

# Neoreactionary Canon

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# Transcriber's Notes

Text and links remain unchanged from original articles, including cases that don't make much sense in the context of an e-book, for example, links to the next part in a series of articles. Please submit corrections or feedback to <https://github.com/jbboehr/NeoreactionaryCanon.epub/> or [@jbboehr](#)

# Introduction

# Neoreactionary Canon

January 23, 2014

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/neoreactionary-canon/>

by Bryce Laliberte

*The high theory of neoreaction*



Let us say you are newly introduced to all this neoreaction business. You're aware that the coverage and representation given us by the media has likely been stricken by inaccuracies due at least to simple human limits, if not sheer malevolence, and you are willing to gaze into this void at its source. To assist with that end, this is a sequence of readings selected for their representation of the overall theme of the Dark Enlightenment. The point is less to offer up neoreactionary texts with the intent of persuading you of particular premises (though that is still an intent) but to provide an introduction to the neoreactionary mode of thought.

Altogether this canon must be hundreds of thousands of words in length; the Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives is by itself more than 100,000 words long. For that, this selection is not remotely exhaustive, but thorough. You shall become acquainted with arguments which favor monarchy, patriarchy, anarchy, ethno-nationalism, and a number of other modern triggers even more horrifying. Most will reject our thought without any reading of the source material, but for those who find themselves stricken by a morbid curiosity and a desire to grapple with ideas you would never hear in the halls of academia, this is for you. Be warned, however. The nature of engagement necessitates, whether you agree or disagree with our aims, that you shall be changed. For better or worse, that is up to you.

A strict top-to-bottom reading isn't necessary, but the categories have been arranged in an order conducive to complete beginners. The *Major Works* can be skipped for brevity, but it is certainly the case that the hard core of neoreaction is found in those texts. *Initial Remarks* will provide an introduction to the broad areas of agreement and the boundaries between neoreaction and related thought systems. *Taking the Red Pill* is a series of trenchant analyses of civilization which shall instruct in new hermeneutics for the interpretation of experience and social phenomena. *Whipping Up a Society from Scratch* delves into theory concerning the conditioning of individual's lives by the social structures they participate in. Finally, *Tinkering with Ideology* illuminates insights as to the propagation and spread of ideas.

Best of luck.

### **Major Works**

- [The Dark Enlightenment](#)
- [An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives](#)
- [Reactionary Philosophy in an Enormous, Planet-Sized Nutshell](#)
- [What is Neoreaction: Ideology, Social-Historical Evolution, and the Phenomena of Civilization](#)

### **Initial Remarks**

- [Introduction to the Neoreaction](#)

- [Neoreaction \(for Dummies\)](#)
- [The Reactionary Consensus](#)
- [Reactionary Unity](#)
- [What Unites Neoreaction?](#)
- [Trichotomy](#)
- [A Formalist Manifesto](#)
- [Potential Approximations of Neoreaction](#)
- [Oaks vs. Sandboxes](#)
- [Premises of Neoreactionary Thought](#)

### **Taking the Red Pill**

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- [An Introduction to Group Dynamics](#)
- [Material Conditions, Mass Psychology](#)
- [How Democracy Fails: Brecht's Solution](#)
- [The Part is Subordinate to the Whole: Female Outliers](#)
- [Language is a Badge of Tribal Membership](#)
- [Three Reasons Diversity isn't Working](#)
- [Postmodernism's Final Causes and Pyrrhic Victory](#)
- [Making Neoreaction Simple](#)
- [The Cathedral and the Bizarre: Benjamin Crump's Manufactured Consent](#)
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- [Clausewitz, Lenin, Robin Dunbar](#)
- [The Monkey Trap](#)
- [Screwed Since 1913](#)
- [Creeping Horror](#)

### **Whipping Up a Society from Scratch**

- [Myth, Rhetoric, and the Dark Enlightenment](#)
- [Stability as Virtue of Civilization](#)
- [Reconciling Transhumanism and Neoreaction](#)
- [Inaccessible is Ungovernable](#)
- [Chinese Eugenics and Why Losers Don't Win](#)
- [Monarchy](#)
- [Burnout](#)
- [The Power of Myth](#)
- [The Cult of Neoreaction](#)
- [Neoreaction, Liberalism, and Conservatism: Reject the Isms](#)
- [Ur-Malthusianism](#)

### **Tinkering with Ideology**

- [Taking on the Cathedral](#)
- [Transhumanism and Palingenesis](#)
- [To Light a Fire Under the Ass of the Neoreaction](#)
- [Game, Dark Enlightenment, and Reaction](#)
- [Cipher Ideology](#)
- [The Dove Sketches Beauty Scam](#)
- [Real Men Want to Drink Guinness, But Don't Expect Them to Pay for It](#)
- [A Typology of Magic](#)
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- [Orwell and Newspeak](#)
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# Neoreactionary Canon

February 1, 2014

<http://www.moreright.net/neoreactionary-canon/>

by Michael Anissimov

*Questioning Modernity*



Bryce Laliberte over at [Anarcho-Papist](#) put together a Neoreactionary Canon, which we generally endorse. We've added a new category: books.

## Major Works

- [The Dark Enlightenment](#)
- [An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives](#)
- [Reactionary Philosophy in an Enormous, Planet-Sized Nutshell](#)
- [What is Neoreaction: Ideology, Social-Historical Evolution, and the Phenomena of Civilization](#)

## Books

- [Men Among the Ruins](#) by Julius Evola
- [Ride the Tiger](#) by Julius Evola
- [Democracy: the God That Failed](#) by Hans-Hermann Hoppe
- [Liberty or Equality](#) by Erik von Kuenhelt-Leddhin
- [Patriarchia](#) by Robert Filmer
- [Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies](#) by Bryan Caplan

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- [Creeping Horror](#)
- [The Case Against Democracy: Ten Red Pills](#)

### **Whipping Up a Society from Scratch**

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- [Stability as Virtue of Civilization](#)
- [Reconciling Transhumanism and Neoreaction](#)
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# Major Works

# The Dark Enlightenment

March 2, 2012 - July 20, 2012

<http://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/>

by Nick Land

## Part 1: Neo-reactionaries head for the exit

March 2, 2012

Enlightenment is not only a state, but an event, and a process. As the designation for an historical episode, concentrated in northern Europe during the 18th century, it is a leading candidate for the ‘true name’ of modernity, capturing its origin and essence (‘Renaissance’ and ‘Industrial Revolution’ are others). Between ‘enlightenment’ and ‘progressive enlightenment’ there is only an elusive difference, because illumination takes time – and feeds on itself, because enlightenment is self-confirming, its revelations ‘self-evident’, and because a retrograde, or reactionary, ‘dark enlightenment’ amounts almost to intrinsic contradiction. To become enlightened, in this historical sense, is to recognize, and then to pursue, a guiding light.

There were ages of darkness, and then enlightenment came. Clearly, advance has demonstrated itself, offering not only improvement, but also a model. Furthermore, unlike a renaissance, there is no need for an enlightenment to recall what was lost, or to emphasize the attractions of return. The elementary acknowledgement of enlightenment is already Whig history in miniature.

Once certain enlightened truths have been found self-evident, there can be no turning back, and conservatism is pre-emptively condemned – predestined – to paradox. F. A. Hayek, who refused to describe himself as a conservative, famously settled instead upon the term ‘Old Whig’, which – like ‘classical liberal’ (or the still more melancholy ‘remnant’) – accepts that progress isn’t what it used to be. What could an Old Whig be, if not a reactionary progressive? And what on earth is that?

Of course, plenty of people already think they know what reactionary modernism looks like, and amidst the current collapse back into the 1930s their concerns are only likely to grow. Basically, it’s what the ‘F’ word is for, at least in its progressive usage. A flight from democracy under these circumstances conforms so perfectly to expectations that it eludes specific recognition, appearing merely as an atavism, or confirmation of dire repetition.

Still, something is happening, and it is – at least in part – something else. One milestone was the April 2009 [discussion](#) hosted at Cato Unbound among libertarian thinkers (including Patri Friedman and Peter Thiel) in which disillusionment with the direction and possibilities of democratic politics was expressed with unusual forthrightness. Thiel [summarized](#) the trend bluntly: “I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.”

In August 2011, Michael Lind posted a democratic [riposte](#) at Salon, digging up some impressively malodorous dirt, and concluding:

The dread of democracy by libertarians and classical liberals is justified. Libertarianism really is incompatible with democracy. Most libertarians have made it clear which of the two they prefer. The

only question that remains to be settled is why anyone should pay attention to libertarians.

Lind and the ‘neo-reactionaries’ seem to be in broad agreement that democracy is not only (or even) a system, but rather a vector, with an unmistakable direction. Democracy and ‘progressive democracy’ are synonymous, and indistinguishable from the expansion of the state. Whilst ‘extreme right wing’ governments have, on rare occasions, momentarily arrested this process, its reversal lies beyond the bounds of democratic possibility. Since winning elections is overwhelmingly a matter of vote buying, and society’s informational organs (education and media) are no more resistant to bribery than the electorate, a thrifty politician is simply an incompetent politician, and the democratic variant of Darwinism quickly eliminates such misfits from the gene pool. This is a reality that the left applauds, the establishment right grumpily accepts, and the libertarian right has ineffectively railed against. Increasingly, however, libertarians have ceased to care whether anyone is ‘pay[ing them] attention’ – they have been looking for something else entirely: an exit.

It is a structural inevitability that the libertarian voice is drowned out in democracy, and according to Lind it should be. Ever more libertarians are likely to agree. ‘Voice’ is democracy itself, in its historically dominant, Rousseauistic strain. It models the state as a representation of popular will, and making oneself heard means more politics. If voting as the mass self-expression of politically empowered peoples is a nightmare engulfing the world, adding to the hubbub doesn’t help. Even more than Equality-vs-Liberty, Voice-vs-Exit is the rising alternative, and libertarians are opting for voiceless flight. Patri Friedman [remarks](#): “we think that free exit is so important that we’ve called it the only Universal Human Right.”

For the hardcore neo-reactionaries, democracy is not merely doomed, it is doom itself. Fleeing it approaches an ultimate imperative. The subterranean current that propels such anti-politics is recognizably Hobbesian, a coherent dark enlightenment, devoid from its beginning of any Rousseauistic enthusiasm for popular expression. Predisposed, in any case, to perceive the politically awakened masses as a howling irrational mob, it conceives the dynamics of democratization as fundamentally degenerative: systematically consolidating and exacerbating private vices, resentments, and deficiencies until they reach the level of collective criminality and comprehensive social corruption. The democratic politician and the electorate are bound together by a circuit of reciprocal incitement, in which each side drives the other to ever more shameless extremities of hooting, prancing cannibalism, until the only alternative to shouting is being eaten.

Where the progressive enlightenment sees political ideals, the dark enlightenment sees appetites. It accepts that governments are made out of people, and that they will eat well. Setting its expectations as low as reasonably possible, it seeks only to spare civilization from frenzied, ruinous, gluttonous debauch. From Thomas Hobbes to Hans-Hermann Hoppe and beyond, it asks: How can the sovereign power be prevented – or at least dissuaded – from devouring society? It consistently finds democratic ‘solutions’ to this problem risible, at best.

Hoppe advocates an anarcho-capitalist ‘private law society’, but between monarchy and democracy he does not hesitate (and his [argument](#) is strictly Hobbesian):

As a hereditary monopolist, a king regards the territory and the people under his rule as his personal property and engages in the monopolistic exploitation of this “property.” Under democracy, monopoly and monopolistic exploitation do not disappear. Rather, what happens is this: instead of a king and a nobility who regard the country as their private property, a temporary and interchangeable caretaker is put in monopolistic charge of the country. The caretaker does not own the country, but as long as he is in office he is permitted to use it to his and his protégés’ advantage. He owns its current use – usufruct – but not its capital stock. This does not eliminate exploitation. To the contrary, it makes exploitation less calculating and carried out with little or no regard to the capital stock. Exploitation becomes shortsighted and capital consumption will be systematically promoted.

Political agents invested with transient authority by multi-party democratic systems have an overwhelming (and demonstrably irresistible) incentive to plunder society with the greatest possible rapidity and comprehensiveness. Anything they neglect to steal – or ‘leave on the table’ – is likely to be inherited by political successors who are not only unconnected, but actually opposed, and who can therefore be expected to utilize all available resources to the detriment of their foes. Whatever is left behind becomes a weapon in your enemy’s hand. Best, then, to destroy what cannot be stolen. From the perspective of a democratic politician, any type of social good that is neither directly appropriable nor attributable to (their own) partisan policy is sheer waste, and counts for nothing, whilst even the most grievous social misfortune – so long as it can be assigned to a prior administration or postponed until a subsequent one – figures in rational calculations as an obvious blessing. The long-range techno-economic improvements and associated accumulation of cultural capital that constituted social progress in its old (Whig) sense are in nobody’s political interest. Once democracy flourishes, they face the immediate threat of extinction.

Civilization, as a process, is indistinguishable from diminishing time-preference (or declining concern for the present in comparison to the future). Democracy, which both in theory and evident historical fact accentuates time-preference to the point of convulsive feeding-frenzy, is thus as close to a precise negation of civilization as anything could be, short of instantaneous social collapse into murderous barbarism or zombie apocalypse (which it eventually leads to). As the democratic virus burns through society, painstakingly accumulated habits and attitudes of forward-thinking, prudential, human and industrial investment, are replaced by a sterile, orgiastic consumerism, financial incontinence, and a ‘reality television’ political circus. Tomorrow might belong to the other team, so it’s best to eat it all now.

Winston Churchill, who remarked in neo-reactionary style that “the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter” is better known for suggesting “that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.” Whilst never exactly conceding that

“OK, democracy sucks (in fact, it really sucks), but what’s the alternative?” the implication is obvious. The general tenor of this sensibility is attractive to modern conservatives, because it resonates with their wry, disillusioned acceptance of relentless civilizational deterioration, and with the associated intellectual apprehension of capitalism as an unappetizing but ineliminable default social arrangement, which remains after all catastrophic or merely impractical alternatives have been discarded. The market economy, on this understanding, is no more than a spontaneous survival strategy that stitches itself together amidst the ruins of a politically devastated world. Things will probably just get worse forever. So it goes.

So, what is the alternative? (There’s certainly no point trawling through the 1930s for one.) “Can you imagine a 21st-century post-demotist society? One that saw itself as recovering from democracy, much as Eastern Europe sees itself as recovering from Communism?” asks supreme Sith Lord of the neo-reactionaries, [Mencius Moldbug](#). “Well, I suppose that makes one of us.”

Moldbug’s formative influences are Austro-libertarian, but that’s all over. As he explains:

... libertarians cannot present a realistic picture of a world in which their battle gets won and stays won. They wind up looking for ways to push a world in which the State’s natural downhill path is to grow, back up the hill. This prospect is Sisyphean, and it’s understandable why it attracts so few supporters.

His awakening into neo-reaction comes with the (Hobbesian) recognition that sovereignty cannot be eliminated, caged, or controlled. Anarcho-capitalist utopias can never condense out of science fiction, divided powers flow back together like a shattered Terminator, and constitutions have exactly as much real authority as a sovereign interpretative power allows them to have. The state isn’t going anywhere because — to those who run it — it’s worth far too much to give up, and as the concentrated instantiation of sovereignty in society, nobody can make it do anything. If the state cannot be eliminated, Moldbug argues, at least it can be cured of democracy (or systematic and degenerative bad government), and the way to do that is to formalize it. This is an approach he calls ‘neo-cameralism’.

To a neocameralist, a state is a business which owns a country. A state should be managed, like any other large business, by dividing logical ownership into negotiable shares, each of which yields a precise fraction of the state’s profit. (A well-run state is very profitable.) Each share has one vote, and the shareholders elect a board, which hires and fires managers.

This business’s customers are its residents. A profitably-managed neocameralist state will, like any business, serve its customers efficiently and effectively. Misgovernment equals mismanagement.

Firstly, it is essential to squash the democratic myth that a state ‘belongs’ to the citizenry. The point of neo-cameralism is to buy out the real stakeholders in sovereign power, not to perpetuate sentimental lies about mass enfranchisement. Unless ownership of the state is formally transferred into the hands of its

actual rulers, the neo-cameral transition will simply not take place, power will remain in the shadows, and the democratic farce will continue.

So, secondly, the ruling class must be plausibly identified. It should be noted immediately, in contradistinction to Marxist principles of social analysis, that this is not the 'capitalist bourgeoisie'. Logically, it cannot be. The power of the business class is already clearly formalized, in monetary terms, so the identification of capital with political power is perfectly redundant. It is necessary to ask, rather, who do capitalists pay for political favors, how much these favors are potentially worth, and how the authority to grant them is distributed. This requires, with a minimum of moral irritation, that the entire social landscape of political bribery ('lobbying') is exactly mapped, and the administrative, legislative, judicial, media, and academic privileges accessed by such bribes are converted into fungible shares. Insofar as voters are worth bribing, there is no need to entirely exclude them from this calculation, although their portion of sovereignty will be estimated with appropriate derision. The conclusion of this exercise is the mapping of a ruling entity that is the truly dominant instance of the democratic polity. Moldbug calls it the Cathedral.

The formalization of political powers, thirdly, allows for the possibility of effective government. Once the universe of democratic corruption is converted into a (freely transferable) shareholding in gov-corp. the owners of the state can initiate rational corporate governance, beginning with the appointment of a CEO. As with any business, the interests of the state are now precisely formalized as the maximization of long-term shareholder value. There is no longer any need for residents (clients) to take any interest in politics whatsoever. In fact, to do so would be to exhibit semi-criminal proclivities. If gov-corp doesn't deliver acceptable value for its taxes (sovereign rent), they can notify its customer service function, and if necessary take their custom elsewhere. Gov-corp would concentrate upon running an efficient, attractive, vital, clean, and secure country, of a kind that is able to draw customers. No voice, free exit.

... although the full neocameralist approach has never been tried, its closest historical equivalents to this approach are the 18th-century tradition of enlightened absolutism as represented by Frederick the Great, and the 21st-century nondemocratic tradition as seen in lost fragments of the British Empire such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Dubai. These states appear to provide a very high quality of service to their citizens, with no meaningful democracy at all. They have minimal crime and high levels of personal and economic freedom. They tend to be quite prosperous. They are weak only in political freedom, and political freedom is unimportant by definition when government is stable and effective.

In European classical antiquity, democracy was recognized as a familiar phase of cyclical political development, fundamentally decadent in nature, and preliminary to a slide into tyranny. Today this classical understanding is thoroughly lost, and replaced by a global democratic ideology, entirely lacking in critical self-reflection, that is asserted not as a credible social-scientific thesis, or even as a spontaneous popular aspiration, but rather as a religious creed, of a specific, historically identifiable

kind:

... a received tradition I call Universalism, which is a nontheistic Christian sect. Some other current labels for this same tradition, more or less synonymous, are progressivism, multiculturalism, liberalism, humanism, leftism, political correctness, and the like. ... Universalism is the dominant modern branch of Christianity on the Calvinist line, evolving from the English Dissenter or Puritan tradition through the Unitarian, Transcendentalist, and Progressive movements. Its ancestral briar patch also includes a few sideways sprigs that are important enough to name but whose Christian ancestry is slightly better concealed, such as Rousseauvian laicism, Benthamite utilitarianism, Reformed Judaism, Comtean positivism, German Idealism, Marxist scientific socialism, Sartrean existentialism, Heideggerian postmodernism, etc, etc, etc. ... Universalism, in my opinion, is best described as a mystery cult of power. ... It's as hard to imagine Universalism without the State as malaria without the mosquito. ... The point is that this thing, whatever you care to call it, is at least two hundred years old and probably more like five. It's basically the Reformation itself. ... And just walking up to it and denouncing it as evil is about as likely to work as suing Shub-Niggurath in small-claims court.

To comprehend the emergence of our contemporary predicament, characterized by relentless, [totalizing](#), state expansion, the proliferation of spurious positive 'human rights' (claims on the resources of others backed by coercive bureaucracies), politicized money, reckless evangelical '[wars for democracy](#)', and comprehensive thought control arrayed in defense of universalistic dogma (accompanied by the degradation of science into a government public relations function), it is necessary to ask how Massachusetts came to conquer the world, as Moldbug does. With every year that passes, the international ideal of sound governance finds itself approximating more closely and rigidly to the standards set by the Grievance Studies departments of New England universities. This is the divine providence of the ranters and levelers, elevated to a planetary teleology, and consolidated as the reign of the Cathedral.

The Cathedral has substituted its gospel for everything we ever knew. Consider just the concerns expressed by America's founding fathers (compiled by 'Liberty-clinger', comment #1, [here](#)):

A democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where 51% of the people may take away the rights of the other 49%. — Thomas Jefferson

Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote! — Benjamin Franklin

Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide. — John Adams

Democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found

incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their death. — James Madison

We are a Republican Government, Real liberty is never found in despotism or in the extremes of democracy...it has been observed that a pure democracy if it were practicable would be the most perfect government. Experience has proved that no position is more false than this. The ancient democracies in which the people themselves deliberated never possessed one good feature of government. Their very character was tyranny... — Alexander Hamilton

More on voting with your feet (and the incandescent genius of Moldbug), next ...

Added Note (March 7):

Don't trust the attribution of the 'Benjamin Franklin' quote, above. According to [Barry Popik](#), the saying was probably invented by James Bovard, in 1992. (Bovard remarks [elsewhere](#): "There are few more dangerous errors in political thinking than to equate democracy with liberty.")

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Original Article:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120414125952/http://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/article/1880/the-dark-enlightenment-part-1>

## Part 2: The arc of history is long, but it bends towards zombie apocalypse

March 9, 2012

David Graeber: *It strikes me that if one is going to pursue this to its logical conclusion, the only way to have a genuinely democratic society would also be to abolish capitalism in this state.*

Marina Sitrin: *We can't have democracy with capitalism... Democracy and capitalism don't work together.*

([Here](#), via [John J. Miller](#))

That's always the trouble with history. It always looks like it's over. But it never is.

([Mencius Moldbug](#))

Googling 'democracy' and 'liberty' together is highly enlightening, in a dark way. In cyberspace, at least, it is clear that only a distinct minority think of these terms as positively coupled. If opinion is to be judged in terms of the Google spider and its digital prey, by far the most prevalent association is disjunctive, or antagonistic, drawing upon the reactionary insight that democracy poses a lethal menace to liberty, all but ensuring its eventual eradication. Democracy is to liberty as Gargantua to a pie ("Surely you can see that we love liberty, to the point of gut-rumbling and salivation ...").

Steve H. Hanke lays out the case authoritatively in his short [essay](#) *On Democracy Versus Liberty*, focused upon the American experience:

Most people, including most Americans, would be surprised to learn that the word "democracy" does not appear in the Declaration of Independence (1776) or the Constitution of the United States of America (1789). They would also be shocked to learn the reason for the absence of the word democracy in the founding documents of the U.S.A. Contrary to what propaganda has led the public to believe, America's Founding Fathers were skeptical and anxious about democracy. They were aware of the evils that accompany a tyranny of the majority. The Framers of the Constitution went to great lengths to ensure that the federal government was not based on the will of the majority and was not, therefore, democratic.

If the Framers of the Constitution did not embrace democracy, what did they adhere to? To a man, the Framers agreed that the purpose of government was to secure citizens in John Locke's trilogy of the rights to life, liberty and property.

He elaborates:

The Constitution is primarily a structural and procedural document that itemizes who is to exercise power and how they are to exercise it. A great deal of stress is placed on the separation of powers and the checks and balances in the system. These were not a Cartesian construct or formula aimed at

social engineering, but a shield to protect the people from the government. In short, the Constitution was designed to govern the government, not the people.

The Bill of Rights establishes the rights of the people against infringements by the State. The only thing that the citizens can demand from the State, under the Bill of Rights, is for a trial by a jury. The rest of the citizens' rights are protections from the State. For roughly a century after the Constitution was ratified, private property, contracts and free internal trade within the United States were sacred. The scope and scale of the government remained very constrained. All this was very consistent with what was understood to be liberty.

As the spirit of reaction digs its Sith-tentacles into the brain, it becomes difficult to remember how the classical (or non-communist) progressive narrative could once have made sense. What were people thinking? What were they expecting from the emerging super-empowered, populist, cannibalistic state? Wasn't the eventual calamity entirely predictable? How was it ever possible to be a Whig?

The ideological credibility of radical democratization is not, of course, in question. As thinkers ranging from (Christian progressive) Walter Russell Mead to (atheistic reactionary) Mencius Moldbug have exhaustively detailed, it conforms so exactly to ultra-protestant religious enthusiasm that its power to animate the revolutionary soul should surprise nobody. Within just a few years of Martin Luther's challenge to the papal establishment, peasant insurrectionists were stringing up their class enemies all over Germany.

The empirical credibility of democratic advancement is far more perplexing, and also genuinely complex (which is to say controversial, or more precisely, worthy of a data-based, rigorously-argued controversy). In part, that is because the modern configuration of democracy emerges within the sweep of a far broader modernistic trend, whose techno-scientific, economic, social and political strands are obscurely interrelated, knitted together by misleading correlations, and subsequent false causalities. If, as Schumpeter argues, industrial capitalism tends to engender a democratic-bureaucratic culture that concludes in stagnation, it might nevertheless seem as though democracy was 'associated' with material progress. It is easy to misconstrue a lagging indicator as a positive causal factor, especially when ideological zeal lends its bias to the misapprehension. In similar vein, since cancer only afflicts living beings, it might – with apparent reason – be associated with vitality.

Robin Hanson (gently) [notes](#):

Yes many trends have been positive for a century or so, and yes this suggests they will continue to rise for a century or so. But no this does not mean that students are empirically or morally wrong for thinking it “utopian fantasy” that one could “end poverty, disease, tyranny, and war” by joining a modern-day Kennedy's political quest. Why? Because positive recent trends in these areas were not much caused by such political movements! They were mostly caused by our getting rich from the industrial revolution, an event that political movements tended, if anything, to try to hold back on

average.

Simple historical chronology suggests that industrialization supports progressive democratization, rather than being derived from it. This observation has even given rise to a widely accepted school of pop social science theorizing, according to which the ‘maturation’ of societies in a democratic direction is determined by thresholds of affluence, or middle-class formation. The strict logical correlate of such ideas, that democracy is *fundamentally non-productive* in relation to material progress, is typically under-emphasized. Democracy *consumes* progress. When perceived from the perspective of the dark enlightenment, the appropriate mode of analysis for studying the democratic phenomenon is general parasitology.

Quasi-libertarian responses to the outbreak accept this implicitly. Given a population deeply infected by the zombie virus and shambling into cannibalistic social collapse, the preferred option is quarantine. It is not communicative isolation that is essential, but a functional dis-solidarization of society that tightens feedback loops and exposes people with maximum intensity to the consequences of their own actions. Social solidarity, in precise contrast, is the parasite’s friend. By cropping out all high-frequency feedback mechanisms (such as market signals), and replacing them with sluggish, infra-red loops that pass through a centralized forum of ‘general will’, a radically democratized society insulates parasitism from what it does, transforming local, painfully dysfunctional, intolerable, and thus urgently corrected behavior patterns into global, numbed, and chronic socio-political pathologies.

*Gnaw off other people’s body parts and it might be hard to get a job* — that’s the kind of lesson a tight-feedback, cybernetically intense, *laissez faire* order would allow to be learned. It’s also exactly the kind of insensitive zombiphobic discrimination that any compassionate democracy would denounce as thought crime, whilst boosting the public budget for the vitally-challenged, undertaking consciousness raising campaigns on behalf of those suffering from involuntary cannibalistic impulse syndrome, affirming the dignity of the zombie lifestyle in higher-education curriculums, and rigorously regulating workspaces to ensure that the shuffling undead are not victimized by profit-obsessed, performance-centric, or even unreconstructed animationist employers.

As enlightened zombie-tolerance flourishes in the shelter of the democratic mega-parasite, a small remnant of reactionaries, attentive to the effects of real incentives, raise the formulaic question: “You do realize that these policies lead inevitably to a massive expansion of the zombie population?” The dominant vector of history presupposes that such nuisance objections are marginalized, ignored, and — wherever possible — silenced through social ostracism. The remnant either fortifies the basement, whilst stocking up on dried food, ammunition, and silver coins, or accelerates the application process for a second passport, and starts packing its bags.

If all of this seems to be coming unmoored from historical concreteness, there’s a conveniently topical remedy: a little digressive channel-hopping over to Greece. As a microcosmic model for the death of the

West, playing out in real time, the Greek story is hypnotic. It describes a 2,500 year arc that is far from neat, but irresistibly dramatic, from proto-democracy to accomplished zombie apocalypse. Its pre-eminent virtue is that it perfectly illustrates the democratic mechanism *in extremis*, separating individuals and local populations from the consequences of their decisions by scrambling their behavior through large-scale, centralized re-distribution systems. You decide what you do, but then vote on the consequences. How could anyone say ‘no’ to that?

No surprise that over 30 years of EU membership Greeks have been eagerly cooperating with a social-engineering mega-project that strips out all short-wave social signals and re-routes feedback through the grandiose circuitry of European solidarity, ensuring that all economically-relevant information is red-shifted through the heat-death sump of the [European Central Bank](#). Most specifically, it has conspired with ‘Europe’ to obliterate all information that might be contained in Greek interest rates, thus effectively disabling all financial feedback on domestic policy choices.

This is democracy in a consummate form that defies further perfection, since nothing conforms more exactly to the ‘general will’ than the legislative abolition of reality, and nothing delivers the hemlock to reality more definitively than the coupling of Teutonic interest rates with East Mediterranean spending decisions. *Live like Hellenes and pay like Germans* — any political party that failed to rise to power on that platform deserves to scabble for vulture-picked scraps in the wilderness. It’s the ultimate *no-brainer*, in just about every imaginable sense of that expression. What could possibly go wrong?

More to the point, what did go wrong? Mencius Moldbug begins his *Unqualified Reservations* series How Dawkins got pwned (or taken over through an “exploitable vulnerability”) with the [outlining](#) of design rules for a hypothetical “optimal memetic parasite” that would be “as virulent as possible. It will be highly contagious, highly morbid, and highly persistent. A really ugly bug.” In comparison to this ideological super-plague, the vestigial monotheism derided in *The God Delusion* would figure as nothing worse than a moderately unpleasant head cold. What begins as abstract meme tinkering concludes as grand-sweep history, in the dark enlightenment [mode](#):

My belief is that Professor Dawkins is not just a Christian atheist. He is a *Protestant atheist*. And he is not just a Protestant atheist. He is a *Calvinist atheist*. And he is not just a Calvinist atheist. He is an *Anglo-Calvinist atheist*. In other words, he can be also described as a Puritan atheist, a Dissenter atheist, a Nonconformist atheist, an Evangelical atheist, etc, etc.

This cladistic taxonomy traces Professor Dawkins’ intellectual ancestry back about 400 years, to the era of the English Civil War. Except of course for the atheism theme, Professor Dawkins’ kernel is a remarkable match for the Ranter, Leveller, Digger, Quaker, Fifth Monarchist, or any of the more extreme English Dissenter traditions that flourished during the Cromwellian interregnum.

Frankly, these dudes were freaks. Maniacal fanatics. Any mainstream English thinker of the 17th,

18th or 19th century, informed that this tradition (or its modern descendant) is now the planet's dominant Christian denomination, would regard this as a sign of imminent apocalypse. If you're sure they're wrong, you're more sure than me.

Fortunately, Cromwell himself was comparatively moderate. The extreme ultra-Puritan sects never got a solid lock on power under the Protectorate. Even more fortunately, Cromwell got old and died, and Cromwellism died with him. Lawful government was restored to Great Britain, as was the Church of England, and Dissenters became a marginal fringe again. And frankly, a damned good riddance it was.

However, you can't keep a good parasite down. A community of Puritans fled to America and founded the theocratic colonies of New England. After its military victories in the American Rebellion and the War of Secession, American Puritanism was well on the way to world domination. Its victories in World War I, World War II, and the Cold War confirmed its global hegemony. All legitimate mainstream thought on Earth today is descended from the American Puritans, and through them the English Dissenters.

Given the rise of this "really ugly bug" to world dominion, it might seem strange to pick on tangential figure such as Dawkins, but Moldbug selects his target for exquisitely-judged strategic reasons. Moldbug identifies with Dawkins' Darwinism, with his intellectual repudiation of Abrahamic theism, and with his broad commitment to scientific rationality. Yet he recognizes, crucially, that Dawkins' critical faculties shut off – abruptly and often comically – at the point where they might endanger a still broader commitment to hegemonic progressivism. In this way, Dawkins is powerfully indicative. Militant secularism is itself a modernized variant of the Abrahamic meta-meme, on its Anglo-Protestant, radical democratic taxonomic branch, *whose specific tradition is anti-traditionalism*. The clamorous atheism of *The God Delusion* represents a protective feint, and a consistent upgrade of religious reformation, guided by a spirit of progressive enthusiasm that trumps empiricism and reason, whilst exemplifying an irritable dogmatism that rivals anything to be found in earlier God-themed strains.

Dawkins isn't merely an enlightened modern progressive and implicit radical democrat, he's an impressively credentialed scientist, more specifically a biologist, and (thus) a Darwinian evolutionist. The point at which he touches the limit of acceptable thinking as defined by the memetic super-bug is therefore quite easy to anticipate. His inherited tradition of low-church ultra-protestantism has replaced God with Man as the locus of spiritual investment, and 'Man' has been in the process of Darwinian research dissolution for over 150 years. (As the sound, decent person I know you are, having gotten this far with Moldbug you're probably already muttering under your breath, *don't mention race, don't mention race, don't mention race, please, oh please, in the name of the Zeitgeist and the dear sweet non-god of progress, don't mention race ...*) ... but Moldbug is [already](#) citing Dawkins, citing Thomas Huxley "...in a contest which is to be carried out by thoughts and not by bites. The highest places in the hierarchy

of civilization will assuredly not be within the reach of our dusky cousins.” Which Dawkins frames by remarking: “Had Huxley... been born and educated in our time, [he] would have been the first to cringe with us at [his] Victorian sentiments and unctuous tone. I quote them only to illustrate how the *Zeitgeist* moves on.”

It gets worse. Moldbug seems to be holding Huxley’s hand, and ... (ewww!) doing that palm-stroking thing with his finger. This sure ain’t vanilla-libertarian reaction anymore — it’s getting seriously dark, and scary. “In all seriousness, what is the evidence for fraternism? Why, exactly, does Professor Dawkins believe that all neohominids are born with identical potential for neurological development? He doesn’t say. Perhaps he thinks it’s obvious.”

Whatever one’s opinion on the respective scientific merits of human biological diversity or uniformity, it is surely beyond contention that the latter assumption, alone, is *tolerated*. Even if progressive-universalistic beliefs about human nature are true, they are not held because they are true, or arrived at through any process that passes the laugh test for critical scientific rationality. They are received as religious tenets, with all of the passionate intensity that characterizes essential items of faith, and to question them is not a matter of scientific inaccuracy, but of what we now call *political incorrectness*, and once knew as *heresy*.

To sustain this transcendent moral posture in relation to *racism* is no more rational than subscription to the doctrine of *original sin*, of which it is, in any case, the unmistakable modern substitute. The difference, of course, is that ‘original sin’ is a traditional doctrine, subscribed to by an embattled social cohort, significantly under-represented among public intellectuals and media figures, deeply unfashionable in the dominant world culture, and widely criticized – if not derided – without any immediate assumption that the critic is advocating murder, theft, or adultery. To question the status of racism as the supreme and defining social sin, on the other hand, is to court universal condemnation from social elites, and to arouse suspicions of *thought crimes* that range from pro-slavery apologetics to genocide fantasies. Racism is *pure or absolute evil*, whose proper sphere is the infinite and the eternal, or the incendiary sinful depths of the hyper-protestant soul, rather than the mundane confines of civil interaction, social scientific realism, or efficient and proportional legality. The dissymmetry of affect, sanction, and raw social power attending old heresies and their replacements, once noticed, is a nagging indicator. A new sect reigns, and it is not even especially well hidden.

Yet even among the most hardened HBD constituencies, hysterical sanctification of plus-good race-think hardly suffices to lend radical democracy the aura of profound morbidity that Moldbug detects. That requires a devotional relation to the State.

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Original Article:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120724074812/http://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/article/1901/the-dark-enlightenment-part-2>

## Part 3

March 19, 2012

The previous installment of this series ended with our hero Mencius Moldbug, up to his waist (or worse) in the mephitic swamp of political incorrectness, approaching the dark heart of his politico-religious meditation on *How Dawkins Got Pwned*. Moldbug has caught Dawkins in the midst of a symptomatically significant, and excruciatingly sanctimonious, denunciation of Thomas Huxley's racist "Victorian sentiments" – a sermon which concludes with the strange declaration that he is quoting Huxley's words, despite their self-evident and wholly intolerable ghastliness, "only to illustrate how the *Zeitgeist* moves on."

Moldbug [pounces](#), asking pointedly: "What, exactly, is this *Zeitgeist* thing?" It is, indisputably, an extraordinary catch. Here is a thinker (Dawkins), trained as a biologist, and especially fascinated by the (disjunctively) twinned topics of naturalistic evolution and Abrahamic religion, stumbling upon what he apprehends as a one-way trend of world-historical spiritual development, which he then – emphatically, but without the slightest appeal to disciplined reason or evidence – denies has any serious connection to the advance of science, human biology, or religious tradition. The stammering nonsense that results is a thing of wonder, but for Moldbug it all makes sense:

In fact, Professor Dawkins' *Zeitgeist* is ... indistinguishable from ... the old Anglo-Calvinist or Puritan concept of *Providence*. Perhaps this is a false match. But it's quite a close one.

Another word for *Zeitgeist* is *Progress*. It's unsurprising that Universalists tend to believe in Progress- in fact, in a political context, they often call themselves *progressives*. Universalism has indeed made quite a bit of progress since [the time of Huxley's embarrassing remark in] 1913. But this hardly refutes the proposition that Universalism is a parasitic tradition. Progress for the tick is not progress for the dog.

What, exactly, is this *Zeitgeist* thing? The question bears repeating. Is it not astounding, to begin with, that when one English Darwinian reaches for a weapon to club another, the most convenient cudgel to hand should be a German word – associated with an abstruse lineage of state-worshipping idealistic philosophy – explicitly referencing a conception of historical time that has no discernible connection to the process of naturalistic evolution? It is as if, scarcely imaginably, during a comparable contention among physicists (on the topic of quantum indeterminacy), one should suddenly hear it shouted that "God does not play dice with the universe." In fact, the two examples are intimately entangled, since Dawkins' faith in the *Zeitgeist* is combined with adherence to the dogmatic progressivism of 'Einsteinian Religion' (meticulously [dissected](#), of course, by Moldbug).

The shamelessness is remarkable, or at least it would be, were it naively believed that the protocols of

scientific rationality occupied sovereign position in such disputation, if only in principle. In fact – and here irony is amplified to the very brink of howling psychosis – Einstein’s Old One still reigns. The criteria of judgment owe everything to neo-puritan spiritual hygiene, and nothing whatsoever to testable reality. Scientific utterance is screened for conformity to a progressive social agenda, whose authority seems to be unaffected by its complete indifference to scientific integrity. It reminds Moldbug of Lysenko, for understandable reasons.

“If the facts do not agree with the theory, so much worse for the facts” Hegel asserted. It is the *Zeitgeist* that is God, historically incarnated in the state, trampling mere data back into the dirt. By now, everybody knows where this ends. An egalitarian moral ideal, hardened into a universal axiom or increasingly incontestable dogma, completes modernity’s supreme historical irony by making ‘tolerance’ the iron criterion for the limits of (cultural) toleration. Once it is accepted universally, or, speaking more practically, by all social forces wielding significant cultural power, that *intolerance is intolerable*, political authority has legitimated anything and everything convenient to itself, without restraint.

That is the magic of the dialectic, or of logical perversity. When only *tolerance is tolerable*, and everyone (who matters) accepts this manifestly nonsensical formula as not only rationally intelligible, but as the universally-affirmed principle of modern democratic faith, nothing except politics remains. Perfect tolerance and absolute intolerance have become logically indistinguishable, with either equally interpretable as the other,  $A = \text{not-}A$ , or the inverse, and in the nakedly Orwellian world that results, power alone holds the keys of articulation. Tolerance has progressed to such a degree that it has become a social police function, providing the existential pretext for new inquisitional institutions. (“We must remember that those who tolerate intolerance abuse tolerance itself, and an enemy of tolerance is an enemy of democracy,” Moldbug [ironizes](#).)

The spontaneous tolerance that characterized classical liberalism, rooted in a modest set of strictly negative rights that restricted the domain of politics, or government intolerance, surrenders during the democratic surge-tide to a positive *right to be tolerated*, defined ever more expansively as substantial entitlement, encompassing public affirmations of dignity, state-enforced guarantees of equal treatment by all agents (public and private), government protections against non-physical slights and humiliations, economic subsidies, and – ultimately – statistically proportional representation within all fields of employment, achievement, and recognition. That the eschatological culmination of this trend is simply impossible matters not at all to the dialectic. On the contrary, it energizes the political process, combusting any threat of policy satiation in the fuel of infinite grievance. “I will not cease from Mental Fight, Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand: Till we have built Jerusalem, In England’s green and pleasant land.” Somewhere before Jerusalem is reached, the inarticulate pluralism of a free society has been transformed into the assertive multiculturalism of a soft-totalitarian democracy.

The Jews of 17th-century Amsterdam, or the Huguenots of 18th-century London, enjoyed the right to be left alone, and enriched their host societies in return. The democratically-empowered grievance groups of

later modern times are incited by political leaders to demand a (fundamentally illiberal) *right to be heard*, with social consequences that are predominantly malignant. For politicians, however, who identify and promote themselves as the voice of the unheard and the ignored, the self-interest at stake could hardly be more obvious.

Tolerance, which once presupposed neglect, now decries it, and in so doing becomes its opposite. Were this a partisan development, partisan politics of a democratic kind might sustain the possibility of reversion, but it is nothing of the kind. “When someone is hurting, government has got to move” declared ‘compassionate conservative’ US President George W. Bush, in a futile effort to channel the Cathedral. When the ‘right’ sounds like this it is not only dead, but unmistakably reeking of advanced decomposition. ‘Progress’ has won, but is that bad? Moldbug [approaches](#) the question rigorously:

If a tradition causes its hosts to make miscalculations that compromise their personal goals, it exhibits Misesian morbidity. If it causes its hosts to act in ways that compromise their genes’ reproductive interests, it exhibits Darwinian morbidity. If subscribing to the tradition is individually advantageous or neutral (defectors are rewarded, or at least unpunished) but collectively harmful, the tradition is parasitic. If subscribing is individually disadvantageous but collectively beneficial, the tradition is altruistic. If it is both individually and collectively benign, it is symbiotic. If it is both individually and collectively harmful, it is malignant. Each of these labels can be applied to either Misesian or Darwinian morbidity. A theme that is arational, but does not exhibit either Misesian or Darwinian morbidity, is trivially morbid.

Behaviorally considered, the Misesian and Darwinian systems are clusters of ‘selfish’ incentives, oriented respectively to property accumulation and gene propagation. Whilst the Darwinians conceive the ‘Misesian’ sphere as a special case of genetically self-interested motivation, the Austrian tradition, rooted in highly rationalized neo-kantian anti-naturalism, is pre-disposed to resist such reductionism. Whilst the ultimate implications of this contest are considerable, under current conditions it is a squabble of minor urgency, since both formations are united in ‘hate’, which is to say, in their reactionary tolerance for incentive structures that punish the maladapted.

‘Hate’ is a word to pause over. It testifies with special clarity to the religious orthodoxy of the Cathedral, and its peculiarities merit careful notice. Perhaps its most remarkable feature is its perfect redundancy, when evaluated from the perspective of any analysis of legal and cultural norms that is not enflamed by neo-puritan evangelical enthusiasm. A ‘hate crime’, if it is anything at all, is just a crime, plus ‘hate’, and what the ‘hate’ adds is telling. To restrict ourselves, momentarily, to examples of uncontroversial criminality, one might ask: what is it exactly that *aggravates* a murder, or assault, if the motivation is attributed to ‘hate’? Two factors seem especially prominent, and neither has any obvious connection to common legal norms.

Firstly, the crime is augmented by a purely ideational, ideological, or even ‘spiritual’ element, attesting

not only to a violation of civilized conduct, but also to a heretical intention. This facilitates the complete abstraction of hate from criminality, whereupon it takes the form of ‘hate-speech’ or simply ‘hate’ (which is always to be contrasted with the ‘passion’, ‘outrage’, or righteous ‘anger’ represented by critical, controversial, or merely abusive language directed against unprotected groups, social categories, or individuals). ‘Hate’ is an offense against the Cathedral itself, a refusal of its spiritual guidance, and a mental act of defiance against the manifest religious destiny of the world.

Secondly, and relatedly, ‘hate’ is deliberately and even strategically asymmetrical in respect to the equilibrium political polarity of advanced democratic societies. Between the relentless march of progress and the ineffective gouching of conservatism it does not vacillate. As we have seen, only the right can ‘hate’. As the doxological immunity system of ‘hate’ suppression is consolidated within elite educational and media systems, the highly selective distribution of protections ensures that ‘discourse’ – especially empowered discourse – is ratcheted consistently to the left, which is to say, in the direction of an ever more comprehensively radicalized Universalism. The morbidity of this trend is extreme.

Because grievance status is awarded as political compensation for economic incompetence, it constructs an automatic cultural mechanism that advocates for dysfunction. The Universalist creed, with its reflex identification of inequality with injustice, can conceive no alternative to the proposition that the lower one’s situation or status, the more compelling is one’s claim upon society, the purer and nobler one’s cause. Temporal failure is the sign of spiritual election (Marxo-Calvinism), and to dispute any of this is clearly ‘hate’.

This does not compel even the most hard-hearted neo-reactionary to suggest, in a caricature of the high Victorian cultural style, that social disadvantage, as manifested in political violence, criminality, homelessness, insolvency, and welfare dependency, is a simple index of moral culpability. In large part – perhaps overwhelmingly large part – it reflects sheer misfortune. Dim, impulsive, unhealthy, and unattractive people, reared chaotically in abusive families, and stranded in broken, crime-wracked communities, have every reason to curse the gods before themselves. Besides, disaster can strike anyone.

In regards to effective incentive structures, however, none of this is of the slightest importance.

Behavioral reality knows only one iron law: **Whatever is subsidized is promoted.** With a necessity no weaker than that of entropy itself, insofar as social democracy seeks to soften bad consequences – for major corporations no less than for struggling individuals or hapless cultures – things get worse. There is no way around, or beyond this formula, only wishful thinking, and complicity with degeneration. Of course, this defining reactionary insight is doomed to inconsequence, since it amounts to the supremely unpalatable conclusion that every attempt at ‘progressive’ improvement is fated to reverse itself, ‘perversely’, into horrible failure. No democracy could accept this, which means that every democracy will fail.

The excited spiral of Misesian-Darwinian degenerative runaway is neatly captured in the [words](#) of the

world's fluffiest Beltway libertarian, Megan McArdle, writing in core Cathedral-mouthpiece *The Atlantic*:

It is somewhat ironic that the first serious strains caused by Europe's changing demographics are showing up in the Continent's welfare budgets, because the pension systems themselves may well have shaped, and limited, Europe's growth. The 20th century saw international adoption of social-security systems that promised defined benefits paid out of future tax revenue—known to pension experts as “paygo” systems, and to critics as Ponzi schemes. These systems have greatly eased fears of a destitute old age, but multiple studies show that as social-security systems become more generous (and old age more secure), people have fewer children. By one estimate, 50 to 60 percent of the difference between America's (above-replacement) birthrate and Europe's can be explained by the latter's more generous systems. In other words, Europe's pension system may have set in motion the very demographic decline that helped make that system—and some European governments—insolvent.

Despite McArdle's ridiculous suggestion that the United States of America has in some way exempted itself from Europe's mortuary path, the broad outline of the diagnosis is clear, and increasingly accepted as commonsensical (although best ignored). According to the rising creed, welfare attained through progeny and savings is non-universal, and thus morally-benighted. It should be supplanted, as widely and rapidly as possible, by universal benefits or ‘positive rights’ distributed universally to the democratic citizen and thus, inevitably, routed through the altruistic State. If as a result, due to the irredeemable political incorrectness of reality, economies and populations should collapse in concert, at least it will not damage our souls. Oh democracy! You saccharine-sweet dying idiot, what do you think the zombie hordes will care for your soul?

Moldbug [comments](#):

Universalism, in my opinion, is best described as a mystery cult of power.

It's a cult of power because one critical stage in its replicative lifecycle is a little critter called the State. When we look at the big U's surface proteins, we notice that most of them can be explained by its need to capture, retain, and maintain the State, and direct its powers toward the creation of conditions that favor the continued replication of Universalism. It's as hard to imagine Universalism without the State as malaria without the mosquito.

It's a mystery cult because it displaces theistic traditions by replacing metaphysical superstitions with philosophical mysteries, such as humanity, progress, equality, democracy, justice, environment, community, peace, etc.

None of these concepts, as defined in orthodox Universalist doctrine, is even slightly coherent. All can absorb arbitrary mental energy without producing any rational thought. In this they are best

compared to Plotinian, Talmudic, or Scholastic nonsense.

As a bonus, here's the Urban Feature guide to the main sequence of modern political regimes:

**Regime(1):** Communist Tyranny

**Typical Growth:** ~0%

**Voice / Exit:** Low / Low

**Cultural climate:** Pyschotic utopianism

**Life is ...** hard but 'fair'

**Transition mechanism:** Re-discovers markets at economic degree-zero

**Regime(2):** Authoritarian Capitalism

**Typical Growth:** 5-10%

**Voice / Exit:** Low / High

**Cultural climate:** Flinty realism

**Life is ...** hard but productive

**Transition mechanism:** Pressurized by the Cathedral to democratize

**Regime(3):** Social Democracy

**Typical Growth:** 0-3%

**Voice / Exit:** High / High

**Cultural climate:** Sanctimonious dishonesty

**Life is ...** soft and unsustainable

**Transition mechanism:** Can-kicking runs out of road

**Regime(4):** Zombie Apocalypse

**Typical Growth:** N/A

**Voice / Exit:** High (mostly useless screaming) / High (with fuel, ammo, dried food, precious metal coins)

**Cultural climate:** Survivalism

**Life is ...** hard-to-impossible

**Transition mechanism:** Unknown

For all regimes, growth expectations assume moderately competent population, otherwise go straight to (4).

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Original Article:

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## Part 4: Re-running the race to ruin

April 1, 2012

*Liberals are baffled and infuriated that poor whites vote Republican, yet voting on tribal grounds is a feature of all multi-ethnic democracies, whether [in] Northern Ireland, Lebanon or Iraq. The more a majority becomes a minority the more tribal its voting becomes, so that increasingly the Republicans have become the “white party”; making this point indelicately got Pat Buchanan the sack, but many others make it too.*

*Will it happen here [in the UK]? The patterns are not dissimilar. In the 2010 election the Conservatives won only 16 per cent of the ethnic minority vote, while Labour won the support of 72 per cent of Bangladeshis, 78 per cent of African-Caribbeans and 87 per cent of Africans. The Tories are slightly stronger among British Hindus and Sikhs – mirroring Republican support among Asian-Americans – who are more likely to be home-owning professionals and feel less alienated.*

*The Economist recently asked if the Tories had a “race problem”, but it may just be that democracy has a race problem.*

– Ed West ([here](#))

Without a taste for irony, Mencius Moldbug is all but unendurable, and certainly unintelligible. Vast structures of historical irony shape his writings, at times even engulfing them. How otherwise could a proponent of traditional configurations of social order – a self-proclaimed Jacobite – compose a body of work that is stubbornly dedicated to subversion?

Irony is Moldbug’s method, as well as his milieu. This can be seen, most tellingly, in his chosen name for the usurped enlightenment, the dominant faith of the modern world: Universalism. This is a word that he appropriates (and capitalizes) within a reactionary diagnosis whose entire force lies in its exposure of an exorbitant particularity.

Moldbug turns continually to history (or, more rigorously, *cladistics*), to accurately specify that which asserts its own universal significance whilst ascending to a state of general dominance that approaches the universal. Under this examination, what counts as Universal reason, determining the direction and meaning of modernity, is revealed as the minutely determined branch or sub-species of a cultic tradition, descended from ‘ranters’, ‘levelers’, and closely related variants of dissident, ultra-protestant fanaticism, and owing vanishingly little to the conclusions of logicians.

Ironically, then, the world’s regnant *Universalist* democratic-egalitarian faith is a particular or peculiar cult that has *broken out*, along identifiable historical and geographical pathways, with an epidemic virulence that is disguised as progressive global enlightenment. The route that it has taken, through England and New England, Reformation and Revolution, is recorded by an accumulation of traits that

provide abundant material for irony, and for lower varieties of comedy. The unmasking of the modern ‘liberal’ intellectual or ‘open-minded’ media ‘truth-teller’ as a pale, fervent, narrowly doctrinaire puritan, recognizably descended from the species of witch-burning zealots, is reliably – and irresistibly – entertaining.

Yet, as the Cathedral extends and tightens its grip upon everything, everywhere, in accordance with its divine mandate, the response it triggers is only atypically humorous. More commonly, when unable to exact humble compliance, it encounters inarticulate rage, or at least uncomprehending, smoldering resentment, as befits the imposition of parochial cultural dogmas, still wrapped in the trappings of a specific, alien pedigree, even as they earnestly confess to universal rationality.

Consider, for instance, the most famous words of America’s [\*Declaration of Independence\*](#): “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights ...” Could it be honestly maintained that to submit, scrupulously and sincerely, to such ‘self-evident’ truths amounts to anything other than an act of religious re-confirmation or conversion? Or denied that, in these words, reason and evidence are explicitly *set aside*, to make room for principles of faith? Could anything be less scientific than such a declaration, or more indifferent to the criteria of genuinely universal reasoning? How could anybody who was not *already a believer* be expected to consent to such assumptions?

That the founding statement of the democratic-republican creed should be formulated as a statement of pure (and doctrinally recognizable) faith is information of sorts, but it is not yet irony. The irony begins with the fact that among the elites of today’s Cathedral, these words of the Declaration of Independence (as well as many others) would be found – almost universally – to be quaintly suggestive at best, perhaps vaguely embarrassing, and most certainly incapable of supporting literal assent. Even amongst libertarian-slanted conservatives, a firm commitment to ‘natural rights’ is unlikely to proceed confidently and emphatically to their divine origination. For modern ‘liberals’, believers in the rights-bestowing (or entitlement) State, such archaic ideas are not only absurdly dated, but positively obstructive. For that reason, they are associated less with revered predecessors than with the retarded, fundamentalist thinking of political enemies. Sophisticates of the Cathedral core understand, as Hegel did, that God is no more than deep government apprehended by infants, and as such a waste of faith (that bureaucrats could put to better use).

Since the Cathedral has ascended to global supremacy, it no longer has need for Founding Fathers, who awkwardly recall its parochial ancestry, and impede its transnational public relations. Rather, it seeks perpetual re-invigoration through their denigration. The phenomenon of the ‘New Atheism’, with its transparent progressive affiliations, attests abundantly to this. Paleo-puritanism must be derided in order for neo-puritanism to flourish – *the meme is dead, long live the meme!*

At the limit of self-parody, neo-puritan parricide takes the form of the ludicrous ‘War on Christmas’, in

which the allies of the Cathedral sanctify the (radically unthreatened) separation of Church and State through nuisance agitation against public expressions of traditional Christian piety, and their ‘Red State’ dupes respond with dyspeptic outrage on cable TV shows. Like every other war against fuzzy nouns (whether ‘poverty’, ‘drugs’, or ‘terror’), the outcome is predictably perverse. If resistance to the War on Christmas is not yet established as the solid center of Yuletide festivities, it can be confidently expected to become so in the future. The purposes of the Cathedral are served nonetheless, through promotion of a synthetic secularism that separates the progressive faith from its religious foundations, whilst directing attention away from the ethnically specific, dogmatic creedal content at its core.

As reactionaries go, traditional Christians are generally considered to be quite cuddly. Even the most wild-eyed fanatics of the neo-puritan orthodoxy have trouble getting genuinely excited about them (although abortion activists get close). For some real red meat, with the nerves exposed and writhing to jolts of hard stimulation, it makes far more sense to turn to another discarded and ceremonially abominated block on the progressive lineage: White Identity Politics, or (the term Moldbug [opts for](#)) ‘white nationalism’.

Just as the ratchet progress of neo-puritan social democracy is radically facilitated by the orchestrated pillorying of its embryonic religious forms, so is its trend to consistently neo-fascist political economy smoothed by the concerted repudiation of a ‘neo-nazi’ (or paleo-fascist) threat. It is extremely convenient, when constructing ever more nakedly corporatist or ‘third position’ structures of state-directed pseudo-capitalism, to be able to divert attention to angry expressions of white racial paranoia, especially when these are ornamented by clumsily modified nazi insignia, horned helmets, Leni Riefenstahl aesthetics, and slogans borrowed freely from *Mein Kampf*. In the United States (and thus, with shrinking time-lag, internationally) the icons of the Ku Klux Klan, from white bed-sheets, quasi-Masonic titles, and burning crosses, to lynching ropes, have acquired comparable theatrical value.

Moldbug offers a sanitized white nationalist blog reading list, consisting of writers who – to varying degrees of success – avoid immediate reversion to paleo-fascist self-parody. The first step beyond the boundary of respectable opinion is represented by [Lawrence Auster](#), a Christian, anti-Darwinist, and ‘Traditionalist Conservative’ who defends ‘substantial’ (ethno-racial) national identity and opposes the liberal master-principle of nondiscrimination. By the time we reach [‘TanstaafI’](#), at the ripped outer edge of Moldbug’s carefully truncated spectrum, we have entered a decaying orbit, spiraling into the great black hole that is hidden at the dead center of modern political possibility.

Before following the TanstaafI-types into the crushing abyss where light dies, there are some preliminary remarks to make about the white nationalist perspective, and its implications. Even more than the Christian traditionalists (who, even in their cultural mid-winter, can bask in the warmth of supernatural endorsement), white identity politics considers itself *besieged*. Moderate or measured concern offers no equilibrium for those who cross the line, and begin to self-identify in these terms. Instead, the path of involvement demands rapid acceleration to a state of extreme alarm, or racial panic, conforming to an

analysis focused upon malicious population replacement at the hands of a government which, in the oft-cited words of Bertolt Brecht, “has decided to dissolve the people, and to appoint another one.”

‘Whiteness’ (whether conceived biologically, mystically, or both) is associated with vulnerability, fragility, and persecution. This theme is so basic, and so multifarious, that it is difficult to adequately address succinctly. It encompasses everything from criminal predation (especially racially-charged murders, rapes, and beatings), economic exactions and inverse discrimination, cultural aggression by hostile academic and media systems, and ultimately ‘genocide’ – or definitive racial destruction.

Typically, the prospective annihilation of the white race is attributed to its own systematic vulnerability, whether due to characteristic cultural traits (excessive altruism, susceptibility to moral manipulation, excessive hospitality, trust, universal reciprocity, guilt, or individualistic disdain for group identity), or more immediate biological factors (recessive genes supporting fragile Aryan phenotypes). Whilst it is unlikely that this sense of unique endangerment is reducible to the chromatic formula ‘White + Color = Color’, the fundamental structure is of this kind. In its abstract depiction of non-reciprocal vulnerability, it reflects the ‘one drop rule’ (and Mendelian recessive / dominant gene combination). It depicts mixture as essentially anti-white.

Because ‘whiteness’ is a limit (pure absence of color), it slips smoothly from the biological factuality of the Caucasian sub-species into metaphysical and mystical ideas. Rather than accumulating genetic variation, a white race is contaminated or polluted by admixtures that compromise its defining negativity – to darken it is to destroy it. The mythological density of these – predominantly subliminal – associations invests white identity politics with a resilience that frustrates enlightened efforts at rationalistic denunciation, whilst contradicting its own paranoid self-representation. It also undermines recent white nationalist promotions of a racial threat that is strictly comparable to that facing indigenous peoples, universally, and depicting whites as ‘natives’ cruelly deprived of equal protection against extinction. There is no route back to tribal innocence, or flat, biological diversity. Whiteness has been compacted indissolubly with ideology, whichever the road taken.

“If Blacks can have it, and Hispanics can have it, and Jews can have it, why can’t we have it?” – That’s the final building block of white nationalist grievance, the werewolf curse that means it can only ever be a monster. There’s exactly one way out for persecuted palefaces, and it leads straight into a black hole. We promised to get back to Tanstaaf, and [here](#) we are, in late Summer 2007, shortly after he got ‘[the Jew thing](#)’. There isn’t anything very original about his epiphany, which is exactly the point. He quotes himself:

Isn’t it absurd that anyone would even think to blame Christianity or WASPs for the rise of PC and its catastrophic consequences? Isn’t this in fact a reversal of the truth? Hasn’t the rise and spread of PC eroded the power of Christianity, WASPs, and whites in general? Blaming them is in effect blaming the victim.

Yes, there are Christians, WASPs, and whites who have fallen for the PC brainwashing. Yes, there are some who have taken it so deeply to heart that they work to expand and protect it. That's the nature of PC. That is its purpose. To control the minds of the people it seeks to destroy. The left, at its root, is all about destruction.

You don't have to be an anti-Semite to notice where these ideas originate from and who benefits. But you do have to violate PC to say: Jews.

That's the labyrinth, the trap, with its pitifully constricted, stereotypical circuit. "Why can't we be cuddly racial preservationists, like Amazonian Indians? How come we always turn into Neo-Nazis? It's some kind of conspiracy, which means *it has to be the Jews*." Since the mid-20th century, the political intensity of the globalized world has streamed, almost exclusively, out of the cratered ash-pile of the Third Reich. Until you get the pattern, it seems mysterious that there's no getting away from it. After listing some blogs falling under the relatively genteel category of 'white nationalism', Moldbug [cautions](#):

The Internet is also home to many out-and-out racist blogs. Most are simply unreadable. But some are hosted by relatively capable writers ... On these racist blogs you'll find racial epithets, anti-Semitism (see [why I am not an anti-Semite](#)) and the like. Obviously, I cannot recommend any of these blogs, and nor will I link to them. However, if you are interested in the mind of the modern racist, Google will get you there.

Google is overkill. A little link-trawling will get you there. It's a 'six degrees of separation' problem (and more like two, or less). Start digging into the actually existing 'reactosphere', and things get quite astoundingly ugly very quickly. Yes, there really is 'hate', panic, and disgust, as well as a morbidly addictive abundance of very grim, vitriolic wit, and a disconcertingly impressive weight of credible fact (these guys just *love* statistics to death). Most of all, just beyond the horizon, there's the black hole. If reaction ever became a popular movement, its few slender threads of bourgeois (or perhaps dreamily 'aristocratic') civility wouldn't hold back the beast for long.

As liberal decency has severed itself from intellectual integrity, and exiled harsh truths, these truths have found new allies, and become considerably harsher. The outcome is mechanically, and monotonously, predictable. Every liberal democratic 'cause war' strengthens and feralizes what it fights. The war on poverty creates a chronically dysfunctional underclass. The war on drugs creates crystallized super-drugs and mega-mafias. Guess what? The war on political incorrectness creates data-empowered, web-coordinated, paranoid and poly-conspiratorial werewolves, superbly positioned to take advantage of liberal democracy's impending rendezvous with ruinous reality, and to then play their part in the unleashing of unpleasantnesses that are scarcely imaginable (except by disturbing historical analogy). When a sane, pragmatic, and fact-based negotiation of human differences is [forbidden by ideological fiat](#), the alternative is not a reign of perpetual peace, but a festering of increasingly self-conscious and militantly defiant *thoughtcrime*, nourished by publicly unavowable realities, and energized by powerful,

atavistic, and palpably dissident mythologies. That's obvious, on the 'Net.

Moldbug considers the danger of white nationalism to be both over- and understated. On the one hand, the 'menace' is simply ridiculous, and merely reflects neo-puritan spiritual dogma in its most hysterically oppressive and stubbornly mindless form. "It should be obvious that, although I am not a white nationalist, I am not exactly allergic to the stuff," Moldbug remarks, before describing it as "the most marginalized and socially excluded belief system in the history of the world ... an obnoxious social irritant in any circle which does not include tattooed speedfreak bikers."

Yet the danger remains, or rather, is *under construction*.

I can imagine one possibility which might make white nationalism genuinely dangerous. White nationalism would be dangerous if there was some issue on which white nationalists were right, and everyone else was wrong. Truth is always dangerous. Contrary to common belief, it does not always prevail. But it's always a bad idea to turn your back on it. ...While the evidence for human cognitive biodiversity is indeed debatable, what's not debatable is that it is debatable ...[even though] everyone who is not a white nationalist has spent the last 50 years informing us that it is not debatable ...

There's far more to Moldbug's essay, as there always is. Eventually it explains why he rejects white nationalism, on grounds that owe nothing to conventional reflexes. But the dark heart of the essay, lifting it beyond brilliance to the brink of genius, is found early on, at the edge of a black hole:

Why does white nationalism strike us as evil? Because Hitler was a white nationalist, and Hitler was evil. Neither of these statements is remotely controvertible. There is exactly one degree of separation between white nationalism and evil. And that degree is Hitler. Let me repeat: Hitler.

The argument seems watertight. (Hitlertight?) But it holds no water at all.

Why does socialism strike us as evil? Because Stalin was a socialist, and Stalin was evil. Anyone who wants to seriously argue that Stalin was less evil than Hitler has an awful long row to hoe. Not only did Stalin order more murders, his murder machine had its heyday in peacetime, whereas Hitler's can at least be seen as a war crime against enemy civilians. Whether this makes a difference can be debated, but if it does it puts Stalin on top.

And yet I have never had or seen anything like the "red flags" response to socialism ["the sense of the presence of evil"]. If I saw a crowd of young, fashionable people lining up at the box office for a hagiographic biopic on Reinhard Heydrich, chills would run up and down my neck. For Ernesto Guevara, I have no emotional response. Perhaps I think it's stupid and sad. I do think it's stupid and sad. But it doesn't freak me out.

Any attempt to be nuanced, balanced, or proportional in the moral case against Hitler is to entirely

misconstrue the nature of the phenomenon. This can be noted, quite regularly, in Asian societies, for instance, because the ghost of the Third Reich does not occupy central position in their history, or rather, their *religion*, although – as the inner sanctum of the Cathedral – it is determined to (and shows almost every sign of succeeding). A brief digression on cross-cultural misunderstanding and reciprocal blindness might be merited at this point. When Westerners pay attention to the ‘God-Emperor’ style of political devotion that has accompanied modern totalitarianism in East Asia, the conclusion typically drawn is that this pattern of political feeling is exotically alien, morbidly amusing, and ultimately – chillingly – incomprehensible. Contemporary comparisons with laughably non-numinous Western democratic leaders only deepen the confusion, as do clumsy quasi-Marxist references to ‘feudal’ sensibilities (as if absolute monarchy was not an *alternative* to feudalism, and as if absolute monarchs were worshipped). *How could a historical and political figure ever be invested with the transcendent dignity of absolute religious meaning?* It seems absurd ...

“Look, I’m not saying that Hitler was a particularly nice guy ...” – to imagine such words is already to see many things. It might even provoke the question: Does anybody within the (Cathedral’s) globalized world still think that Adolf Hitler was less evil than the Prince of Darkness himself? Perhaps only a few scattered paleo-Christians (who stubbornly insist that Satan is really, *really* bad), and an even smaller number of Neo-Nazi ultras (who think Hitler was kind of cool). For pretty much everybody else, Hitler *perfectly* personifies demonic monstrosity, transcending history and politics to attain the stature of a metaphysical absolute: evil incarnate. Beyond Hitler it is impossible to go, or think. This is surely interesting, since it indicates an irruption of the infinite within history – a religious revelation, of inverted, yet structurally familiar, Abrahamic type. (‘Holocaust Theology’ already implies as much.)

In this regard, rather than Satan, it might be more helpful to compare Hitler to the Antichrist, which is to say: to a mirror Messiah, of reversed moral polarity. There was even an empty tomb. *Hitlerism*, neutrally conceived, therefore, is less a pro-Nazi ideology than a universal faith, speciated within the Abrahamic super-family, and united in acknowledging the coming of pure evil on earth. Whilst not exactly worshipped (outside the extraordinarily disreputable circles already ventured into), Hitler is sacramentally abhorred, in a way that touches upon theological ‘first things’. If to embrace Hitler as God is a sign of highly lamentable politico-spiritual confusion (at best), to recognize his historical singularity and sacred meaning is near-mandatory, since he is affirmed by all men of sound faith as the exact complement of the incarnate God (the revealed anti-Messiah, or Adversary), and this identification has the force of ‘self-evident truth’. (Did anybody ever need to ask why the *reductio ad Hitlerum* works?)

Conveniently, like the secularized neo-puritanism that it swallows, (aversive) Hitlerism can be safely taught in American schools, at a remarkably high level of religious intensity. Insofar as progressive or programmatic history continues, this suggests that the Church of Sacred Hitlerite Abomination will eventually supplant its Abrahamic predecessors, to become the world’s triumphant ecumenical faith. How could it not? After all, unlike vanilla deism, this is a faith that fully reconciles religious enthusiasm with enlightened opinion, equally adapted, with consummate amphibious capability, to the convulsive

ecstasies of popular ritual and the letter pages of the *New York Times*. “Absolute evil once walked amongst us, and lives still ...” How is this not, already, the principal religious message of our time? All that remains unfinished is the mythological consolidation, and that has long been underway.

There’s still some bone-fragment picking to do among the ashes and debris [in Part 5], before turning to healthier things ...

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## Part 4a: A multi-part sub-digression into racial terror

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*My own sense of the thing is that underneath the happy talk, underneath the dogged adherence to failed ideas and dead theories, underneath the shrieking and anathematizing at people like me, there is a deep and cold despair. In our innermost hearts, we don't believe racial harmony can be attained. Hence the trend to separation. We just want to get on with our lives away from each other. Yet for a moralistic, optimistic people like Americans, this despair is unbearable. It's pushed away somewhere we don't have to think about it. When someone forces us to think about it, we react with fury. That little boy in the Andersen story about the Emperor's new clothes? The ending would be more true to life if he had been lynched by a howling mob of outraged citizens.*

— John Derbyshire, interviewed at Gawker

*We believe in the equal dignity and presumption of equal decency toward every person — no matter what race, no matter what science tells us about comparative intelligence, and no matter what is to be gleaned from crime statistics. It is important that research be done, that conclusions not be rigged, and that we are at liberty to speak frankly about what it tells us. But that is not an argument for a priori conclusions about how individual persons ought to be treated in various situations — or for calculating fear or friendship based on race alone. To hold or teach otherwise is to prescribe the disintegration of a pluralistic society, to undermine the aspiration of E Pluribus Unum.*

— Andrew McCarthy, defending the expulsion of JD from the National Review

*“The Talk” as black Americans and liberals present it (to wit: necessitated by white malice), is a comic affront — because no one is allowed (see Barro above) to notice the context in which black Americans are having run-ins with the law, each other, and others. The proper context for understanding this, and the mania that is the Trayvonics for that matter, is the reasonable fear of violence. This is the single most exigent fact here — yet you decree it must not be spoken.*

— Dennis Dale, responding to Josh Barro's call for JD's 'firing'

*Quite an experience to live in fear, isn't it? That's what it is to be a slave.*

— Bladerunner

There is no part of Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei, Shanghai, or very many other East Asian cities where it is impossible to wander, safely, late at night. Women, whether young or old, on their own or with small children, can be comfortably oblivious to the details of space and time, at least insofar as the threat of assault is concerned. Whilst this might not be quite sufficient to define a civilized society, it comes extremely close. It is certainly *necessary* to any such definition. The contrary case is barbarism.

These lucky cities of the western Pacific Rim are typified by geographical locations and demographic profiles that conspicuously echo the embarrassingly well-behaved 'model minorities' of Occidental

countries. They are (non-obnoxiously) dominated by populations that – due to biological heredity, deep cultural traditions, or some inextricable entanglement of the two – find polite, prudent, and pacific social interactions comparatively effortless, and worthy of continuous reinforcement. They are also, importantly, open, cosmopolitan societies, remarkably devoid of chauvinistic boorishness or paranoid ethno-nationalist sentiment. Their citizens are disinclined to emphasize their own virtues. On the contrary, they will typically be modest about their individual and collective attributes and achievements, abnormally sensitive to their failures and shortcomings, and constantly alert to opportunities for improvement. Complacency is almost as rare as delinquency. In these cities an entire – and massively consequential – dimension of social terror is simply absent.

In much of the Western world, in stark contrast, barbarism has been normalized. It is considered simply obvious that cities have ‘bad areas’ that are not merely impoverished, but lethally menacing to outsiders and residents alike. Visitors are warned to stay away, whilst locals do their best to transform their homes into fortresses, avoid venturing onto the streets after dark, and – especially if young and male – turn to criminal gangs for protection, which further degrades the security of everybody else. Predators control public space, parks are death traps, aggressive menace is celebrated as ‘attitude’, property acquisition is for mugs (or muggers), educational aspiration is ridiculed, and non-criminal business activity is despised as a violation of cultural norms. Every significant mechanism of socio-cultural pressure, from interpreted heritage and peer influences to political rhetoric and economic incentives, is aligned to the deepening of complacent depravity and the ruthless extirpation of every impulse to self-improvement. Quite clearly, these are places where civilization has fundamentally collapsed, and a society that includes them has to some substantial extent *failed*.

Within the most influential countries of the English-speaking world, the disintegration of urban civilization has profoundly shaped the structure and development of cities. In many cases, the ‘natural’ (one might now say ‘Asian’) pattern, in which intensive urbanization and corresponding real estate values are greatest in the downtown core, has been shattered, or at least deeply deformed. Social disintegration of the urban center has driven an exodus of the (even moderately) prosperous to suburban and exurban refuges, producing a grotesque and historically unprecedented pattern of ‘donut’-style development, with cities tolerating – or merely accommodating themselves to – ruined and rotting interiors, where sane people fear to tread. ‘Inner city’ has come to mean almost exactly the opposite of what an undistorted course of urban development would produce. This is the geographical expression of a Western – and especially American – social problem that is at once basically unmentionable and visible from outer space.

Surprisingly, the core-crashed donut syndrome has a notably insensitive yet commonly accepted name, which captures it in broad outlines – at least according to its secondary characteristics – and to a reasonable degree of statistical approximation: *White Flight*. This is an arresting term, for a variety of reasons. It is stamped, first of all, by the racial bi-polarity that – as a *vital archaism* – resonates with America’s chronic social crisis at a number of levels. Whilst superficially outdated in an age of many-

hued multicultural and immigration issues, it reverts to the undead code inherited from slavery and segregation, perpetually identified with Faulkner's words: "The past is not dead. It isn't even past." Yet even in this untypical moment of racial candor, blackness is elided, and implicitly disconnected from agency. It is denoted only by allusion, as a residue, concentrated passively and derivatively by the sifting function of a highly-adrenalized white panic. What *cannot be said* is indicated even as it is unmentioned. A distinctive silence accompanies the broken, half-expression of a mute tide of racial separatism, driven by civilizationally disabling terrors and animosities, whose depths, and structures of reciprocity, remain unavowable.

What the puritan exodus from Old to New World was to the foundation of Anglophone global modernity, white flight is to its fraying and dissolution. As with the pre-founding migration, what gives white flight ineluctable relevance here is its sub-political character: *all exit and no voice*. It is the subtle, non-argumentative, non-demanding 'other' of social democracy and its dreams – the spontaneous impulse of dark enlightenment, as it is initially glimpsed, at once disillusioning and implacable.

The core-crashed donut is not the only model of sick city syndrome (the shanty fringe phenomenon emphasized in Mike Davis' [\*Planet of Slums\*](#) is very different). Nor is donut-disaster urbanism reducible to racial crisis, at least in its origins. Technological factors have played a crucial role (most prominently, automobile geography) as have quite other, long-standing cultural traditions (such as the construction of suburbia as a bourgeois idyll). Yet all such lineages have been in very large measure supplanted by, or at least subordinated to, the inherited, and still emerging, 'race problem.'

So what is this 'problem'? How is it developing? Why should anybody outside America be concerned about it? Why raise the topic now (if ever)? – If your heart is sinking under the gloomy suspicion this is going to be huge, meandering, nerve-wracking, and torturous, you're right. We've got *weeks* in this chamber of horrors to look forward to.

The two simplest, quite widely held, and basically incompatible answers to the first question deserve to be considered as important *parts* of the problem.

Question: What is America's race problem?

Answer-1: Black people.

Answer-2: White people.

The combined popularity of these options is significantly expanded, most probably to encompass a large majority of all Americans, when is taken to include those who assume that one of these two answers dominates the thinking of the *other side*. Between them, the propositions "The problem would be over if we could just rid ourselves of black hoodlums / white racists" and / or "They think we're all hoodlums / racists and want to get rid of us" consume an impressive proportion of the political spectrum,

establishing a solid foundation of reciprocal terror and aversion. When defensive projections are added (“We’re not hoodlums, you’re racists” or “We’re not racists, you’re hoodlums”), the potential for super-heated, non-synthesizing dialectics approaches the infinite.

Not that these ‘sides’ are racial (except in black or white [tribal-nationalist fantasy](#)). For crude stereotypes, it is far more useful to turn to the principal political dimension, and its categories of ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ in the contemporary, American sense. To identify America’s race problem with white racism is the stereotypical *liberal* position, whilst identifying it with black social dysfunction is the exact *conservative* complement. Although these stances are formally symmetrical, it is their actual political *asymmetry* that charges the American race problem with its extraordinary historical dynamism and universal significance.

That American whites and blacks – considered crudely as statistical aggregates – co-exist in a relation of reciprocal fear and perceived victimization, is attested by the manifest patterns of urban development and navigation, school choice, gun ownership, policing and incarceration, and just about every other expression of *revealed* (as opposed to *stated*) preference that is related to voluntary social distribution and security. An objective balance of terror reigns, erased from visibility by complementary yet incompatible perspectives of victimological supremacism and denial. Yet between *the liberal and conservative positions on race* there is no balance whatsoever, but something closer to a rout. Conservatives are utterly terrified of the issue, whilst for liberals it is a garden of earthly delight, whose pleasures transcend the limits of human understanding. When any political discussion firmly and clearly arrives at the topic of race, liberalism wins. That is the fundamental law of ideological effectiveness in the shadowy fragrant shade of the Cathedral. In certain respects, this dynamic political imbalance is even the primary phenomenon under consideration (and much more needs to be said about it, down the road).

The regular, excruciating, soul-crushing humiliation of conservatism on the race issue should come as no surprise to anybody. After all, the principal role of conservatism in modern politics is to be humiliated. That is what a perpetual loyal opposition, or court jester, is for. The essential character of liberalism, as guardian and proponent of neo-puritan spiritual truth, invests it with supreme mastery over the dialectic, or invulnerability to contradiction. *That which it is impossible to think must necessarily be embraced through faith.* Consider only the fundamental doctrine or first article of the liberal creed, as promulgated through every public discussion, academic articulation, and legislative initiative relevant to the topic: *Race doesn’t exist, except as a social construct employed by one race to exploit and oppress another.* Merely to entertain it is to shudder before the awesome majesty of the absolute, where everything is simultaneously its precise opposite, and reason evaporates ecstatically at the brink of the sublime.

If the world was built out of ideology, this story would already be over, or at least predictably programmed. Beyond the apparent zig-zag of the dialectic there is a dominant trend, heading in a single, unambiguous direction. Yet the liberal-progressive solution to the race problem – open-endedly

escalating, comprehensively systematic, dynamically paradoxical ‘anti-racism’ – confronts a real obstacle that is only very partially reflected in conservative attitudes, rhetoric, and ideology. The real enemy, glacial, inchoate, and non-argumentative, is ‘white flight’.

At this point, explicit reference to the Derbyshire Case becomes irresistible. There is a very considerable amount of complex, recent historical context that cries out for introduction – the cultural convulsion attending the Trayvon Martin incident in particular – but there’ll be time for that later (oh yes, I’m afraid so). Derbyshire’s intervention, and the explosion of words it provoked, while to some extent illuminated by such context, far exceeds it. That is because the crucial unspoken term, both in Derbyshire’s now-notorious [short article](#), and also – apparently – in the responses it generated, is ‘white flight’. By publishing paternal advice to his (Eurasian) children that has been – not entirely unreasonably – summarized as ‘avoid black people’, he converted white flight from a much-lamented but seemingly inexorable fact into an explicit imperative, even a *cause*. *Don’t argue, flee*.

The word Derbyshire emphasizes, in his own penumbra of commentary, and in antecedent writings, is not ‘flight’ or ‘panic’, but *despair*. When asked by blogger Vox Day whether he agreed that the ‘race card’ had become less intimidating over the past two decades, Derbyshire [replies](#):

One [factor], which I’ve written about more than once, I think, in the United States, is just despair. I am of a certain age, and I was around 50 years ago. I was reading the newspapers and following world events and I remember the civil rights movement. I was in England, but we followed it. I remember it, I remember what we felt about it, and what people were writing about it. It was full of hope. The idea in everyone’s mind was that if we strike down these unjust laws and we outlaw all this discrimination, then we’ll be whole. Then America will be made whole. After an intermediate period of a few years, who knows, maybe 20 years, with a hand up from things like affirmative action, black America will just merge into the general population and the whole thing will just go away. That’s what everybody believed. Everybody thought that. And it didn’t happen.

Here we are, we’re 50 years later, and we’ve still got these tremendous disparities in crime rates, educational attainment, and so on. And I think, although they’re still mouthing the platitudes, Americans in their hearts feel a kind of cold despair about it. They feel that Thomas Jefferson was probably right and we can’t live together in harmony. I think that’s why you see this slow ethnic disaggregation. We have a very segregated school system now. There are schools within 10 miles of where I’m sitting that are 98 percent minority. In residential housing too, it’s the same thing. So I think there is a cold, dark despair lurking in America’s collective heart about the whole thing.

This is a version of reality that few want to hear. As Derbyshire recognizes, Americans are a predominantly Christian, optimistic, ‘can-do’ people, whose ‘collective heart’ is unusually maladapted to an *abandonment of hope*. This is a country culturally hard-wired to interpret despair not merely as error or weakness, but as *sin*. Nobody who understands this could be remotely surprised to find bleak

hereditarian fatalism being rejected — typically with vehement hostility — not only by progressives, but also by the overwhelming majority of conservatives. At NRO, Andrew C. McCarthy no doubt spoke for many in remarking:

There is a world of difference, though, between the need to be able to discuss uncomfortable facts about IQ and incarceration, on the one hand, and, on the other, to urge race as a rationale for abandoning basic Christian charity.

Others went much further. At the Examiner, James Gibson [seized](#) upon “John Derbyshire’s vile racist screed” as the opportunity to teach a wider lesson — “the danger of conservatism divorced from Christianity”:

... since Derbyshire does not believe “that Jesus of Nazareth was divine ... and that the Resurrection was a real event,” he cannot comprehend the great mystery of the Incarnation, whereby the Divine truly did take on human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and suffered death at the hands of a fallen humanity in order to redeem that humanity out of its state of fallenness.

Herein lies the danger of a conservative socio-political philosophy divorced from a robust Christian faith. It becomes a dead ideology spawning a view of humanity that is toxic, fatalistic, and (as Derbyshire proves abundantly) uncharitable.

It was, of course, on the left that the fireworks truly ignited. Elspeth Reeve at the Atlantic Wire [contended](#) that Derbyshire had clung on to his relation with the National Review because he was offering the magazine’s “less enlightened readers” what they wanted: “dated racial stereotypes.” Like Gibson on the right, she was keen for people to learn a wider lesson: don’t think for a minute this stops with Derbyshire. (The stunningly uncooperative comments thread to her article is worth noting.)

At Gawker, Louis Peitzman [jumped the shark](#) (in the approved direction) by describing Derbyshire’s “horrifying diatribe” as the “most racist article possible,” a judgment that betrays extreme historical ignorance, a sheltered life, unusual innocence, and a lack of imagination, as well as making the piece sound far more interesting than it actually is. Peitzman’s commentators are impeccably liberal, and of course uniformly, utterly, shatteringly appalled (to the point of orgasm). Beyond the emoting, Peitzman doesn’t offer much content, excepting only a little extra emoting — this time mild satisfaction mixed with residual rage — at the news that Derbyshire’s punishment has at least begun (“a step in the right direction”) with his “canning” from the *National Review*.

Joanna Schroeder ([writing](#) at something called the Good Feed Blog) sought to extend the purge beyond Derbyshire, to include anybody who had not yet erupted into sufficiently melodramatic paroxysms of indignation, starting with [David Weigel at Slate](#) (who she doesn’t know “in real life, but in reading this piece, it seems you just might be a racist, pal”). “There are so many ... racist, dehumanizing references to black people in Derbyshire’s article that I have to just stop myself here before I recount the entire thing

point by point with fuming rage,” she shares. Unlike Peitzman, however, at least Schroeder has a point – the racial terror dialectic – “... propagating the idea that we should be afraid of black men, of black people in general, makes this world dangerous for innocent Americans.” *Your fear makes you scary*(although apparently not with legitimate reciprocity).

As for Weigel, he gets the terror good and hard. Within hours he’s [back](#) at the keyboard, apologizing for his previous insouciance, and for the fact he “never ended up saying the obvious: People, the essay was disgusting.”

So what did Derbyshire actually say, where did it come from, and what does it mean to American politics (and beyond)? This sub-series will comb through the spectrum from left to right in search of suggestions, with socio-geographically manifested ‘white’ panic / despair as a guiding thread ...

Coming next: The Liberal Ecstasy

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Original Article:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120716054011/http://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/article/2062/the-dark-enlightenment-part-4a>

## Part 4b: Obnoxious observations

May 3, 2012

*Although black families and parents of boys aren't the only ones who worry about the safety of adolescents, Tillman, Brown and other parents say raising black boys is perhaps the most stressful aspect of parenting because they're dealing with a society that is fearful and hostile toward them, simply because of the color of their skin.*

*"Don't believe it? Walk a day in my shoes," Brown said.*

*Brown said that at 14, his son is at that critical age when he's always worried about his safety because of profiling.*

*"I don't want to scare him or have him paint people with a broad brush, but, historically, we black males have been stigmatized as the purveyors of crime and wherever we are, we're suspect," Brown said.*

*Black parents who don't make that fact clear, he and others said, do it at their sons' peril.*

*"Any African-American parent not having that conversation is being irresponsible," Brown said. "I see this whole thing as an opportunity for us to speak frankly, openly and honestly about race relations."*

— Gracie Bonds Staples (Star-Telegram)

*When communities resist an influx of Section 8 housing-voucher holders from the inner city, say, they are reacting overwhelmingly to behavior. Skin color is a proxy for that behavior. If inner-city blacks behaved like Asians — cramming as much knowledge into their kids as they can possibly fit into their skulls — the lingering wariness towards lower-income blacks that many Americans unquestionably harbor would disappear. Are there irredeemable racists among Americans? To be sure. They come in all colors, and we should deplore all of them. But the issue of race in the United States is more complex than polite company is usually allowed to express.*

— Heather Mac Donald (City Journal)

*"Let's talk about the elephant in the room. I'm black, OK?" the woman said, declining to be identified because she anticipated backlash due to her race. She leaned in to look a reporter directly in the eyes.*

*"There were black boys robbing houses in this neighborhood," she said. "That's why George was suspicious of Trayvon Martin."*

— Chris Francescani (Reuters)

*"In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites. This embodies the essence of dialectics," Lenin [notes](#), "but it requires explanations and development." That is to say: further discussion.*

The sublimation (*Aufhebung*) of Marxism into Leninism is an eventuality that is best grasped crudely. By forging a revolutionary communist politics of broad application, almost entirely divorced from the mature material conditions or advanced social contradictions that had been previously anticipated, Lenin demonstrated that dialectical tension coincided, exhaustively, with its politicization (and that all reference to a 'dialectics of nature' is no more than retrospective subordination of the scientific domain to a political model). Dialectics are as real as they are made to be.

The dialectic begins with political agitation, and extends no further than its practical, antagonistic, factional and coalitional 'logic'. It is the 'superstructure' *for itself*, or against natural limitation, practically appropriating the political sphere in its broadest graspable extension as a platform for social domination. Everywhere that there is argument, there is an unresolved opportunity to rule.

The Cathedral incarnates these lessons. It has no need to espouse Leninism, or operational communist dialectics, because it recognizes nothing else. There is scarcely a fragment of the social 'superstructure' that has escaped dialectical reconstruction, through articulate antagonism, polarization, binary structuring, and reversal. Within the academy, the media, even the fine arts, political super-saturation has prevailed, identifying even the most minuscule elements of apprehension with conflictual 'social critique' and egalitarian teleology. Communism is the universal implication.

More dialectics is more politics, and more politics means 'progress' – or social migration to the left. The production of public agreement only leads in one direction, and within public disagreement, such impetus already exists in embryo. It is only in the absence of agreement *and* of publicly articulated disagreement, which is to say, in non-dialectics, non-argument, sub-political diversity, or politically uncoordinated initiative, that the 'right-wing' refuge of 'the economy' (and civil society more widely) is to be found.

When no agreement is necessary, or coercively demanded, negative (or 'libertarian') liberty is still possible, and this non-argumentative 'other' of dialectics is easily formulated (even if, in a free society, it doesn't need to be): *Do your own thing*. Quite clearly, this irresponsible and negligent imperative is *politically* intolerable. It coincides exactly with leftist depression, retrogression, or depoliticization. Nothing cries out more urgently to be *argued against*.

At the opposite extreme lies the dialectical ecstasy of theatrical justice, in which the argumentative structure of legal proceedings is coupled with publicization through the media. Dialectical enthusiasm finds its definitive expression in a courtroom drama that combines lawyers, journalists, community activists, and other agents of the revolutionary superstructure in the production of a show trial. Social contradictions are staged, antagonistic cases articulated, and resolution institutionally expected. This is Hegel for prime-time television (and now for the Internet). It is the way that the Cathedral shares its message with the people.

Sometimes, in its impatient passion for progress, this message can trip over itself, because even though

the agents of the Cathedral are *infinitely* reasonable, they are ever less sensible, often strikingly incompetent, and prone to making mistakes. This is to be expected on theological grounds. As the state becomes God, it degenerates into imbecility, on the model of the holy fool. The media-politics of the Trayvon Martin spectacle provides a pertinent example.

In the United States, as in any other large country, lots of things happen every day, exhibiting innumerable patterns of varying obscurity. For [instance](#), on an average day, there are roughly 3,400 violent crimes, including 40 murders, 230 rapes, 1,000 robberies, and 2,100 aggravated assaults, alongside 25,000 non-violent property crimes (burglaries and thefts). Very few of these will be widely publicized, or seized upon as educational, exemplary, and representative. Even were the media not inclined towards a narrative-based selection of ‘good stories’, the sheer volume of incidents would compel something of the kind. Given this situation, it is all but inevitable that people will ask: *Why are they telling us this?*

Almost everything about the death of Trayvon Martin is controversial, except for media motivation. On that topic there is near unanimity. The meaning or intended message of the story of the case could scarcely have been more transparent: *White racist paranoia makes America dangerous for black people*. It would thus rehearse the dialectic of racial terror (*your fear is scary*), designed – as always – to convert America’s reciprocal social nightmare into a unilateral morality play, allocating legitimate dread exclusively to one side of the country’s principal racial divide. It seemed perfect. A malignantly deluded white vigilante guns down an innocent black child, justifying black fear (‘the talk’) whilst exposing white panic as a murderous psychosis. This is a story of such archetypal progressive meaning that it cannot be told too many times. In fact, it was just too good to be true.

It soon became evident, however, that media selection – even when reinforced by the celebrity / ‘community activist’ rage-machine – hadn’t sufficed to keep the story on script, and both of the main actors were drifting from their assigned roles. If progressively-endorsed stereotypes were to be even remotely preserved, vigorous [editing](#) would be required. This was especially necessary because certain evil, racist, bigoted readers of the [Miami Herald](#) were beginning to forge a narrative-wrecking mental connection between ‘Trayvon Martin’ and ‘burglary tool’.

As for the killer, George Zimmerman, the name said it all. He was clearly going to be a hulking, pasty-faced, storm-trooper look-alike, hopefully some kind of Christian gun-nut, and maybe – if they really hit pay-dirt – a militia movement type with a history of homophobia and anti-abortion activism. He started off ‘white’ – for no obvious reason beyond media incompetence and narrative programming – then found himself transformed into a ‘white Hispanic’ (a category that seems to have been rapidly innovated on the spot), before gradually shifted through a series of ever more reality-compliant ethnic complications, culminating in the discovery of his Afro-Peruvian great grandfather.

In the heart of the Cathedral it was well into head-scratching time. Here was the great Amerikkkan

defendant being prepped for his show trial, the President had pitched in emotionally on behalf of the sacred victim, and the coordinated ground game had been advanced to the simmering brink of race riots, when the message began falling apart, to such an extent that it now threatened to decay into an annoyingly irrelevant case of black-on-black violence. It was not only that George Zimmerman had black ancestry – making him simply ‘black’ by the left’s own social constructivist standards – he had also grown up amicably among black people, with two African-American girls as “part of the household for years,” had entered into joint business venture with a black partner, he was a registered Democrat, and even some kind of ‘community organizer’ ...

So why did Martin die? Was it for carrying iced tea and a bag of Skittles while black (the media and community activist approved, ‘son Obama might have had’ version), for scoping out burglary targets (the Kluxer racial profiling version), or for breaking Zimmerman’s nose, knocking him over, sitting on top of him, and smashing his head repeatedly against the sidewalk (to be decided in court)? Was he a martyr to racial injustice, a low-level social predator, or a human symptom of American urban crisis? The only thing that was really clear when legal proceedings began, beyond the squalid sadness of the episode, was that it was not resolving anything.

For a sense of just how disconcertingly the approved lesson had disintegrated by the time Zimmerman was charged with second degree murder, it is only necessary to read [this post](#) by HBD-blogger oneSTDV, describing the dialectical derangements of the race-warrior right:

Despite the disturbing nature of the “charges” against Zimmerman, many in the alt-right refuse to grant Zimmerman any sympathy or to even view this as a seminal moment in modern leftism’s anarcho-tyrannical reign. According to these individuals, **the Spanish-speaking, registered Democrat mestizo got what was coming to him**— the ire of the black mob and the elite left indirectly buttressed by Zimmerman himself. Due to his voting record, multicultural background, and mentoring of minority youth, they see Zimmerman as emblematic of the left’s assault on white America, a sort of ground soldier in the campaign against American whiteness.[Bolding in original]

The pop PC police were ready to move on. With the great show trial collapsing into narrative disorder, it was time to refocus on the Message, facts be damned (and double damned). ‘[Jezebel](#)’ best exemplifies the hectoring, vaguely hysterical tone:

You know how you can tell that black people are still oppressed? Because *black people are still oppressed*. If you claim that you are not a racist person (or, at least, that you’re committed to working your ass off not to be one — which is really the best that any of us can promise), then you must believe that people are fundamentally born equal. So if that’s true, then in a vacuum, factors like skin color should have no effect on anyone’s success. Right? And therefore, if you really believe that all people are created equal, then when you see that drastic racial inequalities exist in the real world, the only thing that you could *possibly* conclude is that some external force is holding certain

people back. Like...racism. Right? So congratulations! You believe in racism! Unless you don't actually think that people are born equal. And if you don't believe that people are born equal, *then you're a f\*\*\*\*\*g racist.*

Does anyone "really believe that people are born equal," in the way it is understood here? Believe, that is, not only that a formal expectation of equal treatment is a prerequisite for civilized interaction, but that any revealed deviation from substantial equality of outcome is an obvious, unambiguous indication of oppression? That's "the only thing you could *possibly* conclude"?

At the very least, Jezebel should be congratulated for expressing the progressive faith in its purest form, entirely uncontaminated by sensitivity to evidence or uncertainty of any kind, casually contemptuous of any relevant research – whether existent or merely conceivable – and supremely confident about its own moral invincibility. If the facts are *morally wrong*, so much worse for the facts – that's the only position that could *possibly* be adopted, even if it's based upon a mixture of wishful thinking, deliberate ignorance, and insultingly childish lies.

To call the belief in substantial human equality a superstition is to insult superstition. It might be unwarranted to believe in leprechauns, but at least the person who holds to such a belief isn't *watching them not exist*, for every waking hour of the day. Human inequality, in contrast, and in all of its abundant multiplicity, is constantly on display, as people exhibit their variations in gender, ethnicity, physical attractiveness, size and shape, strength, health, agility, charm, humor, wit, industriousness, and sociability, among countless other features, traits, abilities, and aspects of their personality, some immediately and conspicuously, some only slowly, over time. To absorb even the slightest fraction of all this and to conclude, in the only way possible, that it is either nothing at all, or a 'social construct' and index of oppression, is sheer Gnostic delirium: a commitment beyond all evidence to the existence of a true and good world veiled by appearances. People are not equal, they do not develop equally, their goals and achievements are not equal, and nothing can make them equal. Substantial equality has no relation to reality, except as its systematic negation. Violence on a genocidal scale is required to even approximate to a practical egalitarian program, and if anything less ambitious is attempted, people get around it (some more competently than others).

To take only the most obvious example, anybody with more than one child knows that *nobody is born equal* (monozygotic twins and clones perhaps excepted). *In fact*, everybody is born different, in innumerable ways. Even when – as is normally the case – the implications of these differences for life outcomes are difficult to confidently predict, their existence is undeniable, or at least: sincerely undeniable. Of course sincerity, or even minimal cognitive coherence, is not remotely the issue here. Jezebel's position, whilst impeccable in its political correctness, is not only factually dubious, but rather laughably absurd, and actually – strictly speaking – insane. It dogmatizes a denial of reality so extreme that nobody could genuinely maintain, or even entertain it, let alone plausibly explain or defend it. It is a tenet of faith that cannot be understood, but only asserted, or submitted to, as madness made law, or

authoritarian religion.

The political commandment of this religion is transparent: Accept progressive social policy as the *only possible* solution to the ~~sin~~ problem of inequality. This commandment is a ‘categorical imperative’ – no possible fact could ever undermine, complicate, or revise it. If progressive social policy actually results in an exacerbation of the problem, ‘fallen’ reality is to blame, since the social malady is *obviously* worse than had been originally envisaged, and only redoubled efforts in the same direction can hope to remedy it. There can be nothing to learn in matters of faith. Eventually, systematic social collapse teaches the lesson that chronic failure and incremental deterioration could not communicate. (That’s macro-scale social Darwinism for dummies, and it’s the way that civilizations end.)

Due to its exceptional correlation with substantial variation in social outcomes in modern societies, by far the most troublesome dimension of human bio-diversity is intelligence or general problem solving ability, quantified as IQ (measuring Spearman’s ‘g’). When ‘statistical common sense’ or profiling is applied to the proponents of Human Bio-Diversity, however, another significant trait is rapidly exposed: a remarkably consistent deficit of *agreeableness*. Indeed, it is widely accepted within the accursed ‘community’ itself that most of those stubborn and awkward enough to educate themselves on the topic of human biological variation are significantly ‘[socially retarded](#)’, with low verbal inhibition, low empathy, and low social integration, resulting in chronic maladaptation to group expectations. The typical EQs of this group can be extracted as the approximate square-root of their IQs. Mild autism is typical, sufficient to approach their fellow beings in a spirit of detached, natural-scientific curiosity, but not so advanced as to compel total cosmic disengagement. These traits, which they themselves consider – on the basis of copious technical information – to be substantially heritable, have manifest social consequences, reducing employment opportunities, incomes, and even reproductive potential. Despite all the free therapeutic advice available in the progressive environment, this obnoxiousness shows no sign of diminishing, and might even be intensifying. As Jezebel shows so clearly, this can only *possibly* be a sign of structural oppression. Why can’t obnoxious people get a break?

The history is damning. ‘Sociables’ have always had it in for the obnoxious, often declining to marry or do business with them, excluding them from group activities and political office, labeling them with slurs, ostracizing and avoiding them. ‘Obnoxiousness’ has been stigmatized and stereotyped in extremely negative terms, to such an extent that many of the obnoxious have sought out more sensitive labels, such as ‘socially-challenged’, or ‘differently socially abled’. Not uncommonly, people have been verbally or even physically assaulted for no other reason than their radical obnoxiousness. Most tragically of all, due to their complete inability to get on with one another, the obnoxious have never been able to politically mobilize against the structural social oppression they face, or to enter into coalitions with their natural allies, such as cynics, debunkers, contrarians, and Tourette Syndrome sufferers. Obnoxiousness has yet to be liberated, although it’s probable that the Internet will ‘help’ ...

Consider John Derbyshire’s essay in infamy [The Talk: Nonblack Version](#), focusing initially on its

relentless obnoxiousness, and attentive to the negative correlation between sociability and objective reason. As Derbyshire notes elsewhere, people are generally incapable of differentiating themselves from group identities, or properly applying statistical generalizations about groups to individual cases, including their own. A rationally indefensible, but socially inevitable, reification of group profiles is psychologically normal – even ‘human’ – with the result that noisy, non-specific, statistical information is erroneously accepted as a contribution to self-understanding, even when specific information is available.

From the perspective of socially autistic, low-EQ, rational analysis, this is simply *mistaken*. If an individual has certain characteristics, the fact of belonging to a group that has similar or dissimilar average characteristics is of no relevance whatsoever. Direct and determinate information about the individual is not to any degree enriched by indirect and indeterminate (probabilistic) information about the groups to which the individual belongs. If an individual’s test results are known, for instance, no additional insight is provided by statistical inferences about the test results that *might have been expected* based on group profiling. An Ashkenazi Jewish moron is no less moronic because he is an Ashkenazi Jew. Elderly Chinese nuns are unlikely to be murderers, but a murderer who happens to be an elderly Chinese nun is neither more nor less murderous than one who is not. This is all extremely obvious, to obnoxious people.

To normal people, however, it is not obvious at all. In part this is because rational intelligence is scarce and abnormal among humans, and in part because social ‘intelligence’ works with what everyone else is thinking, which is to say, with irrational groupish sentiment, meager information, prejudices, stereotypes, and heuristics. Since (almost) everybody else is taking short-cuts, or ‘economizing’ on reason, it is only rational to react defensively to generalizations that are likely to be reified or inappropriately applied – over-riding or substituting for specific perceptions. Anybody who anticipates being pre-defined through a group identity has an expanded ego-investment in that group and the way it is perceived. A generic assessment, however objectively arrived at, will immediately become personal, under (even quite remotely) normal conditions.

Obnoxious reason can stubbornly insist that *anything average cannot be about you*, but the message will not be generally received. Human social ‘intelligence’ is not built that way. Even supposedly sophisticated commentators blunder repeatedly into the most jarring exhibitions of basic statistical incomprehension without the slightest embarrassment, because embarrassment was designed for something else (and for almost exactly the opposite). The failure to understand stereotypes in their scientific, or probabilistic application, is a functional prerequisite of sociability, since the sole alternative to idiocy in this respect is obnoxiousness.

Derbyshire’s article is noteworthy because it succeeds in being *definitively obnoxious*, and has been recognized as such, despite the spluttering incoherence of most rejoinders. Among the things that ‘the talk’ and ‘the counter-talk’ share is a theatrical structure of *pseudo-private conversation designed to be*

*overheard*. In both cases, a message that parents are compelled to deliver to their children is staged as the vehicle for a wider social lesson, aimed at those who, through action or inaction, have created a world that is intolerably hazardous to them.

This form is intrinsically manipulative, making even the ‘original’ talk a tempting target of parody. In the original, however, a tone of anguished sincerity is engineered through a deliberate performance of innocence (or ignorance). Listen son, I know this will be difficult to understand ... (*Oh why, oh why are they doing this to us?*). The counter-talk, in stark contrast, melds its micro-social drama with the clinically non-social discourse of “methodical inquiries in the human sciences” – treating populations as fuzzy bio-geographical units with quantifiable characteristics, rather than as legal-political subjects in communication. It derides innocence, and – by implication – the criterion of sociability itself. Agreement, agreeableness, count for nothing. The rigorously and redundantly compiled statistics say what they say, and if we cannot live with that, so much the worse for us.

Yet even to a reasonably sympathetic, or scrupulously obnoxious, reading, Derbyshire’s article provides grounds for criticism. For instance, and from the beginning, it is notable that the racial reciprocal of “nonblack Americans” is ‘black Americans’, not “American blacks” (the term Derbyshire selects). This reversal of word order, switching nouns and adjectives, quickly settles into a pattern. Does it matter that Derbyshire requests the extension of civility to any “individual black” (rather than to ‘black individuals’)? It certainly makes a difference. To say that someone is ‘black’ is to say something about them, but to say that someone is ‘a black’ is to say who they are. The effect is subtly, yet distinctly, menacing, and Derbyshire is too well-trained, algebraically, to be excused from noticing it. After all, ‘John Derbyshire is a white’ sounds equally off, as does any analogous formulation, submerging the individual in the genus, to be retrieved as a mere instance, or example.

The more intellectually substantive aspect of this over-reach into gratuitous incivility have been examined by [William Saletan](#) and [Noah Millman](#), who make very similar points, from the two sides of the liberal/conservative divide. Both writers identify a fissure or methodical incongruity in Derbyshire’s article, stemming from its commitment to the micro-social application of macro-social statistical generalizations. Stereotypes, however rigorously confirmed, are *essentially* inferior to specific knowledge in any concrete social situation, because nobody ever encounters a population.

As a liberal of [problematic standing](#), Saletan has no choice but to recoil melodramatically from Derbyshire’s “stomach-turning conclusions,” but his reasons for doing so are not consumed by his gastro-emotional crisis. “But what exactly is a statistical truth?” he asks. “It’s a probability estimate you might fall back on if you know nothing about [a particular individual]. It’s an ignorant person’s weak substitute for knowledge.” Derbyshire, with his Aspergery attention to the absence of black Fields Medal winners, is “...a math nerd who substitutes statistical intelligence for social intelligence. He recommends group calculations instead of taking the trouble to learn about the person standing in front of you.”

Millman emphasizes the ironic reversal that switches (obnoxious) social scientific knowledge into imperative ignorance:

The “race realists” like to say that they are the ones who are curious about the world, and the “politically correct” types are the ones who prefer to ignore ugly reality. But the advice Derbyshire gives to his children encourages them not to be too curious about the world around them, for fear of getting hurt. And, as a general rule, that’s terrible advice for kids – and not the advice that Derbyshire has followed in his own life.

Millman’s conclusion is also instructive:

So why am I arguing with Derb at all? Well, because he’s a friend. And because even lazy, socially-irresponsible talk deserves to be refuted, not merely denounced. Is Derbyshire’s piece racist? *Of course it’s racist*. His whole point is that it is both rational and morally right for his children to treat black people significantly differently from white people, and to fear them. But “racist” is a descriptive term, not a moral one. The “race realist” crowd is strongly convinced of the accuracy of Derbyshire’s major premises, and they are not going to be argued out of that conviction by the assertion such conviction is “racist” – nor, honestly, should they be. For that reason, I feel it’s important to argue that Derbyshire’s conclusions do not follow simply from those premises, and are, in fact, morally incorrect even if those premises are granted for the sake of argument.

[Brief intermission ...]

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Original Article:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120514163626/http://thatsmags.com/shanghai/article/2159/the-dark-enlightenment-part-4b>

## Part 4c: The Cracker Factory

May 17, 2012

*In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men — yes, black men as well as white men — would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

*It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked "insufficient funds."*

— [Martin Luther King Jr.](#)

*Conservatism ... is a white people's movement, a scattering of outliers notwithstanding.*

*Always has been, always will be. I have attended at least a hundred conservative gatherings, conferences, cruises, and jamborees: let me tell you, there ain't too many raisins in that bun. I was in and out of the National Review offices for twelve years, and the only black person I saw there, other than when Herman Cain came calling, was Alex, the guy who runs the mail room. (Hey, Alex!)*

*This isn't because conservatism is hostile to blacks and mestizos. Very much the contrary, especially in the case of Conservatism Inc. They fawn over the occasional nonwhite with a puppyish deference that fairly fogs the air with embarrassment. (Q: What do you call the one black guy at a gathering of 1,000 Republicans? A: "Mr. Chairman.")*

*It's just that conservative ideals like self-sufficiency and minimal dependence on government have no appeal to underperforming minorities — groups who, in the statistical generality, are short of the attributes that make for group success in a modern commercial nation.*

*Of what use would it be to them to embrace such ideals? They would end up even more decisively pooled at the bottom of society than they are currently.*

*A much better strategy for them is to ally with as many disaffected white and Asian subgroups as they can (homosexuals, feminists, dead-end labor unions), attain electoral majorities, and institute big redistributionist governments to give them make-work jobs and transfer wealth to them from successful groups.*

*Which is what, very rationally and sensibly, they do.*

— [John Derbyshire](#)

*Neo-secessionists are all around us... and free speech gives them a cozy blanket of protection. Rick Perry insinuating Texas could secede rather than adhere to the federal healthcare law, Todd Palin belonging to a political association advocating Alaskan secession, and Sharron Angle talking about 'second amendment remedies' to handle disputes with federal authorities are all examples of dangerous secessionist rhetoric permeating through modern discourse. The media focuses our attention at Civil*

*War reenactors and pick-up trucks with Confederate flags flying on them. But public figures are influenced as well, by academics who struggle to perpetuate a most dangerous brand of revisionism.*

— [Practically Historical](#)

*African-Americans are the conscience of our country.*

— commenter ‘surfed’ [at](#) Walter Russell Mead’s blog (edited for spelling)

America’s racial ‘original sin’ was foundational, dating back before the birth of the United States to the clearing of aboriginal peoples by European settlers, and – still more saliently – to the institution of chattel slavery. This is the Old Testament history of American black-white relations, set down in a providential narrative of escape from bondage, in which factual documentation and moral exhortation are indissolubly fused. The combination of prolonged and intense social abuse in a pattern set by the Torah, recapitulating the primordial moral-political myth of the Western tradition, has installed the story of slavery and emancipation as the unsurpassable frame of the American historical experience: *let my people go*.

‘Practically Historical’ (cited above), quotes Lincoln on the Civil War:

Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

The New Testament of race in America was written in the 1960s, revising and specifying the template. The combination of the Civil Rights Movement, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, and the Republican Southern Strategy (appealing to disaffected whites in the states of the old Confederacy) forged a partisan identification between Blacks and the Democratic Party that amounted to a liberal-progressive rebirth, setting the terms for partisan racial polarization that have endured – and even strengthened – over subsequent decades. For a progressive movement compromised by a history of systematic eugenicist racism, and a Democratic Party traditionally aligned with white southern obduracy and the Ku Klux Klan, the civil rights era presented an opportunity for atonement, ritual purification, and redemption.

Reciprocally, for American conservatism (and its increasingly directionless Republican Party vehicle), this progression spelt protracted death, for reasons that continue to elude it. The Idea of America was now inextricable from a vehement renunciation of the past, and even of the present, insofar as the past still shaped it. Only an ‘ever more perfect union’ could conform to it. At the most superficial level, the broad partisan implications of the new order were unmistakable in a country that was becoming ever more democratic, and ever less republican, with effective sovereignty nationally concentrated in the executive, and the moral urgency of activist government installed as a principle of faith. For what had already become the ‘Old Right’ there was no way out, or back, because the path backwards crossed the

event horizon of the civil rights movement, into tracts of political impossibility whose ultimate meaning was slavery.

The left thrives on dialectics, the right perishes through them. Insofar as there is a pure logic of politics, it is that. One immediate consequence (repeatedly emphasized by Mencius Moldbug) is that progressivism has no enemies to the left. It recognizes only idealists, whose time has not yet come. Factional conflicts on the left are politically dynamic, celebrated for their motive potential. Conservatism, in contrast, is caught between a rock and a hard place: bludgeoned from the left by the juggernaut of post-constitutional statism, and agitated from 'the right' by inchoate tendencies which are both unassimilable (to the mainstream) and often mutually incompatible, ranging from extreme (Austro-libertarian) varieties of *laissez-faire* capitalist advocacy to strains of obstinate, theologically-grounded social traditionalism, ultra-nationalism, or white identity politics.

'The right' has no unity, actual or prospective, and thus has no definition symmetrical to that of the left. It is for this reason that political dialectics (a tautology) ratchets only in one direction, predictably, towards state expansion and an increasingly coercive substantial-egalitarian ideal. The right moves to the center, and the center moves to the left.

Regardless of mainstream conservative fantasies, liberal-progressive mastery of American providence has become uncontested, dominated by a racial dialectic that absorbs unlimited contradiction, whilst positioning the Afro-American underclass as the incarnate critique of the existing social order, the criterion of emancipation, and the sole path to collective salvation. No alternative structure of historical intelligibility is politically tolerable, or even – strictly speaking – imaginable, since resistance to the narrative is un-American, anti-social, and (of course) racist, serving only to confirm the existence of systematic racial oppression through the symbolic violence manifested in its negation. To argue against it is already to prove it correct, by concretely demonstrating the same benighted forces of social retardation that are being verbally denied. By resisting the demand for orchestrated social re-education, knuckle-dragging 'bitter clingers' only show how much there still is to do.

At its most abstract and all-encompassing, the liberal-progressive racial dialectic abolishes its outside, along with any possibility of principled consistency. It asserts — at one and the same time — that race does not exist, and that its socially-constructed pseudo-existence is an instrument of inter-racial violence. Racial recognition is both mandatory, and forbidden. Racial identities are meticulously catalogued for purposes of social remedy, hate crime detection, and disparate impact studies, targeting groups for 'positive discrimination', 'affirmative action', or 'diversity promotion' (to list these terms in their rough order of historical substitution), even as they are denounced as meaningless (by the United Nations, no less), and dismissed as malicious stereotypes, corresponding to nothing real. Extreme racial sensitivity and absolute racial desensitization are demanded simultaneously. Race is everything and nothing. There is no way out.

Conservatism is dialectically incompetent by definition, and so abjectly clueless that it imagines itself being able to exploit these contradictions, or – in its deluded [formulation](#) – *liberal cognitive dissonance*. The conservatives who triumphantly point out such inconsistencies seem never to have skimmed the output of a contemporary humanities program, in which thick rafts of internally conflicted victimage are lovingly woven out of incompatible grievances, in order to exult in the radical progressive promise of their discordant lamentations. Inconsistency is fuel for the Cathedral, demanding activist argumentation, and ever heightened realizations of unity. *Integrative public debate always moves things to the left* – that might not seem an especially difficult point to grasp, but to understand it is to expose the fundamental futility of mainstream conservatism, and that is in almost nobody’s interest, so it will not be understood.

Conservatism is incapable of working dialectics, or simultaneous contradiction, but that does not prevent it from serving progress (on the contrary). Rather than celebrating the power of inconsistency, it stumbles through contradictions, decompressed, in succession, in the manner of a fossil exhibition, and a foil. After “standing athwart history, yelling ‘Stop!’” during the Civil Rights Era, and thus banishing itself eternally to racial damnation, the conservative (and Republican) mainstream reversed course, seizing upon Martin Luther King Jr. as an integral part of its canon, and seeking to harmonize itself [with](#) “a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.”

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

Captivated by King’s appeal to constitutional and biblical traditionalism, by his rejection of political violence, and by his uninhibited paeans to freedom, American conservatism gradually came to identify with his dream of racial reconciliation and race blindness, and to accept it as the true, providential meaning of its own most sacred documents. At least, this became the mainstream, public, conservative orthodoxy, even though it was consolidated far too late to neutralize suspicions of insincerity, failed almost entirely to convince the black demographic itself, and would remain open to escalating derision from the left for its empty formalism.

So compelling was King's restatement of the American Creed that, retrospectively, its triumph over the political mainstream seems simply inevitable. The further American conservatism departed from the Masonic rationalism of the founders, in the direction of biblical religiosity, the more indistinguishable its faith became from a Black American experience, mythically articulated through Exodus, in which the basic framework of history was an escape from bondage, borne towards a future in which "all of God's children — black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics — will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'"

The genius of King's message lay in its extraordinary power of integration. The flight of the Hebrews from Egypt, the American War of Independence, the abolition of chattel slavery in the wake of the American Civil War, and the aspirations of the civil rights era were mythically compressed into a single archetypal episode, perfectly consonant with the American Creed, and driven forwards not only by irresistible moral force, but even by divine decree. The measure of this integrative genius, however, is the complexity it masters. A century after the "joyous daybreak" of emancipation from slavery, King declares, "the Negro still is not free."

One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land.

The story of *Exodus* is exit, the War of Independence is exit, and the emancipation from slavery is exit, especially when this is exemplified by the Underground Railroad and the model of self-liberation, escape, or flight. To be 'manacled' by segregation, 'chained' by discrimination, trapped on a 'lonely island of poverty', or 'exiled' in one's 'own land', in contrast, has no relation to *exit* whatsoever, beyond that which spell-binding metaphor can achieve. There is no *exit* into social integration and acceptance, equitably distributed prosperity, public participation, or assimilation, but only an aspiration, or a dream, hostage to fact and fortune. As the left and the reactionary right were equally quick to notice, insofar as this dream ventures significantly beyond a right to formal equality and into the realm of substantial political remedy, it is one that the right has no right to.

In the immediate wake of the John Derbyshire affair, Jessica Valenti at *The Nation* blog [makes](#) the point clearly:

... this isn't just about who has written what — it's about the intensely racist policies that are par for the conservative course. Some people would like to believe that racism is just the explicit, said-out-loud discrimination and hatred that is easily identifiable. It's not — it's also pushing xenophobic policies and supporting systemic inequality. After all, what's more impactful — a singular racist like Derbyshire or Arizona's immigration law? A column or voter suppression? Getting rid of one racist

from one publication doesn't change the fact that the conservative agenda is one that disproportionately punishes and discriminates against people of color. So, I'm sorry, folks — you don't get to support structural inequality and then give yourself a pat on the back for not being overtly racist.

The 'conservative agenda' cannot ever be dreamy (hopeful and inconsistent) enough to escape accusations of racism — that's intrinsic to the way the racial dialectic works. Policies broadly compatible with capitalistic development, oriented to the rewarding of low time-preference, and thus punishing impulsivity, will reliably have a disparate impact upon the least economically functional social groups. Of course, the dialectic demands that the racial aspect of this disparate impact can and must be strongly emphasized (for the purpose of condemning incentives to human capital formation as racist), and at the same time forcefully denied (in order to denounce *exactly the same observation* as racist stereotyping). Anyone who expects conservatives to navigate this double-bind with political agility and grace must somehow have missed the late 20th century. For instance, the ~~doomed loser idiots~~ conservatives at the *Washington Examiner*, [noticing](#) with alarm that:

House Democrats received training this week on how to address the issue of race to defend government programs ... The prepared content of a Tuesday presentation to the House Democratic Caucus and staff indicates that Democrats will seek to portray apparently neutral free-market rhetoric as being charged with racial bias, conscious or unconscious.

There are no alternative versions of an ever more perfect union, because union is the alternative to alternatives. Searching for where the alternatives might once have been found, where liberty still meant *exit*, and where dialectics were dissolved in space, leads into a clown-house of horrors, fabricated as the shadow, or significant other, of the Cathedral. Since the right never had a unity of its own, it was given one. Call it the Cracker Factory.

When James C. Bennett, in *The Anglosphere Challenge*, sought to identify the principal cultural characteristics of the English-speaking world, the resulting list was generally familiar. It included, besides the language itself, common law traditions, individualism, comparatively high-levels of economic and technological openness, and distinctively emphatic reservations about centralized political power. Perhaps the most striking feature, however, was a marked cultural tendency to settle disagreements in space, rather than time, opting for territorial schism, separatism, independence, and flight, in place of revolutionary transformation within an integrated territory. When Anglophones disagree, they have often sought to dissociate in space. Instead of an integral resolution (regime change), they pursue a plural irresolution (through regime division), proliferating polities, localizing power, and diversifying systems of government. Even in its present, highly attenuated form, this anti-dialectical, de-synthesizing predisposition to social disaggregation finds expression in a stubborn, sussurous hostility to globalist political projects, and in a vestigial attraction to federalism (in its fissional sense).

Splitting, or fleeing, is all *exit*, and (non-recuperable) anti-dialectics. It is the basic well-spring of liberty within the Anglophone tradition. If the function of a Cracker Factory is to block off all the exits, there's only one place to build it – right here.

Like Hell, or Auschwitz, the Cracker Factory has a simple slogan inscribed upon its gate: *Escape is racist*. That is why the expression 'white flight' – which says exactly the same thing – has never been denounced for its political incorrectness, despite the fact that it draws upon an ethnic statistical generalization of the kind that would, in any other case, provoke paroxysms of outrage. 'White flight' is no more 'white' than low time-preference is, but this broad-brush insensitivity is deemed acceptable, because it structurally supports the Cracker Factory, and the indispensable confusion of ancient (or negative) liberty with original (racial) sin.

You absolutely, definitely, mustn't go [there](#) ... so, of course, we will ... [next]

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Original Article:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120618023630/http://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/article/2210/the-dark-enlightenment-part-4c>

## Part 4d: Odd Marriages

June 15, 2012

The origins of the word ‘cracker’ as a term of ethnic derision are distant and obscure. It seems to have already circulated, as a slur targeting poor southern whites of predominantly Celtic ancestry, in the mid-18th century, derived perhaps from ‘corn-cracker’ or the Scots-Irish ‘crack’ (banter). The rich semantic complexion of the term, inextricable from the identification of elaborate racial, cultural, and class characteristics, is comparable to that of its unmentionable dusky cousin – “the [‘N-‘ word](#)” – and draws from the same well of generally recognized but forbidden truths. In particular, and emphatically, it testifies to the *illicit truism* that people are more excited and animated by their differences than by their commonalities, ‘clinging bitterly’ – or at least tenaciously – to their non-uniformity, and obstinately resisting the universal categories of enlightened population management. Crackers are grit in the clockwork of progress.

The most delectable features of the slur, however, are entirely fortuitous (or Qabbalistic). ‘Crackers’ break codes, safes, organic chemicals – sealed or bonded systems of all kinds – with eventual geopolitical implication. They anticipate a *crack-up*, schism or secession, confirming their association with the anathematized disintegrative undercurrent of Anglophone history. No surprise, then – despite the linguistic jumps and glitching – that the figure of the recalcitrant cracker evokes a still-unpacified South, insubordinate to the manifest destiny of Union. This returns it, by short-circuit, to the most problematic depths of its meaning.

*Contradictions* demand resolution, but *cracks* can continue to widen, deepen, and spread. According to the cracker ethos, when things can fall apart – it’s OK. There’s no need to reach agreement, when it’s possible to split. This *cussedness*, pursued to its limit, tends to a hill-billy stereotype set in a shack or rusting trailer at the end of an Appalachian mountain path, where all economic transactions are conducted in cash (or moonshine), interactions with government agents are conducted across the barrel of a loaded shotgun, and timeless anti-political wisdom is summed in the don’t-tread-on-me reflex: “Get off my porch.” Naturally, this disdain for integrative debate (dialectics) is coded within the mainstream of Anglocentric global history – which is to say, Yankee evangelical Puritanism – as a deficiency not only of cultural sophistication, but also of basic intelligence, and even the most scrupulous adherent of social constructivist righteousness immediately reverts to hard-hereditarian psychometrics when confronted by cracker obstreperousness. To those for whom a broad trend of socio-political progress seems like a simple, incontestable fact, the refusal to recognize anything of the kind is perceived as clear evidence of retardation.

Since stereotypes generally have high statistical truth-value, it’s more than possible that crackers are clustered heavily on the left of the white IQ bell-curve, concentrated there by generations of dysgenic pressure. If, as Charles Murray argues, the efficiency of meritocratic selection within American society

has steadily risen and conspired with assortative mating to transform class differences into genetic castes, it would be passing strange if the cracker stratum were to be characterized by conspicuous cognitive elevation. Yet some awkwardly intriguing questions intervene at this point, as long as one diligently pursues the stereotype. Assortative mating? How can that work, when crackers marry their cousins? Oh yes, there's *that*. Drawing on population groups beyond the north-western [Hajnal Line](#), traditional cracker kinship patterns are notably atypical of the exogamous Anglo (WASP) norm.

The tireless '[hbdchick](#)' is the crucial resource on this topic. Over the course of a truly monumental series of blog [posts](#), she employs [Hamiltonian](#) conceptual tools to investigate the borderland where nature and culture intersect, comprising kinship structures, the differentiations they require in the calculus of inclusive fitness, and the distinctive ethnic profiles in the evolutionary psychology of altruism that result. In particular, she directs attention to the abnormality of (North-West) European history, where obligatory exogamy – through rigorous proscription of cousin marriage – has prevailed for 1,600 years. This distinctive orientation towards outbreeding, she suggests, plausibly accounts for a variety of bio-cultural peculiarities, the most historically significant of which is a unique pre-eminence of reciprocal (over familial) altruism, as indicated by emphatic individualism, nuclear families, an affinity with 'corporate' (kinship-free) institutions, highly-developed contractual relationships among strangers, relatively low levels of nepotism / corruption, and robust forms of social cohesion independent of tribal bonds.

Inbreeding, in contrast, creates a selective environment favoring tribal collectivism, extended systems of family loyalty and honor, distrust of non-relatives and impersonal institutions, and – in general – those 'clannish' traits which mesh uncomfortably with the leading values of (Eurocentric) modernity, and are thus denounced for their primitive 'xenophobia' and 'corruption'. Clannish values, of course, are bred in clans, such as those populating Britain's Celtic fringe and borderlands, where cousin marriage persisted, along with its associated socio-economic and cultural forms, especially herding (rather than farming), and a disposition towards extreme, vendetta-style [violence](#).

This analysis introduces the central paradox of 'white identity', since the specifically European ethnic traits that have structured the moral order of modernity, slanting it away from tribalism and towards reciprocal altruism, are inseparable from a unique heritage of outbreeding that is intrinsically corrosive of ethnocentric solidarity. In other words: it is almost exactly weak ethnic groupishness that makes a group ethnically modernistic, competent at 'corporate' (non-familial) institution building, and thus objectively privileged / advantaged within the dynamic of modernity.

This paradox is most fully expressed in the radical forms of European ethnocentric revivalism exemplified by paleo- and neo-Nazism, confounding its proponents and antagonists alike. When exceptionally advanced 'race-treachery' is your quintessential racial feature, the opportunity for viable ethno-supremacist politics disappears into a logical abyss – even if occasions for large-scale trouble-making no doubt remain. Admittedly, a Nazi, by definition, is willing (and eager) to sacrifice modernity

upon the altar of racial purity, but this is either not to understand, or to tragically affirm, the inevitable consequence – which is to be out-modernized (and thus defeated). Identity politics is for losers, inherently and unalterably, due to an essentially parasitical character that only works from the left. Because inbreeding systematically contra-indicates for modern power, racial *Übermenschen* make no real sense.

In any case, however endlessly fascinating Nazis may be, they are not any kind of reliable key to the history or direction of [cracker culture](#), beyond setting a logical limit to the programmatic construction and usage of white identity politics. Tattooing swastikas on their foreheads does nothing to change that. ([Hatfields vs McCoys](#) is more Pushtun than Teuton.)

The conjunction taking place in the Cracker Factory is quite different, and far more perplexing, entangling the urbane, cosmopolitan advocates of hyper-contractarian marketization with romantic traditionalists, ethno-particularists, and nostalgics of the ‘Lost Cause’. It is first necessary to understand this entanglement in its full, mind-melting weirdness, before exploring its lessons. For that, some semi-random stripped-down data-points might be helpful:

- \* The [Mises Institute](#) was founded in Auburn, Alabama.
- \* Ron Paul newsletters from the 1980s contain [remarks](#) of a decidedly Derbyshirean hue.
- \* Derbyshire [hearts](#) Ron Paul.
- \* Murray Rothbard has [written](#) in defense of HBD.
- \* [lewrockwell.com](#) contributors include [Thomas J. DiLorenzo](#) and [Thomas Woods](#).
- \* Tom Palmer [doesn't](#) heart Lew Rockwell or Hans-Hermann Hoppe because “Together They Have Opened the Gates of Hell and Welcomed the Most Extreme Right-Wing Racists, Nationalists, and Assorted Cranks”
- \* Libertarians / constitutionalists account for 20% of the SPLC ‘Radical Right’ watch [list](#)(Chuck Baldwin, Michael Boldin, Tom DeWeese, Alex Jones, Cliff Kincaid, and Elmer Stewart Rhodes)

... perhaps that’s enough to be going on with (although there’s plenty more within easy reach). These points have been selected, questionably, crudely, and prejudicially, to lend impressionistic support to a single basic thesis: *fundamental socio-historical forces are crackerizing libertarianism*.

If the tentative research conclusions drawn by hbdchick are accepted as a frame, the oddity of this marriage between libertarian and neo-confederate themes is immediately apparent. When positioned on a bio-cultural axis, defined by degrees of outbreeding, the absence of overlap – or even proximity – is dramatically exposed. One pole is occupied by a radically individualistic doctrine, focused near-exclusively upon mutable networks of voluntary interchange of an economic type (and notoriously

insensitive to the very existence of non-negotiable social bonds). Close to the other pole lies a rich culture of local attachment, extended family, honor, contempt for commercial values, and distrust of strangers. The distilled rationality of fluid capitalism is juxtaposed to traditional hierarchy and non-alienable value. The absolute prioritization of *exit* is jumbled amongst folkways from which no exit is even imaginable.

Stapling the two together, however, is a simple, ever more irresistible conclusion: liberty has no future in the Anglophone world outside the prospect of secession. The coming crack-up is the only way out.

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Original Article:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120617172506/http://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/article/2351/the-dark-enlightenment-part-4d>

## Part 4e: Cross-coded history

July 3, 2012

*Democracy is the opposite of freedom, almost inherent to the democratic process is that it tends towards less liberty instead of more, and democracy is not something to be fixed. Democracy is inherently broken, just like socialism. The only way to fix it is to break it up.*

—[Frank Karsten](#)

*Historian (mainly of science) Doug Fosnow called for the USA's "red" counties to secede from the "blue" ones, forming a new federation. This was greeted with much skepticism by the audience, who noted that the "red" federation would get practically no seacoast. Did Doug really think such a secession was likely to happen? No, he admitted cheerfully, but anything would be better than the race war he does think is likely to happen, and it is intellectuals' duty to come up with less horrific possibilities.*

— [John Derbyshire](#)

*Thus, rather than by means of a top-down reform, under the current conditions, one's strategy must be one of a bottom-up revolution. At first, the realization of this insight would seem to make the task of a liberal-libertarian social revolution impossible, for does this not imply that one would have to persuade a majority of the public to vote for the abolition of democracy and an end to all taxes and legislation? And is this not sheer fantasy, given that the masses are always dull and indolent, and even more so given that democracy, as explained above, promotes moral and intellectual degeneration? How in the world can anyone expect that a majority of an increasingly degenerate people accustomed to the "right" to vote should ever voluntarily renounce the opportunity of looting other people's property? Put this way, one must admit that the prospect of a social revolution must indeed be regarded as virtually nil. Rather, it is only on second thought, upon regarding secession as an integral part of any bottom-up strategy, that the task of a liberal-libertarian revolution appears less than impossible, even if it still remains a daunting one.*

— [Hans-Hermann Hoppe](#)

Conceived generically, modernity is a social condition defined by an integral trend, summarized as sustained economic growth rates that exceed population increases, and thus mark an escape from normal history, caged within the Malthusian trap. When, in the interest of dispassionate appraisal, analysis is restricted to the terms of this basic quantitative pattern, it supports sub-division into the (growth) positive and negative components of the trend: techno-industrial (scientific and commercial) contributions to accelerating development on the one hand, and socio-political counter-tendencies towards the capture of economic product by democratically empowered rent-seeking special interests on the other ([demosclerosis](#)). What classical liberalism gives (industrial revolution) mature liberalism takes away (via the cancerous entitlement state). In abstract geometry, it describes an S-curve of self-limiting runaway. As a drama of liberation, it is a broken promise.

Conceived particularly, as a singularity, or real *thing*, modernity has ethno-geographical characteristics that complicate and qualify its mathematical purity. It came from somewhere, imposed itself more widely, and brought the world's various peoples into an extraordinary range of novel relations. These relations were characteristically 'modern' if they involved an overflowing of previous Malthusian limits, enabling capital accumulation, and initiating new demographic trends, but they conjoined concrete groups rather than abstract economic functions. At least in appearance, therefore, modernity was something done by people of a certain kind with, and not uncommonly to (or even against), other people, who were conspicuously unlike them. By the time it was faltering on the fading slope of the S-curve, in the early 20th century, resistance to its generic features ('capitalistic alienation') had become almost entirely indistinguishable from opposition to its particularity ('European imperialism' and 'white supremacy'). As an inevitable consequence, the modernistic self-consciousness of the system's ethno-geographical core slid [towards racial panic](#), in a process that was only arrested by the rise and immolation of the Third Reich.

Given modernity's inherent trend to degeneration or self-cancellation, three broad prospects open. These are not strictly exclusive, and are therefore not true alternatives, but for schematic purposes it is helpful to present them as such.

(1) Modernity 2.0. Global modernization is re-invigorated from a new ethno-geographical core, liberated from the degenerate structures of its Eurocentric predecessor, but no doubt confronting long range trends of an equally mortuary character. This is by far the most encouraging and plausible scenario (from a pro-modernist perspective), and if China remains even approximately on its current track it will be assuredly realized. (India, sadly, seems to be too far gone in its native version of demoscclerosis to seriously compete.)

(2) Postmodernity. Amounting essentially to a new dark age, in which Malthusian limits brutally re-impose themselves, this scenario assumes that Modernity 1.0 has so radically globalized its own morbidity that the entire future of the world collapses around it. If the Cathedral 'wins' this is what we have coming.

(3) Western Renaissance. To be reborn it is first necessary to die, so the harder the 'hard reboot' the better. Comprehensive crisis and disintegration offers the best odds (most realistically as a sub-theme of option #1).

Because competition is good, a pinch of Western Renaissance would spice things up, even if – as is overwhelmingly probable – Modernity 2.0 is the world's principal highway to the future. That depends upon the West stopping and reversing pretty much everything it has been doing for over a century, excepting only scientific, technological, and business innovation. It is advisable to maintain rhetorical discipline within a strictly hypothetical mode, because the possibility of any of these things is deeply colored by incredibility:

- (1) Replacement of representational democracy by constitutional republicanism (or still more [extreme](#) anti-political governmental mechanisms).
- (2) Massive downsizing of government and its rigorous confinement to core functions ([at most](#)).
- (3) Restoration of hard money (precious metal coins and bullion deposit notes) and abolition of central banking.
- (4) Dismantling of state monetary and fiscal discretion, thus abolishing practical macroeconomics and liberating the autonomous (or ‘catallactic’) economy. (This point is redundant, since it follows rigorously from 2 & 3 above, but it’s the real prize, so worth emphasizing.)

There’s more – which is to say, less politics – but it’s already absolutely clear that none of this is going to happen short of an existential civilizational cataclysm. Asking politicians to limit their own powers is a non-starter, but nothing less heads even remotely in the right direction. This, however, isn’t even the widest or deepest problem.

Democracy might begin as a defensible procedural mechanism for limiting government power, but it quickly and inexorably develops into something quite different: a culture of systematic thievery. As soon as politicians have learnt to buy political support from the ‘public purse’, and conditioned electorates to embrace looting and bribery, the democratic process reduces itself to the formation of (Mancur Olson’s) ‘distributional coalitions’ – electoral majorities mortared together by common interest in a collectively advantageous pattern of theft. Worse still, since people are, on average, not very bright, the scale of depredation available to the political establishment far exceeds even the demented sacking that is open to public scrutiny. Looting the future, through currency debauchment, debt accumulation, growth destruction, and techno-industrial retardation is especially easy to conceal, and thus reliably popular. Democracy is essentially tragic because it provides the populace with a weapon to destroy itself, one that is always eagerly seized, and used. Nobody ever says ‘no’ to free stuff. Scarcely anybody even sees that there is no free stuff. Utter cultural ruination is the necessary conclusion.

Within the final phase of Modernity 1.0, American history becomes the master narrative of the world. It is there that the great Abrahamic cultural conveyor culminates in the secularized neo-puritanism of the Cathedral, as it establishes the New Jerusalem in Washington DC. The apparatus of Messianic-revolutionary purpose is consolidated in the evangelical state, which is authorized by any means necessary to install a new world order of universal fraternity, in the name of equality, human rights, social justice, and – above all – *democracy*. The absolute moral confidence of the Cathedral underwrites the enthusiastic pursuit of unrestrained centralized power, optimally unlimited in its intensive penetration and its extensive scope.

With an irony altogether hidden from the witch-burners’ spawn themselves, the ascent of this squinting cohort of grim moral fanatics to previously unscaled heights of global power coincides with the descent

of mass-democracy to previously unimagined depths of gluttonous corruption. Every five years America steals itself from itself again, and fences itself back in exchange for political support. *This democracy thing is easy – you just vote for the guy who promises you the most stuff. An idiot could do it.* Actually, it likes idiots, treats them with apparent kindness, and does everything it can to manufacture more of them.

Democracy's relentless trend to degeneration presents an implicit case for reaction. Since every major threshold of socio-political 'progress' has ratcheted Western civilization towards comprehensive ruin, a retracing of its steps suggests a reversion from the society of pillage to an older order of self-reliance, honest industry and exchange, pre-propagandistic learning, and civic self-organization. The attractions of this reactionary vision are evidenced by the vogue for 18th century attire, symbols, and constitutional documents among the substantial (Tea Party) minority who clearly see the disastrous course of American political history.

Has the 'race' alarm sounded in your head yet? It would be amazing if it hadn't. Stagger back in imagination before 2008, and the fraught whisper of conscience is already questioning your prejudices against Kenyan revolutionaries and black Marxist professors. Remain in reverse until the Great Society / Civil Rights era and the warnings reach hysterical pitch. It's perfectly obvious by this point that American political history has progressed along twin, interlocking tracks, corresponding to the *capacity* and the *legitimation* of the state. To cast doubt upon its scale and scope is to simultaneously dispute the sanctity of its purpose, and the moral-spiritual necessity that it command whatever resources, and impose whatever legal restraints, may be required to effectively fulfill it. More specifically, to recoil from the magnitude of Leviathan is to demonstrate insensitivity to the immensity – indeed, near infinity – of inherited racial guilt, and the sole surviving categorical imperative of senescent modernity – government needs to *do more*. The possibility, indeed near certainty, that the pathological consequences of chronic government activism have long ago supplanted the problems they originally targeted, is a contention so utterly maladapted to the epoch of democratic religion that its practical insignificance is assured.

Even on the left, it would be extraordinary to find many who genuinely believe, after sustained reflection, that the primary driver of government expansion and centralization has been the burning desire *to do good* (not that intentions matter). Yet, as the twin tracks cross, such is the electric jolt of moral drama, leaping the gap from racial Golgotha to intrusive Leviathan, that skepticism is suspended, and the great progressive myth installed. *The alternative to more government, doing ever more, was to stand there, negligently, whilst they lynched another Negro.* This proposition contains the entire essential content of American progressive education.

The twin historical tracks of state capability and purpose can be conceived as a translation protocol, enabling any recommended restraint upon government power to be 'decoded' as malign obstruction of racial justice. This system of substitutions functions so smoothly that it provides an entire vocabulary of (bipartisan) 'code-words' or 'dog-whistles' – 'welfare', 'freedom of association', 'states rights' – ensuring

that any intelligible utterance on the Principal (left-right) Political Dimension occupies a double registry, semi-saturated by racial evocations. Reactionary regression smells of strange fruit.

... and that is before backing out of the calamitous 20th century. It was not the Civil Rights Era, but the 'American Civil War' (in the terms of the victors) or 'War between the States' (in those of the vanquished) that first indissolubly cross-coded the practical question of Leviathan with (black/white) racial dialectics, laying down the central junction yard of subsequent political antagonism and rhetoric. The indispensable primary step in comprehending this fatality snakes along an awkward diagonal between mainstream statist and revisionist accounts, because the conflagration that consumed the American nation in the early 1860s was wholly but non-exclusively about emancipation from slavery and about [states rights](#), with neither 'cause' reducible to the other, or sufficient to suppress the war's enduring ambiguities. Whilst there are any number of 'liberals' happy to celebrate the consolidation of centralized government power in the triumphant Union, and, symmetrically, a (far smaller) number of neo-confederate apologists for the institution of chattel slavery in the southern states, neither of these unconflicted stances capture the dynamic cultural legacy of a *war across the codes*.

The war is a knot. By practically dissociating liberty into *emancipation* and *independence*, then hurling each against the other in a half-decade of carnage, blue against gray, it was settled that freedom would be broken on the battlefield, whatever the outcome of the conflict. Union victory determined that the emancipatory sense of liberty would prevail, not only in America, but throughout the world, and the eventual reign of the Cathedral was assured. Nevertheless, the crushing of American's second war of secession made a mockery of the first. If the institution of slavery de-legitimated a war of independence, what survived of 1776? The moral coherence of the Union cause required that the founders were reconceived as politically illegitimate white patriarchal slave-owners, and American history combusted in progressive education and the culture wars.

If independence is the ideology of slave-holders, emancipation requires the programmatic destruction of independence. Within a cross-coded history, the realization of freedom is indistinguishable from its abolition.

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## Part 4f: Approaching the Bionic Horizon

July 20, 2012

It's time to bring this long digression to a conclusion, by reaching out impatiently towards the end. The basic theme has been mind control, or thought-suppression, as demonstrated by the Media-Academic complex that dominates contemporary Western societies, and which Mencius Moldbug names the Cathedral. When things are squashed they rarely disappear. Instead, they are displaced, fleeing into sheltering shadows, and sometimes turning into monsters. Today, as the suppressive orthodoxy of the Cathedral comes unstrung, in various ways, and numerous senses, a time of monsters is approaching.

The central dogma of the Cathedral [has been](#) formalized as the Standard Social Scientific Model (SSSM) or 'blank slate theory'. It is the belief, completed in its essentials by the anthropology of [Franz Boas](#), that every legitimate question about mankind is restricted to the sphere of culture. Nature permits *that* 'man' is, but never determines *what* man is. Questions directed towards natural characteristics and variations between humans are themselves properly understood as cultural peculiarities, or even pathologies. Failures of 'nurture' are the only thing we are allowed to see.

Because the Cathedral has a consistent ideological orientation, and sifts its enemies accordingly, comparatively detached scientific appraisal of the SSSM easily veers into raw antagonism. As Simon Blackburn [remarks](#) (in a thoughtful review of Steven Pinker's *The Blank Slate*), "The dichotomy between nature and nurture rapidly acquires political and emotional implications. To put it crudely, the right likes genes and the left likes culture ..."

At the limit of reciprocal loathing, hereditarian determinism confronts social constructivism, with each committed to a radically pared-back model of causality. *Either* nature expresses itself as culture, *or* culture expresses itself in its images ('constructions') of nature. Both of these positions are trapped at opposite sides of an incomplete circuit, structurally blinded to *the culture of practical naturalism*, which is to say: the techno-scientific / industrial manipulation of the world.

Acquiring knowledge and using tools is a single dynamic circuit, producing techno-science as an integral system, without real divisibility into theoretical and practical aspects. Science develops in loops, through experimental *technique* and the production of ever more sophisticated instrumentation, whilst embedded within a broader industrial process. Its advance is the improvement of a machine. This intrinsically technological character of (modern) science demonstrates the *efficiency* of culture as a complex natural force. It neither expresses a pre-existing natural circumstance, nor does it merely construct social representations. Instead, nature and culture compose a dynamic circuit, at the edge of nature, where fate is decided.

According to the self-reinforcing presupposition of modernization, to be understood is to be modifiable. It is to be expected, therefore, that biology and medicine co-evolve. The same historical dynamic that

comprehensively subverts the SSSM through inundating waves of scientific discovery simultaneously volatilizes human biological identity through biotechnology. There is no essential difference between learning what we *really are* and re-defining ourselves as technological contingencies, or *technoplastic* beings, susceptible to precise, scientifically-informed transformations. ‘Humanity’ becomes intelligible as it is subsumed into the technosphere, where information processing of the genome – for instance – brings reading and editing into perfect coincidence.

To describe this circuit, as it consumes the human species, is to define our *bionic horizon*: the threshold of conclusive nature-culture fusion at which a population becomes indistinguishable from its technology. This is neither hereditarian determinism, nor social constructivism, but it is what both would have referred to, had they indicated anything real. It is a syndrome vividly anticipated by Octavia Butler, whose [Xenogenesis](#) trilogy is devoted to the examination of a population beyond the bionic horizon. Her Oankali ‘gene traders’ have no identity separable from the biotechnological program that they perpetually implement upon themselves, as they commercially acquire, industrially produce, and sexually reproduce their population within a single, integral process. Between what the Oankali are, and the way they live, or behave, there is no firm difference. Because they make themselves, their nature is their culture and (of course) reciprocally. What they *are* is exactly what they *do*.

Religious traditionalists of the Western Orthosphere are right to identify the looming bionic horizon with a (negative) theological event. Techno-scientific auto-production specifically supplants the fixed and sacralized essence of man as a created being, amidst the greatest upheaval in the natural order since the emergence of eukaryotic life, half a billion years ago. It is not merely an evolutionary event, but the threshold of a new *evolutionary phase*. John H. Campbell heralds the emergence of *Homo autocatalyticus*, whilst [arguing](#): “In point of fact, it is hard to imagine how a system of inheritance could be more ideal for engineering than ours is.”

John H. Campbell? – a prophet of monstrosity, and the perfect excuse for a monster quote:

Biologists suspect that new forms evolve rapidly from very tiny outgroups of individuals (perhaps even a single fertilized female, Mayr, 1942) at the fringe of an existing species. There the stress of an all but uninhabitable environment, forced inbreeding among isolated family members, “introgression” of foreign genes from neighboring species, lack of other members of the species to compete against or whatever, promotes a major reorganization of the genomic program, possibly from modest change in gene structure. Nearly all of these transmogrified fragments of species die out, but an occasional one is fortunate enough to fit a new viable niche. It prospers and expands into a new species. Its conversion into a statistically constrained gene pool then stabilizes the species from further evolutionary change. Established species are far more notable for their stasis than change. Even throwing off a new daughter species does not seem to change an existing species. No one denies that species can gradually transform and do so to various extents, but this so-called “anagenesis” is relatively unimportant compared to geologically-sudden major saltation in the

generation of novelty.

Three implications are important.

1. Most evolutionary change is associated with the origin of new species.
2. Several modes of evolution may operate simultaneously. In this case the most effective dominates the process.
3. Tiny minorities of individuals do most of the evolving instead of the species as a whole.

A second important characteristic of evolution is self-reference (Campbell, 1982). The Cartesian cartoon of an autonomous external “environment” dictating the form of a species like a cookie cutter cutting stencils from sheets of dough is dead, dead wrong. The species molds its environment as profoundly as the environment “evolves” the species. In particular, the organisms cause the limiting conditions of the environment over which they compete. Therefore the genes play two roles in evolution. They are the targets of natural selection and they also ultimately induce and determine the selection pressures that act upon them. This circular causality overwhelms the mechanical character of evolution. Evolution is dominated by feedback of the evolved activities of organisms on their evolution.

The third seminal realization is that evolution extends past the change in organisms as products of evolution to change in the process itself. Evolution evolves (Jantsch, 1976; Balsh, 1989; Dawkins, 1989; Campbell, 1993). Evolutionists know this fact but have never accorded the fact the importance that it deserves because it is incommensurate with Darwinism. Darwinists, and especially modern neodarwinists, equate evolution to the operation of a simple logical principle, one that is prior to biology: Evolution is merely the Darwinian principle of natural selection in action, and this is what the science of evolution is about. Since principles cannot change with time or circumstances, evolution must be fundamentally static.

Of course, biological evolution is not like this at all. It is an actual complex process, not a principle. The way that it takes place can, and indisputably does, change with time. This is of utmost importance because the process of evolution advances as it proceeds (Campbell, 1986). Preliving matter in the earth’s primordial soup was able to evolve only by subdarwinian “chemical” mechanisms. Once these puny processes created gene molecules with information for their self-replication then evolution was able to engage natural selection. Evolution then wrapped the self-replicating genomes within self-replicating organisms to control the way that life would respond to the winds of selection from the environment. Later, by creating multicellular organisms, evolution gained access to morphological change as an alternative to slower and less versatile biochemical

evolution. Changes in the instructions in developmental programs replaced changes in enzyme catalysts. Nervous systems opened the way for still faster and more potent behavioral, social and cultural evolution. Finally, these higher modes produced the prerequisite organization for rational, purposeful evolution, guided and propelled by goal-directed minds. Each of these steps represented a new emergent level of evolutionary capability.

Thus, there are two distinct, but interwoven, evolutionary processes. I call them “adaptive evolution” and “generative evolution.” The former is familiar Darwinian modification of organisms to enhance their survival and reproductive success. Generative evolution is entirely different. It is the change in a process instead of structure. Moreover, that process is ontological. Evolution literally means “to unfold” and what is unfolding is the capacity to evolve. Higher animals have become increasingly adept at evolving. In contrast, they are not the least bit fitter than their ancestors or the lowest form of microbe. Every species today has had exactly the same track record of survival; on average, every higher organism alive today still will leave only two offspring, as was the case a hundred million years ago, and modern species are as likely to go extinct as were those in the past. Species cannot become fitter and fitter because reproductive success is not a cumulative parameter.

For racial nationalists, concerned that their grandchildren should look like them, Campbell is the abyss. Miscegenation doesn't get close to the issue. *Think face tentacles.*

Campbell is also a secessionist, although entirely undistracted by the concerns of identity politics (racial purity) or traditional cognitive elitism (eugenics). Approaching the bionic horizon, secessionism takes on an altogether wilder and more monstrous bearing – towards *speciation*. The folks at euvolution [capture](#) the scenario well:

Reasoning that the majority of humankind will not voluntarily accept qualitative population-management policies, Campbell points out that any attempt to raise the IQ of the whole human race would be tediously slow. He further points out that the general thrust of early eugenics was not so much species improvement as the prevention of decline. Campbell's eugenics, therefore, advocates the abandonment of *Homo sapiens* as a 'relic' or 'living fossil' and the application of genetic technologies to intrude upon the genome, probably writing novel genes from scratch using a DNA synthesizer. Such eugenics would be practiced by elite groups, whose achievements would so quickly and radically outdistance the usual tempo of evolution that within ten generation the new groups will have advanced beyond our current form to the same degree that we transcend apes.

When seen from the bionic horizon, whatever emerges from the dialectics of racial terror remains trapped in trivialities. It's time to move on.

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# An open letter to open-minded progressives

April 17, 2008 - July 17, 2008

<http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/04/open-letter-to-open-minded-progressives.html>

by Mencius Moldbug

*Reactionary Enlightenment*

## Part 1

April 17, 2008

Are you an open-minded progressive? Maybe not, but you probably have friends who are. This essay is for them. Perhaps it can serve as a sort of introduction to this strange blog, UR.

If you are an open-minded progressive, you are probably not a Catholic. (If you are, you probably don't take the Pope too seriously.) Imagine writing an open letter to Catholics, suggesting ways for them to free their minds from the insidious grip of Rome. That sort of thing is quite out of style these days - and in any case, how would you start? But here at UR, we are never afraid of being out of style. And as for starting, we already have.

Is being a progressive like being a Catholic? Why shouldn't it be? Each is a way of understanding the world through a set of beliefs. These beliefs may be true, they may be false, they may be [nonsense](#) which does not even make enough sense to be false. As an open-minded progressive (or an open-minded Catholic), you would like to think all the beliefs you hold are true, but you are willing to reevaluate them - perhaps with a little gentle assistance.

There is one big difference between Catholicism and progressivism: Catholicism is what we call a "religion." Its core beliefs are claims about the spirit world, which no Catholic (except of course the Pope) has experienced firsthand. Whereas progressive beliefs tend to be claims about the real world - about government and history and economics and society. These are phenomena which, unlike the Holy Trinity, we all experience firsthand.

Or do we? Most of us have never worked for a government, and those who have have seen only some tiny corner of one. History is something out of a book. It isn't the Bible, but it might as well be. What is our personal experience of economics? Gasoline prices? And so on. Unless your life has been both long and quite unusual, I suspect your memories shed very little light on the great questions of government, history, etc. Mine certainly don't.

Of course, much of progressive thought claims to be a product of pure reason. Is it? Thomas Aquinas derived Catholicism from pure reason. John Rawls derived progressivism from pure reason. At least one of them must have made a mistake. Maybe they both did. Have you checked their work? One bad variable will bust your whole proof.

And is this really how it happened? Are you a progressive because you started by believing in nothing at all ("We are [nihilists](#)! We believe in nothing!"), thought it through, and wound up a progressive? Of course I can't speak for your own experience, but I suspect that either you are a progressive because your parents were progressives, or you were converted by some book, teacher, or other intellectual experience. Note that this is exactly how one becomes a Catholic.

There is one difference, though. To be a Catholic, you have to have *faith*, because no one has ever seen the Holy Ghost. To be a progressive, you have to have *trust*, because you believe that your worldview accurately reflects the real world - as experienced not just by your own small eyes, but by humanity as a whole.

But you have not shared humanity's experience. You have only read, heard and seen a corpus of text, audio and video compiled from it. And compiled by whom? Which is where the trust comes in. More on this in a little bit.

I am not a progressive, but I was raised as one. I live in San Francisco, I grew up as a Foreign Service brat, I went to Brown, I've been brushing my teeth with Tom's of Maine since the mid-80s. What happened to me is that I lost my trust.

David Mamet lost his trust, too. His [Village Voice essay](#) is worth reading, if just for the shock value of the world's most famous playwright declaring that he's no longer a "brain-dead liberal." There are about five hundred comments on the article. Perhaps I missed one, but I didn't notice any in which the commenter claimed that Mamet had opened his eyes.

Of course, Mamet is Mamet. He's out to shock, not convert. Even the word "liberal," at least as it refers to a present-day political persuasion, borders on hate speech. It's like an ex-Catholic explaining "why I am no longer a brain-dead Papist." John Stuart Mill was a liberal. Barack Obama is a progressive, and so are you. Basic rule of politeness: don't call people names they don't call themselves.

Worse, Mamet doesn't just reject progressivism. He endorses conservatism. Dear God! Talk about making your problem harder. Imagine you live in a country in which everyone is one of two things: a Catholic or a Hindu. Isn't it hard enough to free a man's mind from the insidious grip of Rome? Must he accept Kali, Krishna and Ganesha at the same time?

For example, Mamet endorses the conservative writer [Thomas Sowell](#), who he claims is "our greatest contemporary philosopher." Well. I like Thomas Sowell, his work is certainly not without value, but really. And if you Google him, you will see that his columns frequently appear on a conservative website called [townhall.com](#).

Click that link. Observe the *atrocious* graphic design. (Have you noticed how far above the rest Obama's graphic design is? Some font designers [have](#).) Observe the general horribleness, so reminiscent of Fox News. Then hit "back." Or, I don't know, read an Ann Coulter column, or something. Dear Lord.

I am not a progressive, but I'm not a conservative either. (If you must know, I'm a [Jacobite](#).) Over time, I have acquired the ability to process American conservative thought - if generally somewhat upmarket from Fox News or townhall.com. This is an extremely acquired taste, if "taste" is even the word. It is probably very similar to the way Barack Obama handled the Rev. Wright's more colorful sermons. When

David Mamet points his readers in the general direction of townhall.com, it's sort of like explaining to your uncle who's a little bit phobic that he can understand the value of gay rights by watching this great movie - it's called "120 Days of Sodom." It's not actual communication. It's a fuck-you. It's Mamet.

But many people will think exactly this: if you stop being a progressive, you have to become a conservative. I suspect that the primary emotional motivation for most progressives is that they're progressives because they think something needs to be done about conservatives. Game over. Gutterball. Right back to the insidious grip.

Where does this idea that, if NPR is wrong, Fox News must be right, come from? They can't both be right, because they contradict each other. But couldn't they both be wrong? I don't mean slightly wrong, I don't mean each is half right and each is half wrong, I don't mean the truth is somewhere between them, I mean *neither* of them *has any consistent relationship to reality*.

Let's think about this for a second. As a progressive, you believe - you must believe - that conservatism is a mass delusion. What an extraordinary thing! A hundred-plus million people, many quite dull but some remarkably intelligent, all acting under a kind of mass hypnosis. We take this for granted. We are used to it. But we have to admit that it's really, really weird.

What you have to believe is that conservatives have been *systematically misinformed*. They are not stupid - at least not all of them. Nor are they evil. You can spend all the time you want on townhall.com, and you will not find anyone cackling like Gollum over their evil plan to enslave and destroy the world. They all think, just like you, that by being conservatives they are standing up for what's sweet and good and true.

Conservatism is a theory of government held by a large number of people who have no personal experience of government. They hold this theory because their chosen information sources, such as Fox News, townhall.com, and their local megachurch, feed them a steady diet of facts (and possibly a few non-facts) which tend to support, reinforce, and confirm the theory.

And why does this strange pattern exist? Because conservatism is not just an ordinary opinion. Suppose instead of a theory of government, conservatism was a theory of basketball. "Conservatism" would be a system of views about the pick-and-roll, the outside game, the triangle defense and other issues of great importance to basketball players and coaches.

The obvious difference is that, unless you are a basketball coach, your opinions on basketball matter not at all - because basketball is not a democracy. The players don't even get a vote, let alone the fans. But conservatism can maintain a systematic pattern of delusion, because its fans are not just fans: they are supporters of a political machine. This machine will disappear if it cannot keep its believers, so it has an incentive to keep them. And it does. Funny how that works.

So, as a progressive, here is how you see American democracy: as a contest in which truth and reason are

pitted against a quasicriminal political machine built on propaganda, ignorance and misinformation. Perhaps a cynical view of the world, but if you believe that progressivism is right, you must believe that conservatism is wrong, and you have no other option.

But there is an even more pessimistic view. Suppose American democracy is not a contest between truth and reason and a quasicriminal political machine, but a contest between *two* quasicriminal political machines? Suppose progressivism is just like conservatism? If it was, who would tell you?

Think of conservatism as a sort of mental disease. Virus X, transmitted by Fox News much as mosquitoes transmit malaria, has infected the brains of half the American population - causing them to believe that George W. Bush is a "regular guy," global warming isn't happening, and the US Army can bring democracy to Sadr City. Fortunately, the other half of America is protected by its progressive antibodies, which it imbibes every day in the healthy mother's milk of the Times and NPR, allowing to bask securely in the sweet light of truth.

Or is it? Note that we've just postulated two classes of entity: viruses and antibodies, mosquitoes and mother's milk. [William of Ockham](#) wouldn't be happy. Isn't it simpler to imagine that we're dealing with a virus Y? Rather than one set of people being infected and the other being immune, everyone is infected - just with different strains.

What makes virus X a virus is that, like the shark in Jaws, its only goals in life are to eat, swim around, and make baby viruses. In other words, its features are best explained adaptively. If it can succeed by accurately representing reality, it will do so. For example, you and I and virus X agree on the subject of the international Jewish conspiracy: there is no such thing. We disagree with the evil virus N, which fortunately is scarce these days. This can be explained in many ways, but one of the simplest is that if Fox News stuck a swastika in its logo and told Bill O'Reilly to start raving about the Elders of Zion, its ratings would probably go down.

This is what I mean by "no consistent relationship to reality." If, for whatever reason, an error is better at replicating within the conservative mind than the truth, conservatives will come to believe the error. If the truth is more adaptive, they will come to believe the truth. It's fairly easy to see how an error could make a better story than the truth on Fox News, which is why one would be ill-advised to get one's truth from that source.

So our first small step toward doubt is easy: we simply allow ourselves to suspect that the institutions which progressives trust are fallible in the same way. If NPR can replicate errors just as Fox News does, we are indeed looking at a virus Y. Virus Y may be right when virus X is wrong, wrong when virus X is right, right when virus X is wrong, or wrong when virus X is wrong. Since the two have no consistent relationship to reality, they have no consistent relationship to each other.

There's a seductive symmetry to this theory: it solves the problem of how one half of a society, which (by

global and historical standards) doesn't seem *that* different from the other, can be systematically deluded while the other half is quite sane. The answer: it isn't.

Moreover, it explains a bizarre contradiction which emerges beautifully in Mamet's piece. At one point he writes, in his new conservative persona:

What about the role of government? Well, in the abstract, coming from my time and background, I thought it was a rather good thing, but tallying up the ledger in those things which affect me and in those things I observe, I am hard-pressed to see an instance where the intervention of the government led to much beyond sorrow.

But earlier, he told us:

As a child of the '60s, I accepted as an article of faith that government is corrupt, that business is exploitative, and that people are generally good at heart.

Okay, Dave. As a child of the '60s, you accepted as an article of faith that government is bad, but now you believe that... government is bad? Who's doin' donuts on the road to Damascus?

One of the fascinating facts of American politics today is that *both* progressives and conservatives hate their government. They just hate different parts of it, and they love and cherish the others. In foreign policy, for example, progressives hate the Pentagon, and love and cherish the State Department. Conservatives hate the State Department, and love and cherish the Pentagon.

Look at how nicely this fits in with our virus X-Y theory. Washington contains many mansions, some of which are part of the virus X machine, others of which are perma-infected with virus Y. Outside the Beltway is our herd of drooling, virus-ridden zombie voters. The X zombies hate the Y agencies, the Y zombies hate the X agencies.

But *none* of them hates Washington as a whole. So they can never unite to destroy it, and the whole machine is stable. See how beautiful this is? By separating voters into two competing but cooperating parties, neither of which can destroy the other, the two-party system creates a government which will survive indefinitely, no matter how much happier its citizens might be without it.

This is the prize at the end of our mystery. If you can find a way to stop being a progressive without becoming a conservative, you might even find a way to *actually oppose the government*. At the very least, you can decide that none of these politicians, movements or institutions is *even remotely* worthy of your support. Trust me - it's a very liberating feeling.

But we are nowhere near there yet. We have not actually found a genuine reason to doubt progressivism. Minor errors - some little fact-checking mistake at the Times or whatever - don't count, because they don't do anything about your conviction that progressivism is basically right and conservatism is

basically wrong. Even with a few small eccentricities, progressivism as a cure for conservatism is worth keeping. It may not be an antibody, but perhaps virus Y is at least a vaccine.

Moreover, we've overlooked some major asymmetries between the progressive and conservative movements. They are not each others' evil twins. They are very different things. It is quite plausible that one would be credible and the other wouldn't, and the advantages all seem to be on the progressive side.

First of all, let's look at the *people* who are progressives. As the expressions "blue-state" and "red-state" indicate, progressives and conservatives in America today are different tribes. They are not randomly distributed opinions. They follow clear patterns.

My wife and I had a daughter a few weeks ago, and right before she was due to be discharged the doctors found a minor (and probably harmless) heart problem which required a brief visit from UCSF's head of pediatric cardiology. A very pleasant person. And one of the first things he said, part of his bedside manner, a way of putting us at ease, was a remark about George W. Bush. Somehow I suspect that if he had diagnosed us as hicks from Stockton, he would not have emitted this noise.

Rather, the good doctor had identified us as members of the [Stuff White People Like](#) tribe. This little satirical site has attracted roughly 100 times UR's traffic in a tenth the time, which is a pretty sure sign that it's on to something. The author, Chris Lander, only really has one joke: he's describing a group that doesn't like to be described, and he's assigned them the last name they'd choose for themselves.

Lander's "white people" are indeed overwhelmingly white, as anyone who has been to Burning Man can testify. But there are plenty of "white people" who are Asian, or even black or Latino. In fact, as [Lander points out](#), "white people" are the opposite of racist - they are desperate to have minorities around. Thus the humor of calling them "white." In fact, as anyone who went to an integrated high school can testify, Lander's use of the word "white" is almost exactly the black American usage - as in, "that's so white." Add the word "bread" and you have it down.

Who are these strange people? Briefly, they are America's ruling class. Here at UR we call them *Brahmins*. The Brahmin tribe is adoptive rather than hereditary. Anyone can be a Brahmin, and in fact the less "white" your background the better, because it means your achievements are all your own. As with the Hindu original, your status as a Brahmin is not a function of money, but of your success as a scholar, scientist, artist, or public servant. Brahmins are people who work with their minds.

Brahmins are the ruling class because they are literally the people who govern. Public policies in the modern democratic system are generally formulated by Brahmins, typically at the [NGOs](#) where these "white people" like to congregate. And while not every progressive is a Brahmin and not every Brahmin is a progressive, the equation generally follows.

Most important, the Brahmin identity is inextricably bound up with the American university system. If you are a Brahmin, your status is either conferred by academic success, or by some quasi-academic

achievement, like writing a book, saving the Earth, etc. Thus it's unsurprising that most Brahmins are quite intelligent and sophisticated. They have to be. If they can't at least fake it, they're not Brahmins.

The natural enemy of the Brahmin is, of course, the red-state American. I used to use another Hindu caste name for this tribe -*Vaisyas*- but I think it's more evocative to call them *Townies*. As a progressive you are probably a Brahmin, you know these people, and you don't like them. They are fat, they are *exclusively* white, they live in the suburbs or worse, they are into oak and crochet and minivans, and of course they tend to be Republicans. If they went to college at all, they gritted their teeth through the freshman diversity requirement. And their work may be white-collar, but it has no real intellectual content.

(It's interesting how much simpler American politics becomes once you look at it through this tribal lens. You often see this in Third World countries - there will be, say, the Angolan People's Movement and the Democratic Angolan Front. Each swear up and down that they work for the future of the entire Angolan people. But you notice that everyone in the APM is an Ovambo, and everyone in the DAF is a Bakongo.)

The status relationship between Brahmins and Townies is clear: Brahmins are higher, Townies are lower. When Brahmins hate Townies, the attitude is contempt. When Townies hate Brahmins, the attitude is resentment. The two are impossible to confuse. If Brahmins and Townies shared a [stratified dialect](#), the Brahmins would speak acrolect and the Townies mesolect.

In other words, Brahmins are *more fashionable* than Townies. Brahmin tastes, which are basically better tastes, flow downward toward Townies. Twenty years ago, "health food" was a niche ultra-Brahmin quirk. Now it's everywhere. Suburbanites drink espresso, shop at Whole Foods, listen to alternative rock, you name it.

Thus we see why progressivism is more fashionable than conservatism. Progressive celebrities, for example, are everywhere. Conservative ones are exceptions. This is cold calculation: Bono's PR people are happy that he's speaking out against AIDS. Mel Gibson's PR people are not happy that he's speaking out against the Jews.

So when we question conservatism, we are thinking in a way that is natural and sensible for people of our tribe: we are attacking the enemy. And the enemy is, indeed, a pushover. In fact the enemy is suspiciously easy to push over.

Look at the entire lifecycle of conservatism. The whole thing stinks. Virus X replicates in the minds of uneducated, generally less intelligent people. Townies are, in fact, the same basic tribe that gave us Hitler and Mussolini. Its intellectual institutions, such as they are, are subsidized fringe newspapers, TV channels, and weirdo think-tanks supported by eccentric tycoons. In government, the bastions of conservatism are the military, whose purpose is to kill people, and any agency in which corporate lobbyists can make a buck, eg, by raping the environment.

Whereas virus Y, if "virus" is indeed the name for it, replicates in the most distinguished circles in America, indeed the world: the top universities, the great newspapers, the old foundations such as Rockefeller and Carnegie and Ford. Its drooling zombies are the smartest and most successful people in the country, indeed the world. In government it builds world peace, protects the environment, looks after the poor, and educates children.

The truth of the matter is that progressivism is the mainstream American tradition. This is not to say it hasn't changed in the last 200 years, or even the last 50: it has. However, if we look at the ideas and ideals taught and studied at Harvard during the life of the country, we see a smooth progression up to now, we do not see any violent reversals or even inflection points, and we end up with good old modern-day progressivism. Of course, by "American tradition" we mean the New England tradition - if the Civil War had turned out differently, things might have gone otherwise. But when you realize that Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote a novel about a hippie commune [150 years ago](#), you realize that nothing is new under the sun.

As Machiavelli put it: if you strike at a king, strike to kill. Conservatism, which is barely 50 years old, which has numerous shabby roots, can be mocked and belittled and scorned. The difference between criticizing conservatism and criticizing progressivism is the difference between criticizing Mormonism and criticizing Christianity. You can't doubt progressivism just a little. You have to doubt it on a grand scale.

To say that conservatism is a corrupt and delusional tradition, no more than some "virus X," is to say that it's a tick on the side of America, an aberration, an abortion, an error to be corrected. A failure of education, of leadership, of progress. A small thing, really.

To doubt progressivism is to doubt the American idea itself - because progressivism is where that idea has ended up. If progressivism is "virus Y," America itself is infected. What is the cure for that? It is a strange and terrible thought, a promise of apocalypse.

And yet it makes an awful kind of sense. For one thing, if you were a mental virus, which tradition would you choose to infect? The central current of American thought, or some benighted backwater? The Brahmins, or the Townies? The fashionable people, or the unfashionable ones?

Copy your DNA into the New York Times, and it will trickle down to Fox News in twenty or thirty years. Copy yourself into Fox News, and you might influence the next election. Or two. But how lasting is that? How many people are intellectually moved by George W. Bush? (Repulsion doesn't count.)

As a Brahmin (I'll assume you're a Brahmin), you live inside virus Y. You are one of the zombies. Your entire worldview has been formed by Harvard, the Times, and the rest of what, back in David Mamet's day, they used to call the Establishment. Everything you know about government and history and science and society has been filtered by these institutions. Obviously, this narrative does not contradict itself. But

is it true?

Well, it mostly doesn't contradict itself. It's very well put together. In some places, though, if you look really closely, I think you can see a stitch or two. You don't need to sail to the edge of the world, like Jim Carrey in [The Truman Show](#). All you need, for starters, just to tickle your doubt muscle and get it twitching a little, is a few details that don't quite fit.

Let's start off with three questions. We'll play a little game: you try coming up with a progressive answer, I'll try coming up with a non-progressive answer. We'll see which one makes more sense.

I don't mean these questions don't have progressive answers, because they do. Everything has a progressive answer, just as it has a conservative answer. There is no shortage of progressives to compose answers. But I don't think these questions have *satisfying* progressive answers. Of course, you will have to judge this yourself with your own good taste.

One: what's up with the Third World?

Here, for example, is a [Times story](#) on the fight against malaria. Often, as with politicians, journalists speak the truth in a fit of absent-mindedness, when their real concern is something else. If you read the story, you might notice the same astounding graf that I did:

And the world changed. Before the 1960s, colonial governments and companies fought malaria because their officials often lived in remote outposts like Nigeria's hill stations and Vietnam's Marble Mountains. Independence movements led to freedom, but also often to civil war, poverty, corrupt government and the collapse of medical care.

Let's focus on that last sentence. *Independence movements led to freedom, but also often to civil war, poverty, corrupt government and the collapse of medical care.*

I often find it useful to imagine that I'm an alien from the planet Jupiter. If I read this sentence, I would ask: what is this word *freedom*? What, exactly, does this writer mean by *freedom*? Especially in the context of *civil war, poverty, and corrupt government*?

What we see here is that *independence movements* - which the writer clearly believes are a good thing - led to some very concrete and very, very awful results, in addition to this curious abstraction - *freedom*. Clearly, whatever *freedom* means in this particular context, it's such a great positive that even when you add it to *civil war, poverty, corrupt government and the collapse of medical care*, the result still exceeds zero.

Isn't that strange? Might we not be tempted to revisit this particular piece of arithmetic? But we can't - because if we postulate that *colonial governments and companies* (whatever these were), with their absence of *freedom*, were somehow preferable to *independence movements*, which created this same

*freedom*(the words *freedom* and *independence* appear to be synonyms in this context), we are off the progressive reservation.

In fact, not only are we off the progressive reservation, we're off the *conservative* reservation. No one believes this. You will not find anyone on Fox News or townhall.com or any but the fringiest of fringe publications claiming that colonialism, with its intrinsic absence of *freedom* and its strangely effective malaria control (note how the writer implies, without actually saying, that this was only delivered for the selfish purposes of the evil colonial overlords), was in any way superior to postcolonialism, with its *freedom*, its malaria, its civil war, etc.

And what, exactly, is this word *independence*? It seems to mean the same thing as *freedom*, and yet, it is strange. For example, consider this [Post op-ed](#), by Michelle Gavin of the CFR, which starts with the following intriguing lines:

When Zimbabwe became an independent country in 1980, it was a focal point for international optimism about Africa's future. Today, Zimbabwe is a basket case of a country.

Let's put our alien-from-Jupiter hat back on, and consider the phrase: *When Zimbabwe became an independent country in 1980...*

In English as she is normally spoke, the word *independent* is composed of the prefix *in*, meaning "not," and the suffix *dependent*, meaning "dependent." So, for example, when the United States became *independent*, it meant that no external party was funding or controlling her government. If my daughter was to become *independent*, it would mean that she was making her own decisions in the world, and I didn't need to give her a bottle every three hours.

In the case of Zimbabwe, however, this word seems to have changed strangely and taken on an almost opposite meaning. From [La Wik](#):

The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) of Rhodesia from the United Kingdom was signed on November 11, 1965 by the administration of Ian Smith, whose Rhodesian Front party opposed black majority rule in the then British colony. Although it declared independence from the United Kingdom it maintained allegiance to Queen Elizabeth II. The British government, the Commonwealth, and the United Nations condemned the move as illegal. Rhodesia reverted to de facto and de jure British control as "the British Dependency of Southern Rhodesia" for a brief period in 1979 to 1980, before regaining its independence as Zimbabwe in 1980.

So, strangely enough, the country now known as Zimbabwe declared *independence* in 1965, much as the US declared *independence* in 1776. The former, however, was not *genuine* independence, but rather *illegal* independence. In order to gain genuine, *legal* independence, the country now known as Zimbabwe had to first revert to British control, ie, surrender its *illegal* independence. Are you feeling confused yet? It gets better:

When Zimbabwe became an independent country in 1980, it was a focal point for international optimism about Africa's future. Today, Zimbabwe is a basket case of a country. Over the past decade, the refusal of President Robert Mugabe and his ruling party to tolerate challenges to their power has led them to systematically dismantle the most effective workings of Zimbabwe's economic and political systems, replacing these with structures of corruption, blatant patronage and repression.

So: the *independent* rulers of the new, *free* Zimbabwe has *refused to tolerate challenges to their power*. Thus, the *international optimism* held by Ms. Gavin (who perhaps needed a bottle or two herself in 1980) and her ilk, has given way to pessimism, and the place is now a *basket case*. And who might have been challenging good President Mugabe's power? Presumably someone who did not intend to dismantle *the most effective workings of Zimbabwe's economic and political systems*- thus earning the friendship of Ms. Gavin and her not-uninfluential ilk. This *independence*, as you can see, is a very curious thing.

In the sense of doing its own thing and never, ever needing a bottle, there is actually one remarkably independent country in the world. It's called [Somaliland](#), and it is not *recognized* by anyone in the *international community*. The Wikipedia page for Somaliland's capital, [Hargeisa](#), achieves a glorious level of unintentional high comedy:

Aid from foreign governments was non-existent, making it unusual in Africa for its low level of dependence in foreign aid. While Somaliland is de-facto as an independent country it is not de-jure (legally) recognized internationally. Hence, the government of Somaliland can not access IMF and World Bank assistance.

Isn't all of this quite curious? Doesn't it remind you even a little bit of the scene in which Jim Carrey rams his yacht into the matte painting at the edge of the world?

Two: what is nationalism? And is it good, or bad?

This question is rather similar to question one. I thought of it when a [progressive blogger](#) for whom I have great respect made the offhand comment that "Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist." "Sure," I found myself thinking. "And so is Pat Buchanan." It wasn't the time, but I saved this little mot d'escalier and can't resist bringing it back up now, like bad fish.

Unlike *independence*, I think everyone pretty much agrees on the definition of [nationalism](#). Nationalism (from the Latin natus, birth) is when people of a common linguistic, ethnic, or racial heritage feel the need to act collectively as a single political entity. German nationalism is when Germans do it, Vietnamese nationalism is when Vietnamese do it, black nationalism is when African-Americans do it, American nationalism is when Pat Buchanan does it.

And this is where the agreement ends. La Wik's [opening paragraph](#) is a masterpiece of obfuscation:

Nationalism is a term referring to doctrine or political movement that holds that a nation, usually defined in terms of ethnicity or culture, has the right to constitute an independent or autonomous political community based on a shared history and common destiny. Most nationalists believe the borders of the state should be congruent with the borders of the nation. However, recently nationalists have rejected the concept of "congruency" for sake of its reciprocal value. Contemporary nationalists would argue that the nation should be administered by a single state, not that a state should be governed by a single nation. Occasionally, nationalist efforts can be plagued by chauvinism or imperialism. These ex-nationalist efforts such as those propagated by fascist movements in the twentieth century, still hold the nationalist concept that nationality is the most important aspect of one's identity, while some of them have attempted to define the nation, inaccurately, in terms of race or genetics. Fortunately, contemporary nationalists reject the racist chauvinism of these groups, and remain confident that national identity supersedes biological attachment to an ethnic group.

Everything between them is pure nonsense as far as I can tell, but note the direct contradiction of the first and the last sentences. How can you be a *nationalist*, even a *contemporary nationalist*, if you believe that *national identity supersedes biological attachment to an ethnic group*? If nationalism isn't *plagued by racist chauvinism*, in what sense is it nationalism at all?

And so: if I'm a Czech and I live in Austria-Hungary, do I have a right to my own country? Should I make violence and terror and bomb until I get it? What if I'm a German and I live in Czechoslovakia? Should I make violence and terror and bomb?

A number of Germans noticed this very odd thing in the '20s and '30s. They noticed that America and her friends were very much committed to *national self-determination*, that is, unless you happened to be German. Czech nationalism was good - very good. German nationalism was bad - very bad.

Once you start looking for this little stitch in the canvas, you find it everywhere. It is good, very good, to be a black nationalist. In l'affaire Wright we have seen the intimacy between progressivism and black nationalism - so well illustrated by [Tom Wolfe](#). Indeed, every reputable university in America has a department in which students can essentially major in black nationalism.

On the other hand, it is bad, very bad, to be a Southern nationalist. Any connection to Southern nationalism instantly renders one a [pariah](#). Of course, Southern nationalists have [sinned](#). But then again, so have [black nationalists](#). Are Americans, black or white, really better off for the activities of the Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam, or even the good Rev. Wright?

Similarly, it is good to be a Vietnamese nationalist. It is still bad to be a German nationalist, or a British nationalist, or even a French nationalist. Germans, Brits, and Frenchmen are supposed to believe in the common destiny of all humanity. Vietnamese, Mexicans, or Czechs are free to believe in the common destiny of Vietnamese, Mexicans, or Czechs. (Actually, I'm not sure about the Czechs. This one may have

changed.)

Does this make sense? Does it make *any freakin' sense at all?*

Since this subject is so touchy, I will let my feelings on it slip: I don't believe in any kind of nationalism. Of course, being a Jacobite and all, I also believe in Strafford's [Thorough](#), so you might not want to be getting your constitutional tips from me.

Third: what's so bad about the Nazis?

Okay, they murdered ten million people or so. That's bad. There's really no defending the unprovoked massacre of millions of civilians.

On the other hand, I really really recommend [Nicholson Baker's](#) new book, [Human Smoke](#). Baker is a progressive and pacifist of immaculate credentials (his previous achievement was a novel which fantasized about assassinating President Bush), and what *Human Smoke* drums into you is not a specific message, but the same thing I keep saying: the pieces of the picture do not fit together. They almost fit, but they don't quite fit. The genius of Baker's book is that he simply shows you the picture not fitting, and leaves the analysis up to you.

For example: we are taught that the Nazis were bad because they committed mass murder, to wit, the Holocaust. On the other hand... (a): none of the parties fighting against the Nazis, including us, seems to have given much of a damn about the Jews or the Holocaust. (b): one of the parties on our side was the Soviet Union, whose record of mass murder was known at the time and was at least as awful as the Nazis'.

And, of course, (c): the Allies positively reveled in the aerial mass incineration of German and Japanese civilians. They did not kill six million, but they killed one or two. There was a military excuse for this, but it was quite strained. It was better than the Nazis' excuse for murdering the Jews (who they saw, of course, as enemy civilians). In fact, it was a lot better. But was it a lot lot better? I'm not sure.

And as Baker does not mention, our heroes, the Allies, also had no qualms about deporting [a million Russian refugees](#) to the gulag after the war, or about lending hundreds of thousands of German prisoners as [slave laborers](#) to the Soviets. The idea of World War II as a war for human rights is simply ahistorical. It doesn't fit. If Nazi human-rights violations were not the motivation for the war that created the world we live in now - what was?

Furthermore, Baker, who is of course a critic of American foreign policy today, sees nothing but confusion when he tries to apply the same standards to Iraq and to Germany. If Abu Ghraib is an unbridgeable obstacle to imposing democracy by force on Iraq, what about Dresden or Hamburg and Germany? Surely it's worse to burn tens of thousands of people alive, than to make one stand on a box wearing fake wires and a funny hat? Or is Iraq just different from Germany? But that would be racism,

wouldn't it?

Beyond this is the peculiar asymmetry in the treatment of fascist mass murder, versus Marxist mass murder. Both ideologies clearly have a history of mass murder. If numbers count - and why wouldn't they? - Marxism is ahead by an [order of magnitude](#). Yet somehow, today, fascism or anything reminiscent of it is pure poison and untouchable, whereas Marxism is at best a kind of peccadillo. John Zmirak pulls off a lovely parody of this [here](#), and while I have yet to read Roberto Bolaño the [reviews](#) are quite glowing.

Neither the Soviet Union nor the Third Reich is with us today, but the most recent historical examples are North Korea and South Africa. North Korea is clearly somewhat Stalinist, while apartheid South Africa had looser but still discernible links to Nazism. I welcome anyone who wants to claim that South Africa, whose border fences were designed to keep immigrants out, was a worse violator of human rights than North Korea, an entire country turned into a prison. And yet we see the same asymmetry - "engagement" with North Korea, pure hostility against South Africa. If you can imagine the New York Philharmonic visiting Pretoria in an attempt to build trust between the two countries, you are firmly in Bolañoworld.

Again: this is just weird. As with nationalism, each individual case can be explained on its own terms. Put all the cases together, and double standards are everywhere. And yet the inconsistencies do not seem random. There seems to be a mysterious X factor which the Nazis have and the Soviets don't, or the South Africans have and the North Koreans don't. The treatment may not just be based on X, it may be X + human rights, but it is definitely not just human rights. And yet X does not appear in the explanation.

X seems to be related to the fact that the Nazis are "right-wing" and the Soviets "left-wing." As the French put it: *pas d'amis a droite, pas d'ennemis a gauche*. But why? What do "right-wing" and "left-wing" even mean? Weren't the Soviet and Nazi systems both totalitarian dictatorships? If Communism is "too hot," fascism is "too cold," and liberal democracy is "just right," why not oppose Communism and fascism equally? In fact, the former is much more successful, at least since 1945, so you'd think people would be more worried about it.

Again, we are left with pure confusion. It is simply not possible that the horizon is made of canvas. And yet our boat has crashed into it, and left a big rip.

Continue to [part 2](#).

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/04/open-letter-to-open-minded-progressives.html>

## Part 2: more historical anomalies

April 24, 2008

In [part 1](#), which should be read first, we looked at three anomalies in progressive political thought: a surprising definition of the word *independence*, an oscillatory ambivalence around the concept of *nationalism*, and a chiral gradient in sensitivity to *human rights violations*.

These particular anomalies are not just progressive. They are in fact modern. They are generally shared across the conservative-progressive spectrum. They are even shared by most libertarians - except maybe the Randians, who have epistemic troubles of their own. They are simply as close to universal as it comes.

Unless, of course, the past is allowed to dissent. Because when we look backward a little, we see that these ideas come along quite recently. They are fresh. Very fresh. To a progressive, of course, this is mere progress. But if you are also an evolutionary geneticist, you might also call it a *selective sweep*. Obviously, our anomalies have some competitive advantage. But what might that advantage be?

Well, perhaps the anomalies have prevailed because - in some way that we maybe don't quite understand completely yet - they are *good and sweet and true*. After all, people would rather think thoughts that are good and sweet and true. They would also prefer to share such with their friends. Because it is so obvious, so elegant, and so widely believed, we'll label this the *null hypothesis*.

I'm going to interrupt the discussion for a moment and digress. Since this is after all the 21st century, perhaps we can enliven our proceedings with a little mixed media.

Here's a YouTube clip of a protester in the recent violence in Kenya. As far as I can tell, no one is harmed in this 80-second clip, but otherwise it's as dramatic as it gets: it has a talky start, a shocking climax, and a happy ending.

[\(deleted youtube video\)](#)

Well, it's sort of a happy ending. At least, the blue car gets away. BTW, I lied: the "protester" is hard to follow, but his corner seems to be [here](#). "Metro" is [this](#). If you were fooled (sorry), try watching it again with this perspective.

I think this clip is a good litmus test for whether you've sneaked into the auditorium without a permission slip, or whether you really are a progressive.

If you really are a progressive, when you try to connect the clip above (which might well have been staged) with the broad sweep of human history, you will think of Hitler or Mussolini or maybe even George W. Bush.

Why? Because our protagonist is behaving exactly like them. His actions are *tribal*, *territorial*, and *predatory*. As one of our great Vulcan thinkers once [put it](#): "every ten years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small crappy little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business." I'm sure the people who decided to invade Iraq had many goals, all of which they imagined in entirely benevolent terms. But I really have trouble believing that this wasn't at least one of them.

If you sneaked in - who knows what you think. Something awful, I suspect. Kids, this presentation is not for you. Can't you just slink back to your slimy holes for once? (Note to all: in case you ever find your nice, clean, progressive discussion forums overrun with Nazis, you can drive them away by making the Jew-noise: "Joo! Joo!" It's better than the [Mosquito](#).)

In any case, thanks for participating in our first experimental test of URTV. More videos are not coming soon. Let's get back to these anomalies.

We will continue by assuming two things about the null hypothesis. One is that it's basically true. Two is that any small ways in which it may be imperfect are (a) minor, (b) accidental, and (c) either self-correcting or at least correctable. Since this is basically what progressives (and most non-progressives) believe, it is only fair to start with it.

It's a pity, though, that it leaves us with these odd asymmetries. It is easy to note that progressives, as well as most non-progressives, express these mental adaptations. It is hard to understand *why*. This is especially true since progressive thought seems to lack any sort of theology, which can explain just about anything. (Why are people with red hair and blue eyes evil? Because that's how Baal made them.)

So our three anomalies have three things in common. One: progressives have explanations for all of them, but these explanations seem less than usually compelling. Two: these strained explanations are generally shared not just by progressives, but also by their enemies, the "conservatives."

And three: there is a single anti-progressive hypothesis, which is obviously on its face wrong or at least incomplete, but can at least be explained in terms that do not require a gentleman to hurl his *Sartor Resartus* at his dinner companions, and seems to explain them all quite nicely with plenty of headroom left over.

The hypothesis is that the "international community" - a phrase we see used on a pretty regular basis, although perhaps we are not quite as clear as we might be as to what exactly it might mean - is, and always has been, a fundamentally predatory force.

The fact that falsifies the hypothesis - at least for me - is that my father was a US diplomat, and if the "international community" means anything it must mean [Foggy Bottom](#). And I can tell you that it is simply impossible to mistake a transnational bureaucrat (or [tranzi](#)) for an SS officer, or vice versa. If the Third Reich is your image of an international predator - and why shouldn't it be? Can't we make Hitler

work for us? - the adjective is clearly misapplied.

As anyone who has ever known any number of progressives knows, progressives are generally decent, intelligent and well-meaning people. Moreover, this fact does not stop at the edges of government. By definition, decent, intelligent and well-meaning people are not predatory. Since the "international community" is clearly progressive, the hypothesis is falsified. Whew!

But, not endorsing this false hypothesis, but simply using it as a tool of argument, it sure is interesting to look at how nicely it explains our little anomalies. It may or may not be productive to replace three poorly explained phenomena by one incorrect assumption. But at least it reduces the number of problems. Let's work through them one by one.

First: what happened to the Third World?

Well, that's pretty easy. It was conquered and devastated by the "international community." Admittedly, the "devastated" part kind of sucks. But when you're a predator, it's better to conquer and devastate than not to conquer at all, n'est ce pas?

Let's take a look at this *independence* thing. What exactly is a *multilateral declaration of independence*? Since it's not [this](#)?

Well, on the sweet and good and true side, MDI seems to involve a change in the ethnicity of government officials. Foreign officials are replaced by native-born officials. Clearly, for example, it would be an outrage for true-born Americans to be governed by a dirty no-good Mex - oh, wait. We're progressives. We're not racists. Ethnicity means nothing to us.

Well, the postcolonial regimes are no longer controlled from overseas. They can do whatever they want. They're free!

Sure they are. They're so free that they've received [\\$2.6 trillion](#) in aid since 1960. Does the phrase "who pays the piper calls the tune" ring any bells? Again, in English at least, the word "independence" is a compound of the prefix *in-*, meaning *not*, and *dependent*, meaning *dependent*.

And what does it mean for a government to be "free," anyway? Is the government of North Korea "free?" What about ExxonMobil? Or the Democratic Party? I have a fairly good understanding of what it means for a *human being* to be "free." When it comes to an organization, especially one which claims to be a "government," I'm quite without a clue.

One test we can apply for *independence*, which should be pretty conclusive, is that the structures of government in a genuinely independent country should tend to resemble the structures that existed before it was subjugated - rather than the structures of some other country on which it may happen to be, um, dependent. These structures should be especially unlikely to resemble structures in other newly

independent countries, with which it presumably has nothing in common.

In other words: after 1960, did the Third World become more Westernized or less Westernized? Did it revert to its pre-Western political systems, rejecting the foreign tissue like a bad transplant? Or did it become a more and more slavish imitation of the West?

There is exactly one region in which the former happened: the Persian Gulf. Not that the Gulf states are utterly un-Westernized, but their political systems are clearly the least Western in the world. Oddly enough, the Gulf states also happen to be "independent" in the good old financial sense of the word. There are also two exceptions in Africa: [Somaliland](#), which fell through the cracks, and [Botswana](#), which has diamonds.

(You will sometimes hear Botswana described as a model of African democracy. How fortunate that the Botswanan people should be so wise as to elect, as their first President, none other than their [hereditary monarch](#). In practice the place is more or less run by [De Beers](#), on the good old [United Fruit](#) model.)

Across most of the Third World, however, we see a very simple transition: from the traditional forms of government and tribal leaders whom the British, French, Rhodesians, etc, supported at a local or even regional level in the policy of [indirect rule](#), to a new elite selected and educated in Western missions, schools and universities. In Africa these men are called the [wa-Benzi](#) - "wa" is the Swahili prefix for "tribe," and I think "Benzi" speaks for itself.

Moreover, the rhetoric of *tiers-mondisme* is and was almost the same everywhere. If Algeria and Vietnam were truly growing up and following their own destinies, you might think the former would be ruled by a [Dey](#) and the latter by [emperors and mandarins](#). You'd certainly be surprised to find that they both had an organization called the "National Liberation Front."

And finally, perhaps the subtlest aspect of dependency is power dependency. To whom did this rash of fresh presidents, congresses and liberation fronts owe its existence? Where, exactly, did Macmillan's [Wind of Change](#) blow from? For that matter, who cares about all these people now? Why does a vast river of cash still flow from European and American taxpayers to these weird, camo-bedecked, mirrorshaded thugs?

Well, one theory is that the brave liberation fronts seized power through their own military prowess. Or the unquenchable anger of the people at foreign domination, which could no longer be repressed. Or the fiery will of the workers, which blazed out once too often. Or the shining light of education, which brought the dream of democracy to our little brown brothers. Or... I'm afraid [Professor Frankfort](#) has taught us much on this subject.

In fact you'll see that in pretty much every case, including some that may [surprise you](#) (here's a great [primary source](#)) the liberation fronts achieved power because they had powerful friends. Sometimes the friends were in Paris, sometimes they were in London, sometimes they were even in Moscow. But for the

most part they were in New York and Washington. (There's an excellent new film on this subject - from Barbet Schroeder, the man who gave us [General Idi Amin Dada](#), reality's answer to Forest Whitaker. It's called [Terror's Advocate](#), and you gotta see it.)

Once again: if this is "independence," I'm a three-eyed donkey. Note that the English language has a perfectly good word for a regime which appears to be independent, but in reality is dependent. It starts with "p" and rhymes with "muppet." In fact, perhaps this is a good term for the post-1945 postcolonial regimes.

A muppet state is not quite a puppet state. It delivers a far more lifelike impression of individual identity. It has not just an invisible hand supporting it from below, but invisible strings pulling it from above. In fact, muppet states often appear quite hostile to their masters. There are a variety of reasons for this - one is internal conflict within the master state, which we'll get to in a bit - but the simplest is just camouflage.

The classic story is de Gaulle's legendary obstreperousness during World War II. De Gaulle had to cause problems for the British and Americans, because his whole story was that he represented the true spirit of oppressed France - rather than being just some guy that Churchill set up in an office, which is of course exactly what he was. Furthermore, because a blatant display of puppetry would have been no use to the Allies, they had to tolerate his acting out.

The phenomenon of dependent rebellion is quite familiar to anyone who has ever been a teenager, an analogy that's a good guide to the sort of "independence" we see in the likes of a Mugabe, a Castro or even a Khomeini - each a member of the "I got my job through the New York Times" club.

It's easy to see what a network of postcolonial muppet states harnessed to the hegemonic will of an imperial alien overlord looks like. We have the perfect example: the Warsaw Pact, and its assorted flunkys in Africa and Asia. (In fact, we have two evil muppet empires to look at, because the Maoists spun off their own.) The Marxist-Leninist muppet states all insisted fervently that they were liberated, independent, etc, and that their alliances were brotherly partnerships of equals, with their own Politburos and everything. And of course the whole enterprise was run by Comrade Brezhnev, from the white phone in his *petit salon*. Even Hitler's quislings in New Order Europe did not exhibit quite this level of gall - there was no pretence that Vichy France, for example, was an equal of the Third Reich.

And since the Soviet and Western blocs often competed for the same set of muppets - for example, Nasser, Tito, and even Ho Chi Minh, who never lost his popularity out in [Langley](#) - I'm afraid the pattern is really quite clear.

So from our counterfactual perspective, the story of the Third World is quite clear. In the second half of the 20th century, the Third World passed from its old colonial masters, the British, French and Portuguese, who were certainly no angels but who were perhaps at least a little less brazen, to a new set

of ruthless and cynical overlords, the Cold War powers, whose propaganda skills were matched only by the devastation that their trained thugs unleashed. Under the mendacious pretext of "liberation" and "independence," most remnants of non-European governing traditions were destroyed. Major continents such as Africa were reduced to desolate slums ruled by [corrupt, well-connected fat cats](#), much of whose loot went straight from Western taxpayers to Swiss banks.

What's especially interesting is that when we step back and consider the history of the non-Western world since 1500, we see a broad trend that does not reverse course at all the 20th century. If anything, the 20th century is more of the same, only more so.

We see four basic structures of government: native rule with private Western trade, native rule under the protection of chartered companies or other monopolies (like the [East India Company](#), the [British South Africa Company](#), [Anaconda Copper](#), etc, etc), classic nationalized colonialism with indirect rule, and the postcolonial muppet states.

Across all these stages, as time increases, we see the following trends. One, the non-European world becomes culturally and politically Westernized. Two, more and more Westerners are employed in the actual task of governing them. (I don't know the ratio of aid workers today to colonial administrators 50 years ago, but I'm sure it's tremendous.) And three, the profits accruing to the West from all of this activity dwindle away and are replaced by massive losses. ("Aid" is essentially a subsidy to the muppet states, which are to the old chartered companies as a Lada factory is to a Honda factory.)

Who benefits from these trends? The "international community," ie, the vast army of international administrators who labor diligently and ineffectively at healing the great wounds they have torn in the side of the world. Who loses? Everyone else - Western taxpayers in the usual slow, relentless dribble, Africans and Asians in the gigantic revolutionary hemorrhage of "civil war, poverty, corrupt government and the collapse of medical care."

If you read travel narratives of what is now the Third World from before World War II (I've just been enjoying Erna Fergusson's [Guatemala](#), for example), you simply don't see anything like the misery, squalor and barbarism that is everywhere today. (Fergusson describes Guatemala City as "clean." I kid you not.) What you do see is social and political structures, whether native or colonial, that are clearly not American in origin, and that are unacceptable not only by modern American standards but even by 1930s American standards.

So, again, we have two theories of the "international community." One, its own, depicts it as the savior and liberator of the planet, and essentially global and universal in nature. Two, the one I've just developed, shows it as a ravenous predator, the dominant player in a second [Scramble for Africa](#) with Asia and South America added to the plate - essentially, a new version of the [Delian League](#), with Washington in the part of Athens.

And neither quite makes sense. The first hypothesis is very hopeful and reassuring, and most people believe it, but it has these odd, Orwellian ties in the way it uses English. And the second is, once again, quite counterfactual. I know these people. They are not at all predatory. There is no denying that transnational bureaucrats have the world's best interests at heart, and they are certainly not in any way American nationalists. They simply do not remind me, in any way, shape or form, of Corner Man.

So let's put this conundrum aside and move on to the second anomaly: nationalism. I hope it's not too much of a surprise that this turns out to be a special case of the first.

Nationalist regimes and movements are good when they're doing God's work, ie, their goal is to become nice, multilateral members of the "international community." Nationalist regimes and movements are bad when they "defy international opinion" and turn against said community, which wants nothing other than to be able to love them as its beloved children. In other words: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Typical Machiavellian predatory behavior.

It is always pleasant to depart from the bleak, mendacious twentieth century and return to its predecessor, whose leaders could be just as unscrupulous but who dressed much better. There was an "international community" in the nineteenth century as well, and at least in the Old World, it operated out of one place: London.

Quick association test! The unification of Italy - good or bad? I'll bet you said "good." Well, here's a little story.

A couple of years ago Mrs. Moldbug and I spent three weeks in Italy. For the first week we split a villa in Cilento with some friends, which was lovely if a little buggy, and involved inhaling enormous quantities of Limoncello. Next we thought we'd take our backpacks and bop around on the train a little. Our first stop: Naples.

I'm afraid it's not for nothing that northern Italians say "Garibaldi didn't unite Italy, he divided Africa." Obviously, this is a racist statement and I can't condone it. But even the Lonely Planet warns travellers that "you might think you're in Cairo or Tangier." I have never been to Cairo or Tangier, but if they are anything like Naples, God help them.

The 3000-year-old city of Naples is a reeking, garbage-ridden sewer. This year there was an actual [garbage strike](#), but the problem is perennial - there was a giant, seemingly permanent mound of it right across the street from our LP-recommended albergo. At all times, almost everyone on the street appears to be a criminal, especially at night. The streets are ruinous, unlit, and patrolled by thieves on mopeds. We saw one pull up in front of an old lady carrying a bag of groceries, openly inspect her goods for anything worth stealing, then scoot away. Apparently they have a reputation for ripping earrings out of womens' ears.

From Naples you can take the Trans-Vesuviano to Pompeii. This train has a wonderful name, but its main purpose appears to be to transport criminals from the Stalinist banlieues in which they live, to the city in which in which they steal. Signs in every language known to humanity warn the tourist that pickpockets are everywhere. The trains are stripped to the metal and covered with graffiti, which is not in Latin. As the train stopped at one station, we saw a couple of *carabinieri* carrying a body-bag away from the platform.

The night after this we wandered the historic district of Naples, simply looking for one open-air cafe in which to sit and chat. Eventually we found one. We were pretty much the only people there. It was Saturday night. We moved on and discovered one clean thing in Naples - the new, EU-funded subway. Tried a couple of stops. Everything was the same.

Finally, I remembered a snarky little use of the word "bourgeois" in the Planet and marched Mrs. Moldbug over to the *funicula*, which goes up the hill to the [Vomero](#), a sort of internal suburb. Quelle difference! You go three hundred feet up a cliff, and you have gone from Cairo to Milan. We immediately found a wine-bar with an English-speaking hostess and enjoyed several lovely glasses.

Suddenly we realized that it was late, and we didn't know when the subway stopped running, to get us back to our albergo, near the *Stazione Centrale*. So we asked. And no one knew. Not the waitress, not anyone in the bar. These hip young people had no idea of the subway hours in their own city. I believe the waitress actually said something like, "why do you want to go *there*?"

We hurried, and I think we got the last train. The next day, Mrs. Moldbug, who is far more tasteful than I and who would never repeat that nasty line about Garibaldi, expressed the desire to "just hop on the Eurostar and stay on it until we get to Stockholm." In fact we ended up in Perugia, which is, of course, lovely.

So: Naples. Obviously, Naples being this way, I assumed that Naples had always been this way. There was that old line, "see Naples and die," but presumably it referred to a knife in the ribs. That poor bastard on the Trans-Vesuviano had seen Naples, and died. Was it worth it?

So I was surprised to discover a different version of reality, from British historian Desmond Seward's [Naples: A Travellers' Companion](#):

'In size and number of inhabitants she ranks as the third city of Europe, and from her situation and superb show may justly be considered the Queen of the Mediterranean,' wrote John Chetwode Eustace in 1813. Until 1860 Naples was the political and administrative centre of the Kingdom of The Two Sicilies, the most beautiful kingdom in the world. Consisting of Southern Italy and Sicily, it had a land mass equal to that of Portugal and was the richest state in Europe... For five generations - from 1734 till 1860 - it was ruled by a branch of the French and Spanish royal family of Bourbon who filled the city with monuments to their reign...

The 'Borboni' as their subjects called them, were complete Neapolitans, wholly assimilated, who spoke and thought in Neapolitan dialect (indeed the entire court spoke Neapolitan)... Until 1860, glittering Court balls and regal gala nights at the San Carlo which staggered foreigners by their opulence and splendour were a feature of Neapolitan life... In 1839 that ferocious Whig Lord Macaulay was staying in the city and wrote, 'I must say that the accounts I which I have heard of Naples are very incorrect. There is far less beggary than in Rome, and far more industry... At present, my impressions are very favourable to Naples. It is the only place in Italy that has seemed to me to have the same sort of vitality which you find in all the great English ports and cities. Rome and Pisa are dead and gone; Florence is not dead, but sleepeth; while Naples overflows with life.'

The Borboni's memory have been systematically blackened by partisans of the regime which supplanted them, and by admirers of the Risorgimento. They have had a particularly bad press in the Anglo-Saxon world. Nineteenth-century English liberals loathed them for their absolutism, their clericalism and loyalty to the Papacy, and their opposition to the fashionable cause of Italian unity. Politicians from Lord William Bentinck to Lord Palmerston and Gladstone, writers such as Browning and George Eliot, united in detesting the 'tyrants'; Gladstone convinced himself that their regime was 'the negation of God.' Such critics, as prejudiced as they were ill informed, ignored the dynasty's economic achievement, the kingdom's remarkable prosperity compared with other Italian states, the inhabitants' relative contentment, and the fact that only a mere handful of Southern Italians were opposed to their government. Till the end, The Two Sicilies was remarkable for the majority of its subjects' respect for, and knowledge of, its laws - so deep that even today probably most Italian judges, and especially successful advocates, still come from the south. Yet even now there is a mass of blind prejudice among historians. All too many guidebooks dismiss the Borboni as corrupt despots who misruled and neglected their capital. An entire curtain of slander conceals the old, pre-1860 Naples; with the passage of time calumny has been supplemented by ignorance, and it is easy to forget that history is always written by the victors. However Sir Harold Acton in his two splendid studies of the Borboni has to some extent redressed the balance, and his interpretation of past events is winning over increasing support - especially in Naples itself.

Undoubtedly the old monarchy had serious failings. Though economically and industrially creative, it was also absolutist and isolationist, disastrously out of touch with pan-Italian aspirations... Beyond question there was political repression under the Bourbons - the dynasty was fighting for its survival - but it has been magnified out of all proportion. On the whole prison conditions were probably no worse than in contemporary England, which still had its hulks; what really upset Gladstone was seeing his social equals being treated in the same way as working-class convicts, since opposition to the regime was restricted to a few liberal romantics among the aristocracy and bourgeoisie...

The [Risorgimento](#) was a disaster for Naples and for the south in general. Before 1860 the Mezzogiorno was the richest part of Italy outside the Austrian Empire; after it quickly became the

poorest. The facts speak for themselves. In 1859 money circulating in The Two Sicilies amounted to more than that circulating in all other independent Italian states, while the Bank of Naples's gold reserve was 443 million gold lire, twice the combined reserves of the rest of Italy. This gold was immediately confiscated by Piedmont - whose own reserve had been a mere 27 million - and transferred to Turin. Neapolitan excise duties, levied to keep out the north's inferior goods and providing four-fifths of the city's revenue, were abolished. And then the northerners imposed crushing new taxes. Far from being liberators, the Piedmontese administrators who came in the wake of the Risorgimento behaved like Yankees in the post-bellum Southern States; they ruled The Two Sicilies as an occupied country, systematically demolishing its institutions and industries. Ferdinand's new dockyard was dismantled to stop Naples competing with Genoa (it is now being restored by industrial archeologists). Vilification of the Borboni became part of the school curriculum. Shortly after the Two Sicilies' enforced incorporation into the new Kingdom of Italy, the Duke of Maddaloni protested in the 'national' Parliament: 'This is invasion, not annexation, not union. We are being plundered like an occupied territory.' For years after the 'liberation,' Neapolitans were governed by northern *padroni* and carpet-baggers. And today the Italians of the north can be as stupidly prejudiced about Naples as any Anglo-Saxon, affecting a superiority which verges on racism - 'Africa begins South of Rome' - and lamenting the presence in the North of so many workers from the Mezzogiorno. (The ill-feeling is reciprocated, the Neapolitan translation of SPQR being *Sono porci, questi Romani*.) Throughout the 1860s 150,000 troops were needed to hold down the south.

Note the pattern. What made Italian unification happen? Why did Ferdinand of Naples, with his 443 million gold lire, just roll over for Charles Albert of Piedmont, with his mere 27? Two reasons: [Lord Palmerston](#) and [Napoleon III](#). Where did exiles such as [Mazzini](#) and [Garibaldi](#) find their backers? Not in Pompeii, that's for sure.

The unification of Italy was an event in the 19th century's great struggle between liberalism and reaction. The international liberal movement of the 20th century, in which a figure such as [Carl Schurz](#) could go from German revolutionary in 1848 to Civil War general in 1861, was the clear precursor of today's "international community." And once again, we see it playing the same predatory role: conquering and destroying in the name of liberation and independence.

Unless you count the American Revolution, perhaps the first and clearest case of this strange phenomenon - multilateral independence - was the [Greek War of Independence](#). As La Wik, without a trace of irony, puts it: "After a long and bloody struggle, and with the aid of the Great Powers, independence was finally granted by the Treaty of Constantinople in July 1832." Indeed.

And if we look at the citizens of said Great Powers - principally, of course, Great Britain - who gave us Greek "independence," we see the same type of people who were behind Mazzini, Schurz, and all the way down to today's "international community": liberals, radicals, thinkers, artists. Progressives. ([Lord Byron](#) is of course the archetype.) Again, these are the best and nicest people in the world, now or then. So why

in the world do they always seem to turn up in the same breath as phrases like "long and bloody struggle?"

So we have not solved the anomaly of nationalism. But at least we have reduced it to the same problem as our first anomaly, which has to be something. What happened to the Third World? It was devoured by predatory, cynical, bogus nationalism. Why would educated, cosmopolitan, and civilized thinkers support predatory, cynical, bogus nationalism? Again we hit the wall.

Let's move on to our third problem: Hitler.

Of course I hold no brief for Hitler. "Joo! Joo!" The anomaly, to reprise, is that Hitler today is detested for his human-rights violations, ie, the Holocaust. And the Allies are therefore revered for defeating Hitler, wrapping the whole problem up in a neat little bow. The only problem with this human-rights theory of World War II is that it has no resemblance to reality.

First, the Allies included a [fellow](#) whose human-rights record was at least as bad as Hitler's. Second, Roosevelt and Churchill not only didn't seem to much mind the extermination of the Jews (whom they had [many opportunities](#) to save) - if anything, they [covered it up](#). (Which makes neo-Nazi claims that the Holocaust was Allied war propaganda grimly comical, to say the least.) And third, the Allies didn't at all mind barbecuing as many enemy civilians as they could fit on the [grill](#).

Put these facts together, and the human-rights theory of World War II makes about as much sense as the suggestion that Caesar invaded Britain because he wanted to see Manchester United play Chelsea. So why did it happen? The nominal cause of the European war was that Britain wanted to preserve a free Poland. You'd think that if this was their key goal, they would have found a way to come out of the war with a free Poland - especially having won, and all. Much the same can be said with respect to the [US and China](#).

Note that what we are interested in, here, is not the motives of Hitler and Mussolini and Tojo. These men are dead and so are their movements. The movements that defeated them, however, live on - I think it's pretty clear that the "international community" and the Allies are one and the same. Our question is why said community had such a harsh reaction to Nazi Germany. Especially since its response to Soviet Russia, which was just as aggressive and just as murderous, was so different.

One simple answer, continuing our counterfactual, was that the fascist movement was a competing predator. Perhaps the Allies destroyed the Nazis for the same reason that a lion will kill a leopard, if it gets the chance: not because leopards are all that good to eat, but because there are only so many antelope in the world.

Unfortunately, the waters here are freshly muddied by a [half-educated bestseller](#) which argues that fascism was really a left-wing movement. [Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn](#), a far better writer, made the case far earlier and far more eruditely. He was still wrong.

As a reactionary Jacobite myself, I feel it's especially important to face up to the basically reactionary nature of the fascist movement. Fascism (and Nazism) were certainly creatures of the democratic era - nothing like them could have been imagined in the 19th century. They certainly borrowed many techniques of government from both liberals and Bolsheviks. And the experience of living in a totalitarian state does not much depend on whether that state is Communist, Fascist, Buddhist or Scientologist. Nonetheless, Goldberg is wrong: there is a fundamental difference.

In the 1930s, there was no confusion at all as to whether the fascist movements were parties of the extreme Right or of the extreme Left. Everyone agreed. They were parties of the Right. Populist right-wingers to be sure, but right-wingers nonetheless. For once, the conventional wisdom is perfectly accurate.

For example, in 1930 Francesco Nitti (nephew of a [liberal Prime Minister](#) by the same name) published a book called [Escape](#), about his escape from [internal exile](#) on an Italian island. (Let's just say that it wasn't exactly the Gulag.) In the preface, his uncle the PM explains Mussolini for the English-speaking reader:

Mussolini represents a mediaeval adventure in Italy. Until some fifteen years ago, Communist and Anarchist, he defended regicide, anarchist crime, political assassination. He has written and predicted individual revolt. He has always considered all religions (these are his very words) like opium, to lull people to sleep. He has written and repeated for twenty years in his discourses that the abyss between Capitalism and the Proletariat should be filled with the heads of Capitalists. Again in the year 1920 he incited workmen to occupy factories and to pilfer. In 1914 he laughed at the Belgian occupation and urged the Italians to rebel against those who wanted to drag them into the war.

Which all sounds very well for Goldberg's thesis. But wait:

Not having succeeded in making a red revolution, he attempted a white reaction, taking advantage of the discontent after the war. He succeeded with the help of a few generals and part of the army who wanted reaction... Becoming Dictator, Mussolini has not only forswore all his past, but has introduced the most terrible reaction. All form of liberty has been suppressed; press liberty, association liberty, reunion liberty. Members of Parliament are practically nominated by the government. All political associations have been dissolved...

For those not versed in the color symbolism of 19th-century Europe, white is the color of reaction, just as red is the color of revolution. Thus, Nitti is telling us, unlike the old socialist Mussolini, the new fascist Mussolini is a reactionary. Just like the Borboni.

As we've seen, if the "international community" is a predator, reactionaries are its prey. So, while the Soviets might be seen as a competing predator, fascism is something quite different. Fascism is a species of prey that (unlike the Borboni) decided to fight back. And it was not exactly averse to fighting dirty.

Here is my perception of fascism: it was a reactionary movement that combined the worst ideas of the *ancien regime*, the worst politics of the democrats, and the worst tyrannies of the Bolsheviks. And what was the result? It is every bit as vanished as the Borboni. For a reactionary, fascism is more or less a short course in what not to do.

Even a lifetime later, our emotional responses to fascism and Nazism make these concepts very difficult to handle. (Full disclosure: my grandfather, a Jewish communist, enlisted in the US Army to kill Nazis. And I'm pretty sure he bagged a few.) One way to step away from these associations is to look not at the Third Reich but at the Second - the strange regime of Kaiser Bill, and the war he made.

A less loaded name for fascism might be *neomilitarism*. The ideology of Wilhelmine Germany was generally described as *militarism*, a perfectly accurate description. It was certainly reactionary, and also quite populist - for a monarchy. (World War I was extremely popular in Germany, as in all countries.) Under the Kaiser, the highest social status available was conferred by military rank. You might be a distinguished professor of physics, but if your reserve rank as a military officer was low or (worse) nonexistent, no one would talk to you at parties. Even for Americans who know something of the military, it's almost impossible to imagine living in a true militaristic society.

Why did the last survivors of the *ancien regime* become so aggressive and militaristic? Why, for example, did the German military jump at the opportunity to start a war in 1914? Because they believed our counterfactual - that the "international community" was a killer with fangs.

The German theory in 1914 was that the British alliance with France and Russia was designed to "encircle" Germany - not exactly implausible, if one glances at a map. And we have already seen how the British dealt with reactionaries when they got the chance. The theory of the German General Staff in 1914 was that Germany, surrounded and besieged, had to attack or it would be gradually choked to death.

This [bit of Nazi propaganda](#) from 1939 explains the German militarist theory of modern history quite well:

The deepest roots of this war are in England's old claim to rule the world, and Europe in particular. Although its homeland is relatively small, England has understood how to cleverly exploit others to expand its possessions. It controls the seas, the important points along major sea routes, and the richest parts of our planet. The contrast between England itself and its overseas territories is so grotesque that England has always has a certain inferiority complex with respect to the European continent. Whenever a continental power reached a certain strength, England believed itself and its empire to be threatened. Every continental flowering made England nervous, every attempt at growth by nations wanting their place in the sun led England to take on the policeman's role.

One must understand this to make sense of England's German policy from Bismarck to our own day. England was not happy with the results of the war of 1870-1871. British sympathies were already on

France's side, since for the previous one hundred years it had never had the same fear of France as it had of Germany. France had secured its own colonial empire, and its shrinking biological strength left enough room for expansion within its own natural boundaries. Things were different in Germany. England knew that the German people were strong when they had good leadership, and that nature had given them limited, resource-poor territory with a limited coast. Great Britain kept an eye on Germany, all the more whenever Germany expressed its strength, even in the most natural ways. The Second Reich experienced England's "balance of power" policy. We know that England did not want a true balance of power. It wants a situation in which England is always in a position with the help of its allies to have its way with a minority of confident, forward-moving nations.

Obviously, this is propaganda. But one bit of real history that I can recommend to anyone is the viewpoint of the fellow on the other side of this "encirclement" business: [Lord Grey of Fallodon](#). If you've ever wondered who said "the lights are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime," Lord Grey is your man. His [memoirs](#) are extremely readable - indeed, reading them one sees just why we have not seen the lamps lit again. There is simply no individual of Grey's caliber, politician or civil servant, in the whole government racket these days.

Needless to say, to Lord Grey (writing after the war), no one would ever dream of trying to encircle Germany. Rather, the German militarists are paranoid and jingoistic, constantly trying to enhance their domestic political position by triggering European crises. And indeed the pot that boiled over at Sarajevo was by no means the first such crisis - [Agadir](#) is a fine example. The British, on the other hand, are simply doing their best to keep the peace. In the end they failed, Germany attacked Belgium without provocation, and British honor bound her to respond.

I find Grey completely credible. I have no reservations about his sincerity. He certainly strikes me as a far more trustworthy character than the slippery Palmerston, who really was a bit of a snake. And his summary of the causes of the war is peerless:

After 1870 Germany had no reason to be afraid, but she fortified herself with armaments and the Triple Alliance in order that she might never have reason to be afraid in future. France naturally was afraid after 1870, and she made her military preparations and the Dual Alliance (with Russia). Britain, with a very small Army and a very large Empire, became first uncomfortable and then (particularly when Germany began a big-fleet program) afraid of isolation. She made the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, made up her quarrels with France and Russia, and entered into the Entente. Finally Germany became afraid that she would presently be afraid, and struck the blow, while she believed her power to be invincible. Heaven alone knows the whole truth about human affairs, but I believe the above sketch to be as near to a true statement of the causes of war as an ordinary intelligence can get in a few sentences.

And yet - did Germany, or more precisely the Hohenzollern monarchy, have no reason to be afraid? The

Borboni were certainly caught napping. And note that, while Germany was challenging British naval hegemony, the overdog remained Britain and the underdog Germany. Who, exactly, had more reason to be afraid of whom? Grey is not exactly shy in waxing Palmerstonian about the contest between democracy and reaction:

We had no thought ourselves of going to war in 1914 because we supposed that sooner or later we should have to fight. We just strove to prevent war happening at all. But when, in spite of our efforts, war came, it is well that we took our place in it and at the outset. The latent forces at work became apparent as the war proceeded, and the incidents in which the war originated were forgotten as these forces were revealed. It was a great struggle between the Kultur that stood for militarism and the free unmilitarist democratic ideal. It was the perception of this, whether consciously or unconsciously, that brought the United States into the war - the United States, which as a whole had cared little about the incidents that caused the war at the outset, and which did not as a whole then perceive it. But it was the perception of it, revealed to us as the war developed, that made us know that we were fighting for the very life of what Britain and the self-governing Dominions cared for. We could not have escaped that struggle between militarism and democracy by turning our backs on the war in August 1914. The thing would have pursued us until we had to turn our backs and face it, and that would have been when it was even stronger and when we had become weak and isolated.

Who sounds a little paranoid here? The British Empire covered the globe. The forces of democracy and liberalism were clearly on the advance. Reactionary militarism was beleaguered. Did it absolutely have to be utterly crushed, right then and there, bang?

Note that for most of World War I, it was Germany who wanted peace on the basis of the status quo, and the Allies who insisted that Germany be defeated and militarism eradicated. Perhaps Hitler considered his war a crusade to stamp out democracy forever, but the Kaiser did not. His opponents, however, felt no such compunctions. Grey reproduces a memo from his ambassador in Washington that states the basic German perspective, as of September 1914:

German Ambassador has stated in Press that Germany is anxious for peace on basis of *status quo*, and desires no new territory, but that England has declared intention of fighting to finish for her selfish purposes, and is consequently responsible for further bloodshed.

Grey responds:

Germany has planned this war and chosen the time for forcing it upon Europe. No one but Germany was in the same state of preparation.

We want in future to live free from the menace of this happening again.

Treitschke and other writers of repute and popularity in Germany have openly declared that to crush Great Britain and destroy the British Empire must be the objective for Germany.

We want to be sure that this idea is abandoned. A cruel wrong has been done to Belgium - an unprovoked attack aggravated by the wanton destruction of Louvain and other wholesale vandalism. What reparation is Germany to make to Belgium for this?

Is Grey's real concern reparations to Belgium (more or less a British client state?) Clearly, it is not. His concern is setting a condition that the German militarists cannot accept without losing face, because his objective is to crush Germany and destroy the German Empire. As he wrote in early 1916:

Nothing but the defeat of Germany can make a satisfactory end to this war and secure future peace...

We must, however, be careful in stating our determination to continue the war to make it clear that our object is not to force, but to support our Allies. Increasing mischief is being made between us and our Allies by German propaganda. This propaganda represents the war as one of rivalry between Great Britain and Germany; it insinuates that France, Russia and Belgium could have satisfactory terms of peace now, and that they are continuing the war in the interest of Great Britain to effect the ruin of Germany, which is not necessary for the safety of the Allies, but which alone will satisfy Great Britain.

It is just possible that this insidious misrepresentation, false though it be, may create in France, Russia, Italy and Belgium a dangerous peace movement - a movement positively unfriendly to us.

It would be well if we could all, Ministers and Press alike, strike one note, that of determination to help the Allies who have suffered the most grievous wrong, to secure the liberation of their territory, reparation for wrong done, and the advantages necessary for their future security. We should emphasize the impossibility and disgrace of thinking of peace till the Allies are secure, but should let it be understood that it is for them whose territory is occupied by the enemy, whose population has been, and is being, so grossly ill-treated, rather than for us, to say when it is opportune to speak of peace. Till that time comes, we use all our efforts and make every sacrifice to defeat the enemy in the common cause, and have no other thought but this.

Can you make this stuff up?

We're fighting for the sake of the Allies. If they would prefer peace, it is their place to speak of peace, not ours. But let's make sure we don't let them think it's okay to think of peace, because Germany must be defeated. It's especially important to counter the insidious German peace propaganda, which may lead our Allies to think we can only be satisfied by the defeat of Germany. Which is nonsense - we're only fighting to redress the wrongs to our Allies.

Again, I am not sure these excerpts really convey the flavor of Lord Grey's thinking. Obviously I am not presenting it at its best. I really do find Grey a congenial character, as I'm sure I would not find, say, Ludendorff. It is simply impossible to think of him as a predator.

And yet once again, it is difficult not to see the fangs. In any war, each side presents itself as the injured party, and the other side as the aggressor. Is Germany trying to crush Britain? Or is Britain trying to crush Germany? Or are they both aggressors?

Again, we are at an impasse. We have a very tempting theory that seems to explain all of these anomalies quite neatly, but the theory is obviously not true. Reject it, however, and the anomalies are back - and they seem to have friends. What to do?

Continue to [part 3](#).

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/04/open-letter-pt-2-more-historical.html>

## Part 3: the Jacobite history of the world

May 1, 2008

Okay, open-minded progressives. You've read [part 1](#) and [part 2](#). Quite a bushel of prose. And has any of it changed your mind? Are you ready to stop being a progressive, and start being a reactionary?

Almost certainly not. We haven't really learned anything here. All we've done is plant a couple of little, tiny seeds of doubt. Now we're going to throw a little water on those seeds, and see if we can maybe get a leaf or two to poke its head out. Don't expect a full-grown redwood to fly up and hit you in the face. Even when they work, which isn't often, conversions don't work that way. Doubt is a slow flower. You have to give it time.

What we've seen is that the story of the world that you and I grew up with - a story that is the common heritage of progressives and conservatives alike, although progressives are certainly truer to it - is oddly complicated in spots. The great caravan of the past comes with quite a baggage wagon of paradoxes, each of which needs its own explanation.

So, for example, by one set of standards which seem essential to the progressive mind, the end of colonialism was a great victory for humanity. By another set of standards which it is equally difficult to imagine rejecting, it was a vast human tragedy. Could it be both? A tragic victory, perhaps? Clio was always both poet and historian, and the idea of a tragic victory has definite Empsonian potential. On the other hand, however...

History is big. We shouldn't expect it to be simple. But we'd like it to be as simple as possible. When we study the errors of others, we see that nonsense often conceals the obvious. And what is nonsense, to those who believe in it? To a Catholic, what is the Trinity? A mystery. Some things are truly mysterious. But others have simple explanations. The Trinity is a compromise designed by a [standards committee](#). History 1, mystery 0.

I hate to beat this colonialism thing to death, but there is an odd [little op-ed](#) in the Times this morning. It's about Robert Mugabe and T.S. Eliot. It's short and worth a read.

I've seen a few similar reminiscences in the fishwrap recently - we'll let this one serve as an example. What's fascinating about these pieces is how close they come to being apologies. And yet how far away they are.

Because why should John Darnton apologize? What could he possibly be sorry for? You apologize when you're responsible for something bad that has happened. President Mugabe is clearly a bad egg. But how could Mr. Darnton and his Quill Club friends be *responsible* for him? They are reporters, that's all. They report. You decide. And yet there is that phrase - "responsible journalism."

While we're on the fishwrap beat, another puzzle was inflicted on Americans this week >by a man of the cloth. As one might expect, the smart people of the world have [smart explanations](#), whereas the [dumb ones](#) scratch their heads and say "duh:"

Chris Matthews said it best when he said if anything like the 9/11 remarks had been said in his church the weekend after he would certainly have know. I know that's true. In 20 years you have never heard anything inflammatory? It just isn't believable. He initially lied the when ABC first aired the tapes. The next night he was asked by three different news medias and he said he did not hear nor did he know of any of these remarks. Then the following Tuesday, he acknowledged he had heard about them before he announced his candidacy and that's why he asked him not to come out. Too wierd!

"Too weird." Indeed, weirdness is the mother of doubt. Is it not slightly weird that a twenty-year member of the Church of Hate Whitey could become not only the leading candidate for the Presidency, but the candidate who stands for racial harmony? Is it more weird, or less weird, than the fact that Robert Mugabe had no interest in T.S. Eliot?

The thing is: these things *don't* seem weird to me. In the progressive story of the world, they are mysteries. They can be explained, but they need to be explained. In the reactionary story of the world, however, they are firmly in dog-bites-man territory.

I have yet to justify this assertion. But as a progressive, you can swallow it without fear. It is not the red pill that will turn you to an instant Jacobite, forcing you to abandon your life, your beliefs, your friends and lovers, and replace them with an ascetic and fanatical devotion to the doomed old cause of the [Royal Stuarts](#). (Though at least you'd still "oppose Republicanism.")

Because even if we admit that the progressive story has these little lacunae, the reactionary story has giant, gaping holes. In fact, it's hard to even say there *is* a reactionary story. If there was, how would you know it? What would [Archbishop Laud](#) make of the iPhone? Of jazz? Of Harley-Davidson? The mind, she boggles.

Hopefully she will boggle slightly less after you read the following. Which will still not turn you into a Jacobite - but might at least help you understand the temptation.

Before we can tell the reactionary story, we have to define these weird words, *progressive* and *reactionary*. Vast tomes have been devoted to this purpose. But let's make it as simple: to be progressive is to be left-wing. To be reactionary is to be right-wing.

What is this weird political axis? As you may know, the terms *left* and *right* come from the seating arrangements in the French [Legislative Assembly](#). A body no longer in existence. Yet somehow, the dimension remains relevant. It is easy to say that if Barack, Hillary and McCain were seated in the

Legislative Assembly, Hillary would be sitting to the right of Barack, and McCain would be to the right of Hillary.

Moreover, we can apply the axis to events even before 1791. For example, we can say that in the Reformation, Catholicism was right-wing and Protestantism left-wing. This gets a little confusing in the post-1945 era - most pre-20C Catholics would find the present-day Church quite, um, Protestant. (If you are unconvinced of this, you may enjoy [Novus Ordo Watch](#).) But there is really no Catholic equivalent of the [Münster Republic](#), the [Levellers](#), etc, etc.

Of course, politics is not a quantitative science (or a science at all), and sometimes it can be a little tricky to decide who is to the left or right of whom. But it's really quite amazing that this linear criterion can be applied so effectively across five centuries of human history. (It even works pretty well on the Greeks and Romans.)

Imagine, for instance, that we wanted to classify *music* along a linear axis. Is Bach to the right of the Beatles? Okay, probably. Are the Stones to the left of the Beatles? Where does the Cure fit in? And John Coltrane? And the Dead Kennedys? What about Einstürzende Neubauten? Are they to the right of Tom Petty, or the left? Is Varg Vikernes between them? And how does he stack up next to 50 Cent?

Each of these musicians represents a way of thinking about music. None of them invented music, nor are any of them unique. They are members of movements. If we have trouble classifying the individual artists, we should at least be able to classify the movements. So is punk to the left of goth? Is baroque to the right of death metal, gangsta rap, ragtime, etc? We remain completely lost. I'm sure you could arrange all these musical forms on a line, if you had to. And so could I. But I doubt our answers would be the same.

Yet strangely, in the political sphere, this works. Indeed we take it for granted. Why should philosophies of music be all over the map, but philosophies of government arrange themselves along one consistent dimension?

Feel free to come up with your own answer. Here is mine.

Let's start with the obvious. A reactionary - ie, a right-winger - is someone who believes in *order*, *stability*, and *security*. All of which he treats as synonyms.

Think, as a progressive, about the simplicity of this proposition. It is so stupid as to be almost mindless. What is the purpose of government? Why do we have government, rather than nothing? Because the alternative is [Corner Man](#).

Note that Corner Man has his own philosophy of government. He exercises [sovereignty](#). That's *his* corner. ("Metro [the Las Vegas PD] can't even get me off this ---- corner.") Indeed, he has much the same relationship to the government that you and I know and love, that Henry VIII had to the Pope. And how

did he acquire his corner? "I've been on this ---- corner for ten ---- years." In legal theory this is called [adverse possession](#), which is more or less how the Tudors acquired *their* little island.

Of course, we reactionaries are not fans of Corner Man, largely because his claim to the corner is contested by a superior authority which will prevail in any serious conflict. Why does he attack the blue PT Cruiser? Is it because he's on crack? Perhaps, but perhaps it's also because the driver owes allegiance to the other side of the conflict - "Metro" - and neither has nor would acknowledge Corner Man's authority. For example, she has not paid him any taxes, fees, or rents for the privilege of positioning her vehicle on his (so-called) territory.

One synonym *reactionary* is [legitimist](#). When the legitimist asks whether Corner Man really owns his corner, he is not asking whether Corner Man *should* own his corner. He asks whether Corner Man *does* own his corner. And his answer is "no." He prefers the claim of "Metro," not (or not just) because "Metro" is not in the habit of getting loaded and bashing the holy heck out of random peoples' cars, but because "Metro" and Corner Man have conflicting claims, and in the end, the former is almost certain to win.

And when he asks whether the Bourbons are the legitimate rulers of France or the Stuarts of England, he is not asking whether (a) the Bourbon or Stuart family has some hereditary biological property that makes their scions ideal for the job ([midichlorians](#), perhaps), or (b) the Bourbon or Stuart will suffer intolerably as a result of being deprived of the throne, or even (c) the Bourbon or Stuart families obtained their original claims fairly and squarely. At least, not if he has any sense. None of these arguments is even close to viable.

Thus, the order that the rational reactionary seeks to preserve and/or restore is *arbitrary*. Perhaps it can be justified on some moral basis. But probably not. It is good simply because it is order, and the alternative to order is violence at worst and politics at best. If the Bourbons do not rule France, someone will - Robespierre, or Napoleon, or Corner Man.

One of the difficulties in resurrecting classical reactionary thought is that when this idea was expressed in the 17th century, it came out in the form of theology. Who put the Stuarts in charge of England? God did. Obviously. And you don't want to argue with God. For a believer in [Divine Providence](#), this is pretty much unanswerable. For a 21st-century reactionary, it won't do at all.

Perhaps the best and most succinct statement of the reactionary philosophy of government - especially considering the context - was [this one](#):

Truly I desire their liberty and freedom as much as anybody whomsoever; but I must tell you their liberty and freedom consists of having of government, those laws by which their life and their goods may be most their own. It is not for having a share in government, sir, that is nothing pertaining to them. A subject and sovereign are clear different things.

While I'm not prepared to endorse the author on all matters whatsoever (and I feel that [chartered companies](#) are more likely to produce effective neo-reactionary government than royal families, Stuart or otherwise), I agree with every word of the above. At least for me, it makes a fine endpoint to the axis: it is impossible to be more reactionary than Charles I.

So we know what a reactionary is: a believer in order. What is a progressive?

Here is the problem. We only have one dimension to work with. We know that a progressive is the polar opposite of a reactionary. So if a reactionary is a believer in order, a progressive is - a believer in disorder? A believer in mayhem? A believer in chaos?

Well, of course, this is exactly what a reactionary would say. (In fact, Dr. Johnson did [say it](#).) The only problem is that it's obviously not true. When you, dear progressive, watch the clip of Corner Man, do you revel in the crunch of smashing glass, the screams of the victims, the thrill of wanton destruction? Um, no. You're horrified, just like me.

Let's put aside this question of order for the moment. We know that reactionaries believe in order. We know that progressives do not believe in chaos. But we know that reactionaries are the opposite of progressives. Is this a paradox? It is, and we will resolve it. But not quite yet.

We can say quite easily that a progressive is someone who believes in *progress*. That is, he or she believes the world is moving toward - or at least should be moving toward - some state which is an improvement on the present condition of affairs.

This is what Barack Obama means when he talks about *change*. Why do he and his listeners assume so automatically that this *change* will be for the better? Isn't this word neutral? *Change* means a transition to something different. Different could be better. Or it could be worse. Surely the matter deserves some clarification.

The obvious explanation is that since Obama and his followers will be doing the changing, they will make sure that the result is desirable - at least, to them.

I find this answer inadequate. It implies that progressives are egocentric, humorless, and incapable of self-criticism. I'm sure this is true of some. I'm sure it is also true of some reactionaries - although these days you need a pretty solid sense of humor to even consider being a reactionary. But it is rude to apply a pejorative derivation to an entire belief system, and nor is it particularly accurate in my experience.

A better answer is that today's progressives see themselves as the modern heirs of a tradition of *change*, stretching back to the Enlightenment. They see *change* as inherently good because they see this history as a history of progress, ie, improvement. In other words, they believe in [Whig history](#).

Whether you are a progressive, a reactionary, or anything in between, I highly recommend the recent

documentary [Your Mommy Kills Animals](#), about the animal-rights movement. In it there is a clip of [Ingrid Newkirk](#) in which she makes the following proposition: animal rights is a social-justice movement. All social-justice movements in the past have been successful. Therefore, the animal-rights movement will inevitably succeed.

This is pure Whig history. It postulates a mysterious force that animates the course of history, and operates inevitably in the progressive direction. Note the circular reasoning: social justice succeeds because social justice is good. How do we know that social justice is good? Because it succeeds, and good tends to triumph over evil. How do we know that good tends to triumph over evil? Well, just look at the record of social-justice movements.

Which is impressive indeed. If there is any constant phenomenon in the last few hundred years of Western history, it's that - with [occasional reversals](#) - reactionaries tend to lose and progressives tend to win. Whether you call them progressives, [liberals](#), [Radicals](#), [Jacobins](#), [republicans](#), or even revolutionaries, socialists or communists, the left is your winning team.

What's interesting about this effect is the number of theories that have been proposed to explain it. Richard Dawkins attributes it to a mysterious force which he calls the [Zeitgeist](#). Dawkins, to his great credit, allows as how he has no understanding of the effect. It is just a variable without which his equations won't balance, like Einstein's cosmological constant.

Others of a more theological bent have attributed the effect to [Divine Providence](#). (Note that the success of progressivism quite conclusively disproves the Providential theory of divine-right monarchy.) And then of course there is our old friend, [dialectical materialism](#). Since all these theories are mutually inconsistent, let's reserve our judgment by calling this mysterious left-favoring force the W-force - W, for Whig.

What explains the W-force? One easy explanation is that it's just the interaction of hindsight and a random walk. Everything changes over time - including opinions. Since by definition we consider ourselves enlightened, history appears as a progress from darkness to light.

For example, Professor Dawkins, since he is a progressive, sees the modern tolerance of gays and lesbians as genuine progress (I happen to agree). And for the same reason, he sees the modern intolerance of slavery in just the same way.

However, if these changes are indeed arbitrary, a random walk could reverse them. Professor Dawkins' great-great-grandchildren could then explain to us, just as sincerely, the great moral advance of society, which early in the 21st century still turned a blind eye to rampant sodomy and had no conception of the proper relationship between man and servant.

While this theory is amusing, it is pretty clearly wrong. It depends on the fact that we don't yet have a good definition of what it means to be "progressive." But it clearly does mean *something*. We don't see

these kinds of reversals. We see consistent movement in a single direction. Furthermore, we know that progress is the opposite of reaction, and we have a very good definition of reaction. And we know that reaction tends to lose. That isn't random.

Another phenomenon that people often invoke implicitly is the advance of science and engineering, which indeed is very like the W-force. It is easy to assume, for example, that Charles I could not possibly have anything to say to us on the theory of government, because - to paraphrase Hilaire Belloc - we have the iPhone, and he did not.

Of course, all the forms of government we know today were known not only to Charles I, but also to Aristotle. We know why science and engineering have advanced monotonically: it is much easier to create knowledge than destroy it. Since the American approach to government, which has now spread around the world, not only considerably predates iPhones but was in fact based on ancient Greek models, the analogy is quite spurious. It rests on little more than the double meaning of the word "progress."

Another way to evaluate this question is to imagine that the technology of the present suddenly became available to the societies of the past. Stuart iPhones simply break the brain, but we can imagine what the reactionary England of 1808, in which approximately twelve people had the vote and small children were hanged for inappropriate use of the word "God," would make of 21st-century technology. I suspect they would do pretty much what they did with 19th-century technology - use it to take over the world.

We should also seriously consider the possibility that the W-force is exactly what it claims to be, and that good really does have a tendency to triumph over evil. Unfortunately, when we examine political turmoil at the micro level, this is not the tendency we see - the classic case being the French Revolution.

Why did the French Revolution, the vast majority of whose initiators meant nothing but the best for their country, go so sour? A simple explanation is that good people are scrupulous, and evil ones are not. Thus, the latter have more freedom of action than the former. Thus, those who are amoral and simply wish to get ahead in life should choose the side of evil. Thus, good is outnumbered and evil is reinforced, producing the [Yeats effect](#):

The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Anyone who has not seen this in practice has no experience of human affairs.

I'm afraid I have no rational progressive explanation for the W-force. If anyone else does, I'd be curious to hear it. ([Professor Dawkins](#) might be curious to hear it as well.) I do, however, have a reactionary explanation.

First, let's consider the famous first paragraph of Macaulay's [History of England](#), which (as La Wik [notes](#)) has long served as the case study of Whig history:

I purpose to write the history of England from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living. I shall recount the errors which, in a few months, alienated a loyal gentry and priesthood from the House of Stuart. I shall trace the course of that revolution which terminated the long struggle between our sovereigns and their parliaments, and bound up together the rights of the people and the title of the reigning dynasty. I shall relate how the new settlement was, during many troubled years, successfully defended against foreign and domestic enemies; how, under that settlement, the authority of law and the security of property were found to be compatible with a liberty of discussion and of individual action never before known; how, from the auspicious union of order and freedom, sprang a prosperity of which the annals of human affairs had furnished no example; how our country, from a state of ignominious vassalage, rapidly rose to the place of umpire among European powers; how her opulence and her martial glory grew together; how, by wise and resolute good faith, was gradually established a public credit fruitful of marvels which to the statesmen of any former age would have seemed incredible; how a gigantic commerce gave birth to a maritime power, compared with which every other maritime power, ancient or modern, sinks into insignificance; how Scotland, after ages of enmity, was at length united to England, not merely by legal bonds, but by indissoluble ties of interest and affection; how, in America, the British colonies rapidly became far mightier and wealthier than the realms which Cortes and Pizarro had added to the dominions of Charles the Fifth; how in Asia, British adventurers founded an empire not less splendid and more durable than that of Alexander.

Okay. Imagine you are the leader of a daring, futuristic, secret science project whose goal is to resurrect the mind of Macaulay, by digitizing scraps of rotten tissue from his cranium, applying a holographic reconstruction algorithm, and simulating the result in a giant supercomputer. After great effort, you succeed. Macaulay lives. You connect the computer to the Internet. Running at superhuman speed, it downloads gigabytes of information from La Wik and other reliable sources. It says nothing. It is merely processing. Macaulay is revising his great history of England. You wait, breathless, as he reacts to the last 150 years. Finally the screen flashes to life and produces a single sentence:

And then it all went to shit.

The trouble is that the people who run England now, while they are progressive to a T and consider themselves very much the heirs of the British liberal tradition, have different objective standards of success than Macaulay. By Tony Blair's standards, Great Britain is doing better than ever. By Macaulay's standards, it is a disaster area.

What happened? The W-force itself. With its customary glacial irresistibility, it has been driving the center of British politics steadily to the left for the last 150 years. Meanwhile, poor Macaulay has been stuck in his own cranium, just rotting. He has had no chance to adapt. So he still has the same opinions he held in 1859, which in the world of 2008 put him somewhere to the right of [John Tyndall](#). If I think of Gordon Brown's Labour as the left edge of my screen and David Cameron's Tories as the right, Macaulay

is somewhere out on the fire escape.

Of course, if you are a progressive with a soft spot for Macaulay - despite some of his rather, um, Eurocentric [opinions](#) - Macaulay, you might assume that by reading the last 150 years of history, he would realize that New Labour is exactly where it's at. I suppose this is a matter of opinion. Perhaps Gordon Brown really is that convincing.

However, we also need to consider the possibility that Macaulay would be convinced in the *opposite direction*. Given the fact that the state of England today would horrify him, he might well be open to moving further out on the fire escape - a reaction not dissimilar to the response that 18th-century Whigs, such as Burke (yes, Burke was a Whig) had to the Reign of Terror.

The absolute shibboleth of the 18th-century and 19th-century British liberal movement, for example, was the proposition that a fundamentally aristocratic government could resist democratic pressures by conceding a mixed constitution. Contemporary commenters on the Reform Acts of [1832](#) and [1867](#) are constantly explaining that Tory or [Adullamite](#) right-wing resistance to these measures was not only futile, but actually dangerous - it could spark an actual, French-style revolution.

Indeed the entire constitution of post-1688 Britain was based on this proposition, because it was based on the concept of [constitutional monarchy](#) - as opposed to that dreaded Jacobite abomination, "absolute" monarchy. And how exactly did that one work out? As La Wik puts it:

As originally conceived, a constitutional monarch was quite a powerful figure, head of the executive branch even though his or her power was limited by the constitution and the elected parliament... An evolution in political thinking would, however, eventually spawn such phenomena as universal suffrage and political parties. By the mid 20th century, the political culture in Europe had shifted to the point where most constitutional monarchs had been reduced to the status of figureheads, with no effective power at all. Instead, it was the democratically elected parliaments, and their leader, the prime minister who had become those who exercised power.

If, in 1688, you had insisted that the concept of a "constitutional monarchy" was a contradiction in terms, that "constitutional" simply meant "symbolic" and the upshot of the whole scheme would simply be a return to the rule of Parliament, you were a Jacobite. Plain and simple.

And you were also dead wrong - for about two centuries. Most of the royal powers died with George III, but even Queen Victoria exercised a surprising amount of authority over the operations of "her" government. No longer. If the W-force has made anything clear, it's that constitutional monarchy is not a stable form of government. Nor is restricted suffrage. There is simply no compromise with democracy - good or bad.

Moreover, 19th-century classical liberals promised over and over again that democracy, despite the obvious mathematics of the situation, need not lead to what we now call "socialism." Supposedly the

English people, with their stern moral fibre, would never tolerate it. Etc.

The lesson of history is quite clear. Whether you love the W-force or hate it, surrendering to it is not an effective way to resist it. There is no stable point along the left-right axis at which the W-force, having exacted all the concessions to which justice entitles it, simply disappears. Oh, no. It always wants more. "I can has cheezburger?"

The persistence of this delusion in Anglo-American thought is quite remarkable. For example, I was reading [Harold Temperley's](#) life of [George Canning](#), from 1905, when I came across this amazing [passage](#) on the [Holy Alliance](#):

Despite the great revolution the despots of Europe had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing, except their one saving grace of benevolence. The paternal system of government has not succeeded where strong local institutions or feelings exist, and for this reason Austria has never conciliated or subdued Hungary. But the Holy Alliance proposed a sort of patriarchal system of government for all Europe, which could not really have applied to those nations where free constitutions or strong patriotic feeling still remained. These proved indeed to be to [Metternich](#) and [Alexander](#) what [Kossuth](#) and [Deak](#) have been to [Francis Joseph](#). Metternich did not understand the changes created by the French Revolution in the ideas and hearts of men. He thought he could tear a page from the Book of History, and destroy both the memory and the hope of liberty. He believed that re-action could be permanent, that new ideals and opinions could be crushed, and the world again beguiled into the dreary inaction which characterized the home politics of all nations before 1789.

"Dreary inaction!" "Their one saving grace of benevolence!"

Friends, the world today is not such an awful place. Corner Man aside. But compared to what it would be if "dreary inaction" had prevailed in the world since 1905, it is a sewer and a slum and a dungheap.

Think of all the beautiful people who would have lived, all the beautiful cities that would not have been bombed, all the hideous ones that would not have been built. The Napoleonic Wars were a garden-party compared to the First and Second. The French Revolution was a garden-party compared to the Russian. And, as we've seen, the Whig foreign policy of exporting democracy as a universal remedy for all ills, as practiced by both Canning and Temperley, does not appear entirely unconnected with these tragedies.

Temperley is even wrong about the small stuff. The hot-blooded Hungarians? Snoring soundly in the arms of Brussels. And before that, Moscow. Which had far less trouble with Nagy than Franz Josef had with Kossuth. No constitutions conceded there! So much for the "Book of History."

Moreover, Temperley didn't even need the future to prove him wrong about Metternich - who, as Deogolwulf [points out](#), if anything exaggerated the eventual futility of his efforts. Europe's era of pure reaction was short, but the years between 1815 and 1848 were great ones. (Don't miss the Wulf's rare

sally into long form, wherein he [devastates the Enlightenment](#) in the shape of the distinguished [Professor Grayling](#) - who turns up in the comment barrel, and receives the brisk filleting his name suggests.)

This brings us to the failed project of conservatism, which puts its money in a slightly different place - the proposition that all the concessions made to the W-force in the past are good and necessary, but any further concessions are bad and unnecessary. The Confederate theologian [R.L. Dabney](#) dispensed with this [quite eloquently](#):

It may be inferred again that the present movement for women's rights will certainly prevail from the history of its only opponent, Northern conservatism. This is a party which never conserves anything. Its history has been that it demurs to each aggression of the progressive party, and aims to save its credit by a respectable amount of growling, but always acquiesces at last in the innovation. What was the resisted novelty of yesterday is today one of the accepted principles of conservatism; it is now conservative only in affecting to resist the next innovation, which will tomorrow be forced upon its timidity and will be succeeded by some third revolution, to be denounced and then adopted in its turn. American conservatism is merely the shadow that follows Radicalism as it moves forward towards perdition. It remains behind it, but never retards it, and always advances near its leader. This pretended salt bath utterly lost its savor: wherewith shall it be salted? Its impotency is not hard, indeed, to explain. It is worthless because it is the conservatism of expediency only, and not of sturdy principle. It intends to risk nothing serious for the sake of the truth, and has no idea of being guilty of the folly of martyrdom. It always when about to enter a protest very blandly informs the wild beast whose path it essays to stop, that its "bark is worse than its bite," and that it only means to save its manners by enacting its decent role of resistance. The only practical purpose which it now subserves in American politics is to give enough exercise to Radicalism to keep it "in wind," and to prevent its becoming puffy and lazy, from having nothing to whip. No doubt, after a few years, when women's suffrage shall have become an accomplished fact, conservatism will tacitly admit it into its creed, and thenceforward plume itself upon its wise firmness in opposing with similar weapons the extreme of baby suffrage; and when that too shall have been won, it will be heard declaring that the integrity of the American Constitution requires at least the refusal of suffrage to donkeys. There it will assume, with great dignity, its final position.

I'm sure Rev. Dabney would have regarded the era of Ingrid Newkirk with great amusement.

However, note how thoroughly hoist on his own petard he is. The proposition that suffrage is a bad idea, period, may not be one you regard as defensible - but it is surely more defensible than the proposition that all men should be able to vote, but not all women. (Or white men and not black men, another proposition of which the Rev. Dabney was convinced. Note that this bastion also proved impractical to defend.)

So: we still do not understand the W-force. Nor do we understand why reaction is the polar opposite of progressivism. Nor do we have any theory which explains in which cases the latter is good, and in which cases it is bad.

But Dabney and Metternich suggest a very different way of dealing with it. Perhaps if you actually oppose the W-force, the most effective way to oppose it is simply to... oppose it.

After all, as a progressive, you oppose racism. Is the most effective way to oppose racism to give it a little air, to let it blow off steam - to be just a little bit racist, but not too much? It strikes me that the most effective way to oppose racism is simply to not tolerate it at all.

As a progressive, you support democracy. But if you set this aside, wouldn't your advice to a government that opposed democracy simply be the same? If you, with full hindsight, were advising Charles I, would you really advise him to let the Parliament execute [Strafford](#), on the grounds that it might sate their lust for necks?

What I'm suggesting is that the W-force actually behaves as an [inverted pendulum](#), perhaps with a bit of a delay loop. As an "absolute" monarch, the best strategy for maintaining your rule is to preserve your sovereignty entirely intact. Ripping off chunks of it and throwing them to the wolves only seems to encourage the critters.

Why was this not obvious to the kings and princes of old Europe? Perhaps it was obvious. The trouble was that absolute monarchy was always an ideal, never a reality. Every sovereign in history has been a creature of politics - not democratic politics, perhaps, but politics still. At the very least, a king who loses the support of the army is finished. So the pendulum is not quite vertical, and it's all too easy to let it do what it obviously wants to do.

The inverted-pendulum model suggests that, for a stable and coherent nondemocratic state, eliminating politics requires very little repressive energy. Singapore, Dubai and China, for example, all have their secret police - as did the 19th-century Hapsburgs. Each of these governments is very different from the others, but they are all terrified of the W-force. Yet they manage to restrain it, without either falling prey to democracy or opening death camps.

Residents of these countries can think whatever they like. They can even say whatever they like. It is only when they actually organize that they get in trouble. If you don't want the [Ministry of Public Security](#) to bother you, don't start or join an antigovernment movement. Certainly this is not ideal - I don't think this blog would be tolerated in China, and my image of the ideal state is one in which you can start all the antigovernment movements you want, as long as they don't involve guns or bombs. However, when we compare this level of infringement of personal freedom to the experience of daily life under Stalin or Hitler, we are comparing peanuts to pumpkins.

Why does China not tolerate peaceful antigovernment politics? Because "people power" can defeat the People's Liberation Army? No. Because China is not a perfectly stable state, and it knows that quite well. Within the Chinese Communist Party, there is politics galore. One move that is off-limits for contending figures within the Chinese regime, however, is imposing one's will on one's adversaries by means of mob politics. Almost everyone in any position of responsibility in the PRC today was personally scarred by the Cultural Revolution, in which China felt all the vices of democracy and none of its virtues. Only by outlawing politics can the Party hold itself together.

Note that in 1989 the Chinese government broke the cardinal rule of Whig government: never fire on a mob. As John F. Kennedy put it, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." Not only did the Chinese government make peaceful revolution impossible - they made peaceful revolution violent. And the result? Violent revolution? No - twenty years of peace, unparalleled prosperity, and personal if not political freedom. As philosophers say, one white raven refutes the assertion that all ravens are black.

The inverted-pendulum model of the W-force gives us a great way to understand Hitler. Yes: Hitler was a reactionary. I am a reactionary. Yikes! If I ever feel the need to grow a mustache, which I won't, I'll have to make sure it extends well past the nose on both sides. Perhaps waxing and curling the tips is just the only way.

Nazism, and fascism in general, was a reactionary movement. It was also the product of a very unusual set of circumstances in history. The fascisms emerged in countries in which the top level of the political system had been turned over to liberals, but many remnants of the *ancien regime* still existed - notably in the security forces and judiciary system - and retained considerable popular support among the petit-bourgeois or Townie caste.

So the pendulum was a long, long way from top dead center. But the system still had a crude mechanism by which it could be brutally yanked back: street violence. Hitler and Mussolini came to power partly by good old democratic politics, and partly by using their thugs to intimidate their political opponents. This would not have been possible without a security system which tolerated this sort of behavior. When the SA had street fights with the Communists, the SA men tended to get off and the Communists get long jail sentences.

Note how much effort post-1945 governments invest in making sure this particular horse does not escape from this particular barn. There is zero official tolerance for right-wing political violence in any Western country today. (There is a good bit of tolerance for left-wing violence, notably the European [antifas](#), who are the real heirs of [Ernst Röhm](#).) Classical fascism simply does not work without a hefty supply of judges who are willing to "let boys be boys."

The Western judicial systems today cannot be described as reactionary in any way, shape or form. Thus, if you are a progressive, you can cross fascism - at least, good old 1930s style fascism - off your list of

worries. And if you are a reactionary, you can cross it off your list of tricks to try. Considering the results of the 1930s, I have to regard this as a good thing.

Okay. Enough suspense. Enough digressions. Let's explain the W-force. Let's also explain why progressivism is the opposite of reaction. In fact, let's explain them both with the same theory.

Progressives do not, in general, believe in chaos. (Imagine breaking into the Obama website and replacing all uses of the word "change" with "chaos." Happy, chanting crowds, holding placards that just say "CHAOS..." frankly, the whole thing is creepy enough as it is.) Nor do they believe in disorder, mayhem, destruction, or doing a massive pile of crack and smashing the crap out of some poor woman's car.

Rather, when you look at what progressives, Whigs, republicans, and other anti-reactionaries *actually believe in* - whether they are supporters of Obama, Lafayette, Herzen, or any other paladin of the people's cause - it is rarely (although not never) the simple, nihilistic liquidation of the present order. It is always the construction of some new order, which is at least intended as an improvement on the present one.

However, in order to construct this new order, two things need to happen. One: the builders of the new order need to gain power. Two: they need to destroy the old order, which by its insistence on continuing to exist obstructs the birth of the new.

In the progressive mind, these indispensable tasks are not objectives. They are methods. They may even be conceived as unpleasant, if necessary, duties.

One fascinating fact about the presidential campaign of 2008 is that both Democratic candidates are, or at least at one point were, disciples of [Saul Alinsky](#). Clinton actually studied and corresponded with Alinsky. Obama was an Alinskyist "community organizer." Next year, we may well have our first Alinskyist president.

Last year, the New Republic - not a reactionary publication - published an [excellent article](#) on Obama's Alinskyist roots. I'm afraid this piece is required reading for all progressives. If you are still a progressive after reading it, at least you know what you're involved with. Here's the bit that jumped out for me:

Alinsky's contribution to community organizing was to create a set of rules, a clear-eyed and systemic approach that ordinary citizens can use to gain public power. The first and most fundamental lesson Obama learned was to reassess his understanding of power. Horwitt says that, when Alinsky would ask new students why they wanted to organize, they would invariably respond with selfless bromides about wanting to help others. Alinsky would then scream back at them that there was a one-word answer: "You want to organize for power!"

Galluzzo shared with me the manual he uses to train new organizers, which is little different from the version he used to train Obama in the '80s. It is filled with workshops and chapter headings on

understanding power: "power analysis," "elements of a power organization," "the path to power." Galluzzo told me that many new trainees have an aversion to Alinsky's gritty approach because they come to organizing as idealists rather than realists. But Galluzzo's manual instructs them to get over these hang-ups. "We are not virtuous by not wanting power," it says. "We are really cowards for not wanting power," because "power is good" and "powerlessness is evil."

The other fundamental lesson Obama was taught is Alinsky's maxim that self-interest is the only principle around which to organize people. (Galluzzo's manual goes so far as to advise trainees in block letters: "get rid of do-gooders in your church and your organization.") Obama was a fan of Alinsky's realistic streak. "The key to creating successful organizations was making sure people's self-interest was met," he told me, "and not just basing it on pie-in-the-sky idealism. So there were some basic principles that remained powerful then, and in fact I still believe in."

[...]

Obama so mastered the workshops on power that he later taught them himself. On his campaign website, one can find a photo of Obama in a classroom teaching students Alinskian methods. He stands in front of a blackboard on which he has written, "Power Analysis" and "Relationships Built on Self Interest," an idea illustrated by a diagram of the flow of money from corporations to the mayor.

(I haven't looked for this picture. I suspect the site has probably been updated.)

Here is my theory about progressivism: it is a "Relationship Built on Self Interest." It is exactly what Alinsky says it is: a way for people who want power to organize. It brings them together around the oldest human pleasure other than sex: ganging up on your enemies. It lets them rationalize this ruthless, carnivorous activity as a philanthropic cause. But the real attraction is the thrill of power and victory - sometimes with a little money thrown in.

This is why the likes of a Temperley cannot imagine a world of "dreary inaction," with no politics at all for anyone. "That is nothing pertaining to them." Obama once tried to take a regular job at an [ordinary company](#). He felt dead in it. It was like feeding a dog on turnips. Carnivores need meat.

What made Alinsky so effective was that he dispensed with the romantic euphemisms. He just described the thing as what it is. You have to admire him for that, I feel. A Lafayette, a Herzen, or almost any 19th-century republican outside the Marxist department, would have been absolutely appalled by Alinsky. But the fact is that they were basically in the same business.

So the progressive is, indeed, the polar opposite of the reactionary. Just as order and stability are essential to reaction, disorder and destruction are essential to progressivism.

The progressive never sees it this way. His goal is never to produce disorder and destruction. Unless he is

Alinsky himself, he is very unlikely to think directly in terms of seizing power and smashing his enemies. Usually there is some end which is unequivocally desirable - often even from the reactionary perspective.

But if you could somehow design a progressive movement that could achieve its goal without seizing power or smashing its enemies, it would have little energy and find few supporters. What makes these movements so popular is the opportunity for action and the prospect of victory. To defeat them, ensure that they have no chance of success. No one loves a loser.

This theory also explains why progressive movements can produce results which are good. One: their goals have to be good, at least from their followers' perspective. Since these are not evil people we're talking about, their definition of good is often the same as yours or mine. And two: if progressivism is an essentially destructive force, some things still do need destroying.

Let's take homophobia, for example, because this is one area on which (despite my breeder tendencies) I am fully in agreement with the most advanced progressive thinking. And yet, the destruction of homophobia is an act of violent cultural hegemony. Americans and Europeans have considered homosexuality sick, evil and wrong since Jesus was a little boy. If you have the power to tell people they can't believe this anymore, you have the power to tell them just about anything. In this case, you are using your superpowers for good. Is this always so?

As for the W-force, while the inverted pendulum is a good physical analogy, there is another: [entropy](#).

Progressivism is obviously entropic. Obviously, its enemy is order. Progressives instinctively despise formality, authority, and hierarchy. Reactionary political theorists such as Hobbes liked to conceive the state in terms of an ordered system, a sort of clockwork. Progressivism is sand in the gears of the clock.

More subtly, however, the real entropic effect is in the progressive method of capturing power not by seizing the entire state, but by biting off little chunks of it wherever it sticks out. The effect is a steady increase in the complexity of the state's decision-making process. And complexity, of course, is the same thing as entropy.

Continue to [part 4](#)...

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/05/ol3-jacobite-history-of-world.html>

## Part 4: Dr. Johnson's hypothesis

May 8, 2008

In the [first three parts](#), dear open-minded progressive, we've tried to build up some tools that will help you evaluate the disturbing proposition we're about to present.

The proposition is neither new nor mysterious. We'll call it Dr. Johnson's hypothesis - from [this quip](#) by the great [Doctor](#). Of course this is not a hypothesis in the scientific sense of the word - we cannot prove it, nor will we try. It is just a phrase you can agree with, or not.

The great advantage of Dr. Johnson's formulation is that it has a pleasant boolean quality. You can agree or disagree. It is pretty hard to be indifferent. Let's take it for granted that, as a progressive, you disagree, and we'll try to figure out what might change your mind.

What does it mean that the "Devil was the first Whig?" What do you think of when you think of the Devil? I always think of [Mick Jagger](#). Surely we can agree that the Devil *rode a tank, held a general's rank, when the Blitzkrieg raged and the bodies stank*. What Dr. Johnson is proposing is that the Adversary clapped at the [Putney Debates](#), that he smeared his face and shook his tomahawk on the [Dartmouth](#), that he leered and cackled as he swore the [Tennis Court Oath](#). Not that it's a short song, but I don't recall these bits.

Of course, there is that part about *St. Petersburg*, when it was *time for a change...* I actually have been holding out on you guys here. I have a little family secret to reveal.

I am not a progressive. But my father's parents were. Great Neck Jews of the Yiddish variety, *progressive* is the exact word they always used to describe their views. And they meant exactly the same thing by it that Barack Obama does. One of the last things my grandmother said to me, before she fell down the stairs and smashed her frontal lobe (kids, when your elderly relatives sign living wills, they generally mean it - make sure the doctors are reminded, often), was that [Frank Rich](#) is a really, really wonderful writer.

Only, you know what? For Gramps and Grandma, who were about the nicest people you could imagine, who certainly had no interest in the Devil or any of his works, not even Mick Jagger, *progressive* was a code word. A sort of dog-whistle. What they really were was Communists.

I don't mean just pinkos or fellow travelers of the "Alger - I mean, Adlai" variety. I mean actual, dues-paying members of the [CPUSA](#). From the '30s through at least the '70s. Did they have cards? Did they carry them? Did they ever pull out their Party cards by mistake at Safeway? "I'm sorry, ma'am, this may entitle you to free travel on the Moscow subway, but it does not provide access to our low-priced specials." I'm afraid these details are lost to history.

But my brother has wartime letters from my grandfather in which he closes by asking his wife to "keep faith with the Party." My parents recall dinner-table conversations from the early '70s in which the phrase "party line" was used in a non-ironic context. And the story goes that the two of them actually met at a Party meeting, at which Gramps stood on a chair in someone's kitchen and made some kind of a rabble-rousing speech.

I am relying on family hearsay here. Because my grandmother would never admit any of it, *even to me*. Not that I outed myself as a Jacobite, but it must have been clear that I hadn't been reading quite enough Frank Rich. Once I screwed up my courage and asked her if the story about owing my existence to a Party cell was true. "Oh, no," she said. "It was a meeting of the [American League for Peace and Democracy](#)." I'm afraid Grandma's conspiratorial reflexes were not made for a world with Wikipedia.

So, in 2008 terms, what we're saying when we say that *the Devil was the first Whig* is that this idea of "progress" might be kind of, well, *creepy and weird*. As you see, my family background predisposes me to this suspicion. There is no use in trying to convince me that there was never any such thing as an international Communist conspiracy.

As a modern progressive, of course, you are not a Communist but (as Sartre put it) an anti-anti-Communist. You think of Communism as a mistake, which of course is exactly what it was. The anti-Communism of a Joe McCarthy or a Robert Welch still shocks and appalls you. Its opposite does not. "McCarthyist" is a live insult in your mind. So is "fascist." "Communist," or any of its variants, is kind of dated and almost funny. "You Communist!"

At most you might say that Obama is a communist the same way Mitt Romney is a Mormon. Romney is not a Mormon because he, personally, read the Book of Mormon and felt the awe and mystery of Joseph Smith's golden plates. He is a Mormon because his parents were Mormons. Just as Obama's were [communists](#). (I use the small 'c' to mean [sympathy](#), not membership.) Even if you made Romney absolute king of the universe, I suspect that re-establishing the [State of Deseret](#) would not be high on his agenda. I'm sure the same goes for Obama and the Politburo.

The anti-anti-Communist theory of history has a special niche for Communism. It is not good, exactly, but it is also not good to attack it. So we won't. The truth is that Communism is only one small part of the progressive experience. The conclusion that progressivism must be bad because Stalin called himself "progressive" is just as facile and fallacious as the conclusion that reaction must be bad because Hitler (though he did not use the word) was a reactionary.

At best Communism is an example of how "progress" could be creepy and weird. But, because of these historical associations, it's not an effective example of "creepy and weird." Here's a better one: *Scientology*.

Did you watch the Tom Cruise [Scientology video](#)? I really think this is a necessity. If you go straight from

this to the Obama [We Are The Ones](#) video (not, I hasten to point out, an official campaign production), what is your gut response? Coincidence? Or, um, conspiracy?

What I'm suggesting is that progressivism, from Dr. Johnson's Whigs (and even well before) to "will.i.am," is a little like Scientology. Let me emphasize the word *little*. I'd say progressivism resembles Scientology in the same way that Scarlett Johansson resembles the [Caenorhabditis nematode](#), a Porsche Cayenne resembles a wheelbarrow, or LSD resembles green tea. On the surface, they are totally different things. The similarities are all low-level.

Scientology is obviously creepy and weird. To make the case that progressivism is creepy and weird, we have one overwhelming challenge: the fact that progressives are not, in general, creepy and weird. Progressives are, in general, pleasant, well-educated and well-grounded. This cannot be said of [Scientists](#).

Then again, there's another thing that Scientists don't have: friends in high places. At least as far as I'm aware. I would like to think that the penetration of Scientology in government and other prestigious institutions is fairly minor. Perhaps I am mistaken about this. I hope not. Because I really have no reason to think that if Scientists take control of any institution - the CIA, Cirque du Soleil, the New York Times, Starbucks, the NBA, Yale, Apple, you name it - they will ever depart of their own free will. At least if you believe Mr. Cruise, they seem quite sincere about their desire to take over the world. For its own good, of course.

Again, does this ring a bell? Maybe. But there's only so much we can learn from this kind of innuendo. I'm afraid it's time for some heavy political theory.

Our concern is the relationship, past and present, between progressivism and American institutions. Clearly a tricky question. There is no plausible null answer, as for Scientology. There is *something* going on. But what is it? What is the big picture?

Let's play a fun little game. We'll separate civilized societies into three types - 1, 2, and 3 - according to their relationship between opinion and authority. To make the game fun, I'll describe the classes abstractly, without giving examples. Then we'll try to figure out which class we live in.

Type 3 is what Karl Popper called the [open society](#). In a type 3 society, thoughts compete on the basis of their resemblance to reality. Institutions which propagate thoughts compete on the basis of the quality of the thoughts they propagate. Is this rocket science? It is not.

Good ideas outcompete bad ideas in a type 3 society, because most of us would rather be clueful than deluded. While many individuals have cognitive biases - such as a natural preference for optimistic over pessimistic predictions, or the reverse - these average out and are dwarfed by the general ambition of intellectuals, to see reality as it actually is. Intellectuals are brutally competitive by nature, and delight in exploding the delusions of others. Nonsense should not last long around them.

Thus, in a type 3 society, we cannot say that everyone will agree and they will all be right. But we can be quite confident that the best thoughts will be readily available to those who care to think them. In a type 3 society there will always be superstitions, because there will always be superstitious people, who may like everyone else think and speak as they please. There will always be differences of opinion, because many questions cannot be answered by precise and objective methods - whose performance is better, Humphrey Bogart's in [Casablanca](#) or Rutger Hauer's in [Split Second](#)? But since reality is one thing, and people are people, people who are smart and want to understand reality will generally cluster around the truth.

So when you live in a type 3 society, while you *can* think for yourself, you generally don't *have* to think for yourself. Why buy a cow, when milk is so cheap? The type 3 society makes an accurate perception of reality easily available to anyone who wants it. If you want an accurate understanding of history, just buy a history book. If you want a weird, creepy understanding of history, you can probably find that as well, but first you will need to find a group of historians who share your weird, creepy biases. The sane ones will almost certainly be in the majority.

I think you and I can agree that a type 3 society is where we want to live. The question is: *do* we live in one? Let's take a rain check on this baby.

Type 1 is basically the opposite of type 3. Let's call it the *loyal society*. In a type 1 society, your thoughts are *coordinated by the government*. Public opinion is a matter of state security.

Why is public opinion a matter of state security? Because people are freakin' dangerous. Anyone who has ever raised a male child has seen its instinctive affection for weapons. Heck, *chimpanzees* are [freakin' dangerous](#). And you'll notice that most of the earth's surface is controlled by their hairless relatives, which is clearly not how it would be if our brother apes had their druthers.

In a type 1 society, the State establishes two categories of thoughts: good thoughts and bad thoughts. It penalizes people for expressing bad thoughts, or rewards them for expressing good thoughts, or ideally, of course, both.

A bad thought is any thought that, if a sufficient number of people were to think it, might be threatening to the safety of the State. A good thought is any thought that is useful to the State, even if just because it fits in the spot where a bad one might otherwise go.

To install its good thoughts in your brain, the State supports a set of *official information organs*, institutions which churn out good thinking on a cradle-to-grave basis. The organs install good thoughts in the young, and maintain them in the adult. Hominids are learning machines. They learn what's put in front of them. It's really not that hard.

To keep bad thoughts from spreading, the State uses its powers to discourage, prohibit or destroy

unofficial or otherwise uncoordinated information organs. It constructs a legal environment in which direct, person-to-person transmission of bad thoughts is socially and professionally imprudent at best, actionable at worst. It may exempt dissenters from the protection of the law, or impose legal disabilities on them, or on those who tolerate them. Or, of course, it can imprison, banish or execute them.

In a successful type 1 society - there have been many - the range of good thoughts may be rich and broad. Many if not all of them can be quite sensible. It should be possible for an intelligent member of the governing classes to live a normal and successful life without once being tempted to venture off the reservation.

However, from the perspective of the security forces, it may be quite useful to have one or two questions for which the bad answer is true, and the good one is nonsense. Some people are just natural-born troublemakers. Others are naturally loyal. Separating the sheep from the goats gives the authorities a great way to focus on the latter.

Of course, not *everyone* in a type 1 society needs to be a believer. The more the better, however, especially among the governing classes. An ideal structure is one in which believers are concentrated among the most fashionable and successful social circles, and dissenters (if there are any) tend to be poorly educated, less intelligent, and nowhere near as wealthy. If this can be achieved, the believers will feel a natural and healthy contempt for the dissenters, who will be inclined to abandon any bad thoughts they may have been brought up with if they have any desire to succeed in life.

The sine qua non of a type 1 society is central coordination of information. Because the organs are the instruments which make state security a reality, they cannot be allowed to contradict each other. In a state which is secured purely by military force, can various units of the army and navy get into little catfights with each other? Um, no. Likewise, in a state secured by thought control (as well as probably some military force), any intellectual conflict is a menace of the first order. Even on trivial details, disagreement means instability.

In other words, the information organs of a type 1 society are *synoptic*. They see the world through one eye, one set of doctrines, one official story. Call it the *synopsis*.

How does a type 1 state maintain the coherence of its synopsis? One easy way is to have a single leader, who exercises unified executive supervision. Ideally the same leader manages both physical and intellectual security. If the type 1 state doesn't have a single leader, it should at least have a single authoritative institution. Since security depends on synoptic coherence, any divergence can quite literally lead to civil war.

There is no mystery around the historical identity of type 1 societies. This is an unambiguously right-wing pattern. It is also the default structure of human government: the god-king. The Greeks called it "oriental despotism." In Christian history it is known as [caesaropapism](#). In Anglo-American history, it is

the throne-and-altar state, as represented by the high-church Anglican or Catholic tradition. When Americans express an affection for separation of Church and State, they are expressing an antipathy to the type 1 design.

And, of course, in 20th-century history we see the type 1 state most clearly in National Socialism and Italian Fascism. The fascisms discarded most of the trappings of Christian theism, but reused the basic caesaropapist design. Under Hitler's supervision, of course, Goebbels was more or less the pope of Nazi Germany. His executive authority over all intellectual content in the Third Reich, from films to schools to universities, was easily the equal of any medieval pontiff's. (I highly recommend [this movie](#).)

The Nazi term *Gleichschaltung*, generally translated as "coordination," is more or less the modern epitome of the type 1 design. The Nazis also used the word *Aufklärung*, meaning "enlightenment" or literally "clearing-up," for the inculcation of useful thoughts in the German people. I think of this term every time I see a "public service message."

We also see the type 1 pattern, if not quite as distinctly, in the Communist states. It tends to be more institutional and less personal. It is easy to identify Communist Hitlers, but there is no clear Communist equivalent of Goebbels. Communist states over time experienced a decay of personal authority, which passed instead to institutions. But the Party in a modern one-party state is more or less equivalent to the Church in the old Christian dispensation, and an established church is an established church whether governed by pope or synod.

The type 1 state is certainly the most common form in history. It is not the end of the world. China today is a type 1 society. It also has the world's most successful economy, and not such a bad place to live at all. Elizabethan England, which experienced perhaps the greatest artistic explosion in human history, was a type 1 society, with [secret police galore](#). On the other hand, North Korea is a type 1 society, and it's awful in almost every possible way. I can say generally that I would rather live in a type 3 society than in a type 1 society, but the details matter.

But here is the problem.

The problem is: modern, post-1945 Western society certainly does not match the description of a type 1 society. For example, there is no coordinating authority. Unless you can come up with some conspiracy theory (Joo! Joo!), it simply doesn't exist. There is no Goebbels who tells writers what to write, filmmakers what to film, journalists what to print, or professors what to profess. There is no Pope, there is no Church, there is no Party, there is nothing. And as we've seen, the type 1 design makes no sense without coordination.

On the other hand, however...

One, while our society does not match the type 1 description in this essential sense, it seems to match it quite well in others. And two, while it matches the type 3 description in some ways, it does not seem to

match it in others.

In a type 3 society, for example, we should see intellectual inhomogeneities between competing institutions. Harvard and Yale should *mostly* agree, because reality is one thing. So should the New York Times and the Washington Post. But there will always be sclerosis, stagnation, drift. Competition, not just among ideas but among institutions, is essential to the Popperian ideal. We should see these institutions drift away from reality. And we should see the marketplace of ideas punish them when they do, and reward those which do not.

Do you see this? Because I sure don't. What I see is a synopsis.

From my perspective, not just Harvard and Yale, but in fact all major American universities in the Western world, offer exactly the same intellectual product. Which institution is more to the left, for example? Harvard, or Yale? You can pick any two mainstream universities, and you will not be able to answer this question. It's a sort of intellectual [peloton](#).

And it's not that we don't see drift. There is plenty of drift. If you ask which is more to the left, Harvard today or Harvard in 1958, the answer is easy. Yet somehow, the entire peloton is drifting in the same direction at the same speed. Does this scream "type 3" to you? And yet, if there is some Goebbels telling Harvard and Yale professors what to profess, the secret is awfully well-kept.

The same is true of newspapers. The so-called "mainstream media" is certainly a synopsis. Just as there is a bright line between mainstream and non-mainstream universities, there is a bright line between mainstream and non-mainstream media. The latter may be all over the map. The former constitute a synopsis. And the journalistic and academic synopses are clearly identical - mainstream journalists do not, as a rule, challenge mainstream academic authority.

These "mainstream" institutions look very, very like the set of information organs that we'd expect to see in a type 1 society. And their product is clearly a synopsis. Yet they are clearly not subject to any kind of central coordination.

I think the post-1945 mainstream synopsis is important enough to be a proper noun. Let's call it the Synopsis. Let's also give the set of institutions that produce and propagate the Synopsis - mainstream academia, journalism and education - a name. Let's call them the Cathedral. What explains these phenomena?

The Synopsis, of course, has an answer. The answer is that we live in a type 3 society, and the Synopsis is the set of all reasonable ideas. As for the Cathedral, it is simply the culmination of the great human quest for knowledge. It is just as permanent as the reality it exists within and elucidates, which is why there will still be a Harvard and a Yale in 2108, 2208, and 3008.

Here again is our null hypothesis. If you believe in the Synopsis and trust the Cathedral, you are either a

progressive or an idiot. There is no way to receive a mainstream university education, read the Times every morning, trust both of them, and not be a progressive. Unless, of course, you're an idiot.

But there is another hypothesis, which is that we live in a type 2 society.

The type 2 society is the *consensus society*. Its hallmark is the phenomenon of *spontaneous coordination*. You might call it *Gleichschaltung* without Goebbels. Spontaneous coordination can produce an official information system which in all other respects resembles that of a type 1 society, but which is not responsible to any central authority or institution.

Basically, a type 1 society is a government in which the State controls the press and the universities. A type 2 society is one in which the press and the universities control the State. It is easy to tell the two forms apart, but the customer experience is pretty much the same.

Like a type 1 society, a type 2 society can be reasonably comfortable and pleasant to live in. The type 2 design is more stable in some ways, and less stable in others. It is not the end of the world. As one who would prefer a type 3 society, however, I consider it pernicious.

Type 2 societies tend to form from the breakdown of central authority in type 1 societies. Recall that in a type 1 society, public opinion is power. It is the power of the mob. A mob cannot defeat an army, but if the army is neutral, whoever has the biggest mob wins.

What happens in a type 1 society when the center fails? When censorship no longer operates, journalists no longer take orders, heretics are no longer burned at the stake, professors are no longer hired or fired for their political beliefs? You might think that the natural outcome would be a type 3 society, a marketplace of ideas in which only freedom rules and thoughts compete on their value alone.

But the connection between public opinion and political power still holds. Therefore, the information organs are still acting as power centers. If their views diverge, as without type 1 supervision they will, they can compete in two ways: on the basis of intellectual righteousness, or on the basis of political power. If they choose the former and abjure the latter, they will be at a disadvantage against those to whom all weapons are friends. Moreover, since political power is a deadlier weapon, successful competitors are likely to resolve any tradeoffs between power and righteousness in favor of the former.

We can describe the type 1 pathology as *coercive power distortion*. Political power distorts the landscape of ideas, rendering the playing field non-flat. Ideas that the State favors are artificially popularized. Ideas that it disfavors are artificially discouraged.

The type 2 equivalent is *attractive power distortion*. The coercive State does not exist, or at least does not coerce. But the connection between power and public opinion remains. Ideas, therefore, are selectively favored on the basis of their capacity to serve as standards around which to organize coalitions, which can struggle for power by whatever means are effective.

Again, from the type 3 perspective, attractive power distortion is pathological for the same reason as coercive power distortion. It is an alternative criterion which contributes to the success or failure of ideas, and has nothing to do with their validity.

For example, in many ways nonsense is a more effective organizing tool than the truth. Anyone can believe in the truth. To believe in nonsense is an unforgeable demonstration of loyalty. It serves as a political uniform. And if you have a uniform, you have an army. We saw this effect earlier in the cohesive type 1 state, but it works just as well for competing type 2 factions.

This does not explain, however, how the chaotic post-type-1 society congeals into the mature, spontaneously coordinated type 2 society. Why do we have one Synopsis and one Cathedral, rather than a whole host of competing synopses and cathedrals?

The answer, I think, is that even the type 2 society has only one government. It is impossible for two competing information system to capture a single government. And capturing a government gives an information system a considerable advantage over any competitors. It can subsidize itself. It can penalize its competitors. It can indulge in the entire sordid range of type 1 pathologies.

Without acquiring a central coordinator, the Cathedral can capture the resources and powers of the State. It can devise theories of government which it can incorporate into the Synopsis, and which the State must follow. These theories naturally involve lavish support for the Cathedral, which becomes responsible for the production of "public policy," ie, government decisions. Ie, real power is held by the professors and journalists, ie the Cathedral, not through their purity and righteousness but through their self-sustaining control of public opinion. Lenin's great question, "Who? Whom?", is answered.

But why does the Cathedral not break into factions? What keeps Harvard aligned with Yale? Why doesn't one of the two realize that there is no need for a thousand synoptic progressive universities, and a vast unfilled demand for a single top-notch conservative university? Why, in short, is the Synopsis stable?

I think the answer is that the Synopsis includes only political propositions whose adoption tends to strengthen the Cathedral, and weaken its enemies. It rejects and opposes all other propositions. Inasmuch as these sets shift over time, the Synopsis will shift as well. It follows a sort of [hill-climbing strategy](#) - not in the landscape of truth, but that of power. Thus, by definition, it cannot be opposed from within.

To be progressive is simply to support the Cathedral and the Synopsis. Today's Synopsis is the lineal descendant of the first type 2 movement in modern history, the Reformation. Through the Reformation we reach the Enlightenment, whose link to the Synopsis is obvious. The post-1945 Western regime, whose victory over all pre-Reformation or anti-Enlightenment forces appears final and irreversible, is the Whig millennium.

(I mean "millennium" only in the sense of "utopia." I don't actually expect it to last a thousand years. The terminal condition of our present system of government is that it satisfies the demand for power only by expanding. As it expands, its policymaking process includes more and more input, to the point at which it is completely ineffective. It can thus no longer expand. I don't think analogies to the [stellar cycle](#) are at all misplaced.)

This analysis, which is obviously broad and facile, still explains a few things. For example, let's consider the case of libertarianism.

Libertarians often call themselves "classical liberals," and indeed the word "libertarian" today means about what John Stuart Mill meant when he called himself a "liberal." In fact, in Europe today, "liberal" still means more or less "libertarian."

Why (in the US) did the term stay the same, and the meaning change? Because, in fact, the real meaning has not changed. In 1858 as in 2008, a "liberal" is a supporter of the Cathedral: ie, a Whig, a progressive, a Radical, etc. It is the Synopsis that shifted, and it is today's libertarians who are not with the program.

19th-century liberal Whigs and Radicals supported economic freedom because economic freedom meant the destruction of Tory privileges, such as the Corn Laws (whose beneficiaries were landed aristocrats), which harmed their supporters and benefited their enemies. This position may have been explained on the basis of principle. But if it had not been politically advantageous, spontaneous coordination would have produced other principles. Either Mill would have embraced these other principles, in which case you still would know his name, or he would have been genuinely committed to economic freedom, in which case you wouldn't.

By the start of the 20th century, the old British aristocracy was in full flight, only scraps remained of the Throne-and-Altar system, and by the standard of a half-century earlier, basically everyone was a Radical. Therefore, the progressive movement could become socialist, and stand for economic centralization and official charity. These aims were not attainable in the era of Mill, because the Radicals were too weak and the Tories too strong. These tactical changes did not emerge from any secret cabal - spontaneous coordination is entirely to blame.

Libertarianism in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has gained little political traction. Why? One, it opposes the Cathedral, which controls most real power and does not deal kindly with its enemies. Two, by definition it has no mechanism for using any power it does gain to create jobs for its followers, because it does not believe in the expansion of government. Three, it either appeals to the anti-Cathedral Townies or "conservatives," making itself unfashionable, thus unpopular, and thus ineffective as an opposition, or it tries to ingratiate itself with the Cathedral, making itself thus ineffective as an opposition. It has nowhere to go. It cannot recreate the world of John Stuart Mill, with its target-rich environment of Tory landlordism.

Thus we see again Dr. Johnson's hypothesis: all the principles of Whigs, even those which seem austere and noble, are consistent with the objective of seizing power. Moreover, the Whig is concerned with his own power rather than with the state of society. He would much rather rule in Hell than serve in Heaven, and he will turn any heaven into a hell to get there. And yet he is quite sincere in all his Whiggery, which makes him all the more dangerous.

Of course, there is also the null hypothesis. Maybe we already do live in the open society, and the Synopsis is no more than sweet reason itself. It would certainly be nice.

But if Dr. Johnson was right, what is the answer? Having left the loyal society far behind, how can we proceed from the consensus society to the open society?

Continue to [part five](#)

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/05/014-dr-johnsons-hypothesis.html>

## Part 5: the shortest way to world peace

May 15, 2008

After four [loping and windy installments](#), I thought this week I'd vary the formula. Instead of an open letter to open-minded progressives at large, this is an open letter to just one: [Charles Stross](#), the science-fiction writer.

My first excuse for this audacity is that I know Charlie - sort of. At least, we hung out on the same Usenet group in the early '90s, when he was an aspiring novelist and I was an annoying teenager. Frankly, anyone who could tolerate me even slightly in my Rimbaud period is too supine to protest at any atrocity I could possibly perpetrate now.

My second excuse is that last year on his [Christmas wish list](#), Charlie included a goodie which I know a lot of you open-minded progressives have been wishing for as well - [world peace](#).

Well, it just so happens I have a plan for world peace. Only one problem - it's not a progressive plan. Do ya wanna hear it? C'mon, I know you do.

My proposal is the most obvious one imaginable. Perhaps this is why I've never heard anyone propose it. It can be expressed in one sentence. Are you ready? Here we go. The US should recognize the independence and sovereignty of every government on earth, and respect it according to the principles of classical international law.

Perhaps this proposal sounds progressive to you. (It's meant to sound progressive.) As we'll see, it's about as progressive as William the Conqueror.

Perhaps you doubt its power to produce that fantastic desideratum, *world peace*. Reader, I will simply have to rely on your patience. All will be uncovered. But not immediately.

Why can't I just explain my peace plan directly? Why do you have to churn through another few thousand words? Because you are a progressive and I am a reactionary, and terms like *independence*, *sovereignty*, and *international law* don't mean the same things to us.

As Wittgenstein said: if a lion could talk, we would not understand him. As citizens of the progressive 20th century, we grew up with the progressive theory of government and history. All, or almost all, intelligent people today believe this theory. And if we accept it as reality, the concept of a reactionary plan for world peace makes no more sense than a talking lion.

There are two explanations of why everyone today (including "conservatives," whose deviations from Whiggery are negligible by historical standards) is a progressive. The first is that progressive values are universal, and progressive analysis is irrefutable. The second is that the progressive worldview has some

property, other than truth and righteousness, which has enabled it to consistently defeat its enemies.

I say "defeat" because I mean "defeat." Imagine, for example, that the Axis had won the war. There are many easy ways to construct this counterfactual, but perhaps the easiest is to imagine that Heisenberg had done a better job with the [Nazi bomb](#). If the Nazis have nukes in, say, 1943, the road to a Nazi 2008 is pretty straight.

The question is: in our Nazi 2008, what would Wikipedia look like? Let's assume there is a Nazi Wikipedia. Let's assume it has exactly the same [NPOV policy](#) it has today:

All Wikipedia articles and other encyclopedic content must be written from a neutral point of view (NPOV), representing fairly, and as far as possible without bias, all significant views that have been published by reliable sources.

Of course, in the Nazi 2008, all "significant views" are *Nazi views*. All "reliable sources" are *Nazi sources*. All the Wikipedia editors, all the contributors, are - you get it. Of course, there will be diversity of opinion - there will be radical Nazis, conservative Nazis, and moderate Nazis. Nazipedia must reflect all the major currents of the great river of Nazi thought.

(If you really want to break your brain, imagine if the Nazi 2008 found a way to send a film crew into the real 2008, and made a propaganda documentary showing the world as it would be if the Jewish Bolshevik plutocrats had not been vanquished. The camera eye is, of course, selective. But what would it select? Hm.)

But in the real 2008, Nazipedia does not exist. Why? Because there are not enough Nazis to write it. There are actually no Nazis at all in 2008. There are neo-Nazis, but they are lowlife scum. Neo-Nazism attracts only weirdos and losers, because (a) it is idiotic, and (b) it has no chance of success. National Socialism proper, while no less idiotic, was successful. Even among the intellectual classes, not exactly its political base, it found supporters galore. There was never any shortage of talented and ambitious Nazis. Why would there be?

So there is no Nazi Wikipedia, but there *could be*. There is no Confederate Wikipedia, but there *could be*. And there is no Jacobite Wikipedia, but there *could be*. If you can imagine the first, can you imagine the second? I can't even imagine the third - and I'm a Jacobite myself.

On certain subjects, I'm sure Nazipedia would be quite reliable. [Medicine](#), for example. Or physics - Nazi nukes would have spelled finis for [Deutsche Physik](#). It's not at all improbable that in many technical areas, the Axis scientists and engineers of 2008 would have outperformed our own. It'd certainly be cool to see what, say, a Nazi CPU looks like.

But on the subjects of Jews, Judaism, Judaeology, etc, etc, do we care what Nazipedia has to say? We don't. We know that it is nonsense. Or to be more exact, some combination of truth and

misinterpretation. Perhaps there will even be some factual errors. But why should there be? As Goebbels always said, the truth is the best propaganda. If the page for [Jew](#) links you to all the sinister deeds that have ever been performed by anyone who happened to be Jewish, it will certainly suffice. ([Kevin McDonald](#) is a modern master of this game.)

So here is my claim about government: as a progressive, your theory of government - its history, its principles, even its *present-day structure and operation* - is nonsense.

Just as a misunderstanding of Jews is a fundamental element of the Nazi synopsis, a misunderstanding of government is a fundamental element of the Whig synopsis. It is simply beyond repair. If you are a progressive and you want to understand government, past and present, your best strategy is to forget everything you know and start from scratch. "Zen mind, beginner's mind."

A fun way to demonstrate this, I find, is the method of mysteries. Using my reactionary Jedi mind tricks, painstakingly sifted from the ashcan of history, I ask a question you can't answer. Then I answer it. And you are enlightened - whether or not you want to be.

Here is a question: what is the most successful Protestant denomination in the US today?

Given that North America was colonized largely by Protestant refugees, you'd think the answer would be pretty obvious. I think it's extremely obvious. It's almost a trick question. Is it obvious to you? If not, let's see if we can find some enlightenment.

Suppose you're poking through old books one day, and you find a strange little essay that was written 300 years ago. The author is certainly one of the ten most important writers in the history of your language. Perhaps even one of the top five.

The essay was originally printed as a pamphlet. It is a polemical pamphlet, written with great wit and sharpness, and its politics are extremely, well, extreme. It advocates policies that perhaps would have been approved by some figures of the time, but never publicly endorsed. Nothing like them was applied. In fact, the political winds shifted in the opposite direction.

Yet what's strange is that the arguments seem quite cogent. Not just from the perspective of 300 years ago - but from the perspective of now. Not that the extreme policies of 300 years ago are now mainstream - at least not these extreme policies. But the pamphlet warns that, if X is not done, Y will happen. X was not done. And Y happened.

What's even stranger is that the pamphlet was printed anonymously, as a sort of provocation or black propaganda. It was not a Swiftian satire. It was believable. Its readers took it quite seriously. But its actual author was quite opposed to X, and when his identity was disclosed the authorities were not amused.

The author was [Daniel Defoe](#). The pamphlet was [The Shortest-Way With The Dissenters](#). I recommend reading *The Shortest-Way* in its entirety. It is, of course, short, and quite fun.

What's neat about *The Shortest-Way* is that it gives us a more or less complete Tory history of England in the 17th century, without any mealy-mouthed pandering or Whig double-talk. From the viewpoint of the narrator, who of course is an uber-high Tory, the history of 17th-century England is the history of a nation beset by a kind of mental virus.

The virus is called *Dissent*. Its slaving zombies, who somehow manage to be both religious fanatics and Communist conspirators, are the *Dissenters*. The fruit of this tree is clear: war, poverty, revolution and tyranny. The only way to deal with the *contagion* is to *root it out with a rod of iron*. "*Now, LET US CRUCIFY THE THIEVES!*" If the 2008 election gets your blood flowing, woo baby. Politics in 1704 was certainly a contact sport.

And yet no historian would dispute the essential claim of the piece: that the Anglicans, when in power, were far more tolerant of the [Dissenters](#) than vice versa. (In case you're wondering, a Dissenter is more or less the same thing as a [Puritan](#).)

And what's really fascinating is the arch-Tory prediction of what will happen if, despite all reason, these wretches are allowed to continue with their conspiring:

How just will such reflections be, when our posterity shall fall under the merciless clutches of this uncharitable Generation! when our Church shall be swallowed up in Schism, Faction, Enthusiasm, and Confusion! when our Government shall be devolved upon Foreigners, and our Monarchy dwindled into a Republic!

[Rowan Williams](#), anyone? [Brussels](#), anyone? Granted, England retains its symbolic monarchy, but I'd hate to imagine what any writer who could describe [William of Orange](#) as a *Mock King* would make of the present royals, who are as *machtlos* as they are feckless.

Of course, to *today's* Whig, our modern progressive, all these changes are *good*. The English monarchy has not *dwindled* into a republic. It has *grown* into a republic. Its government has not *devolved upon* foreigners. It has joined with them in a great act of principled unity. Etc.

Yet I see no reason to think that even Defoe himself, let alone an old high Tory, would have seen it this way. "Republic" in 1704 meant [Praisegod Barebones](#). A republican in Queen Anne's England was about as hard to find as a Nazi in modern Germany. Okay, I exaggerate. Slightly.

But here is the conundrum: we have here a 300-year-old document whose proposals, even by the standards of 1704, were so right-wing that no one could utter them seriously. The only thing to the right is - literally - the Spanish Inquisition. And yet its analysis and its predictions are *spot on*. Don't you find that a little weird?

Does this answer the Protestant question? Is it the key to world peace? Neither. It is just a little clue - that's all.

You go back to poking through old books. And you find another one.

This one is a history book. It is only 100 years old - a spring chicken, really. I had never heard of the author and I can't find any biographical information on him. He is simply a historian. A rather good one, too, as far as I can tell, and quite reputable in his day.

But the book is a little stick of dynamite. It is a critical reevaluation of the foundation myth of the most important government on earth. It is deeply subversive.

According to the official story, the founders were prudent and principled men whose rights had been violated once too often by a tyrannical occupation regime, whose love of freedom finally overcame their love of peace, and who prevailed by their courage and force of arms after a desperate struggle. According to the historian, however...

But why spoil it? The book is Sydney George Fisher's [True History of the American Revolution](#). (Here is the original [New York Times review](#).) I believe Fisher was an American himself, which is remarkable considering his results. As he puts it in his first paragraph:

The purpose of this history of the Revolution is to use the original authorities rather more frankly than has been the practice with our historians. They appear to have thought it advisable to omit from their narratives a great deal which, to me, seems essential to a true picture.

To a revision junkie like me, a paragraph like this produces an almost physical excitement. Imagine you're a crackhead, just walking down the street looking for car windows to smash, when suddenly on the sidewalk you see an *enormous rock* the size of a *softball*. Whose is it? Who left it there? Will it fit in your pipe? Who cares? You're on it like a wolf on a baby.

What (if we are to believe Mr. Fisher) did the historians omit? Let's resort again to the method of mysteries. Here are some questions about the American Revolution for which you may find you have no good answer:

One: why do the American loyalists share a nickname with a British political party? Is this just a coincidence, or does it imply some kind of weird alliance? And what is on the other side of said alliance? If the loyalists are called Tories, why does no one call the Patriots Whigs?

Two: what on earth is the British strategy? Why do the redcoats seem to be spending so much time just hanging around in New York or Philadelphia? Valley Forge is literally twenty miles from Philly. Okay, I realize, it's winter. But come on, it's *twenty miles*. General Washington is starving in the snow out there. His troops are deserting by the score. And Lord Howe can't send a couple of guys with muskets to go

bring him in? Heck, it sounds like a well-phrased dinner invitation would probably have done the trick.

Three: if the Stamp Act was such an intolerable abuse, how did the British Empire have all these other colonies - Canada, Australia, yadda yadda - where everyone was so meek? Surely we can understand the idea that taxation without representation was the first step toward tyranny. So where is the tyranny? Where are Her Majesty's concentration camps? Okay, there was the [Boer War](#), I guess. But more generally, why is the history of America so different from that of the other colonies?

Four: why does no one outside America seem to resent these unfortunate events at all? I mean, the Revolution was a war. People got pretty violent on both sides. In some parts of the world, when people lose a war, they don't feel that it was just God's will. They feel that God would be much more satisfied if there was some payback. And they tend to transmit this belief to their offspring. In the American unpleasantness, a lot of people - loyalists - got kicked out of their homes. They had to leave with only a small travel bag. When this sort of thing happens in the Middle East, it's remembered for the life of the known universe.

There is actually a slight clue to two of these questions in the text we just left - the *Shortest-Way*. Defoe, or rather his hyper-Tory alter-ego, writes:

The first execution of the Laws against Dissenters in England, was in the days of King James I; and what did it amount to? Truly, the worst they suffered was, at their own request, to let them go to New England, and erect a new colony; and give them great privileges, grants, and suitable powers; keep them under protection, and defend them against all invaders; and receive no taxes or revenue from them!

This was the cruelty of the Church of England! Fatal lenity! It was the ruin of that excellent Prince, King Charles I. Had King James sent all the Puritans in England away to the West Indies; we had been a national unmixed Church! the Church of England had been kept undivided and entire!

(I think we can take it for granted that the difference between sending the Puritans to Massachusetts or Jamaica is not, at least in the narrator's mind, a matter of climate. Oh, no.)

We learn three things from this passage. One, the issues of the Revolution were already in play 70 years earlier. Two, since Whiggery is the political projection of Puritanism (elsewhere our narrator refers to *Fanatical Whiggish Statesmen*), this is indeed a conflict of Whig and Tory. And three, at least from the Tory perspective, New England - far from being subjected to unprecedented despotism - has enjoyed a unique set of privileges.

Indeed. As Fisher puts it:

The British government, only too glad to be rid of rebellious Puritans, Quakers, and Roman Catholics, willingly gave them liberal charters. This explains that freedom in many of the old

charters which has surprised so many students of our colonial history. Some of these liberal instruments were granted by the Stuart kings, with the approval of their officials and courtiers, all of whom showed by almost every other act of their lives that they were the determined enemies of free parliaments and free representation of the people.

Connecticut, for example, obtained in 1662 from Charles II a charter which made the colony almost independent; and to-day there is no colony of the British empire that has so much freedom as Connecticut and Rhode Island always had, or as Massachusetts had down to 1685. Connecticut and Rhode Island elected their own legislatures and governors, and did not even have to send their laws to England for approval. No modern British colony elects its own governor; and, if it has a legislature elected by its people, the acts of that legislature can be vetoed by the home government. A community electing its own governor and enacting whatever laws it pleases is not a colony in the modern English meaning of the word. Connecticut and Rhode Island could not make treaties with foreign nations, but in other respects they were, as we would now say, semi-independent commonwealths under the protectorate or suzerainty of England.

One of the many neat things about Fisher's history is that it was written when the British Empire was actually a going concern, not a shadowy boogeyman from the past. From the British perspective, the condition of the "semi-independent commonwealths" was irregular at best, and corrupt at worst. Generally the latter. This space is too short to contain the vast tapestry of corruption and venality that Fisher presents - read the book.

Basically, both England and America were happy not to force the issue while there was a third party on the scene - France. But in 1763, this changed:

Canada being conquered and England in possession of it, the colonies and England suddenly found themselves glaring at each other. Each began to pursue her real purpose more directly. England undertook to establish her sovereignty, abolish abuses, or, as she expressed it at that time, to remodel the colonies. The patriotic party among the colonists resisted the remodelling, sought to retain all their old privileges, and even to acquire new ones.

Again, I don't have the space to copy Fisher's encyclopedic evisceration of the bizarre jailhouse-lawyer barratry that the Americans, newly safe from Frenchification, put forth in their attempts to wriggle out of Britain's embrace. Read the book. And along with the barratry, there was another and more ominous development - mob violence:

During that summer of 1765, while the assemblies of the different colonies were passing resolutions of protest, the mobs of the patriot party were protesting in another way. It certainly amazed Englishmen to read that the mob in Boston, not content with hanging in effigy the proposed stamp distributors, levelled the office of one of them to the ground and smashed the windows and furniture of his private house; that they destroyed the papers and records of the court of admiralty, sacked the

house of the comptroller of customs, and drank themselves drunk with his wines; and, finally, actually proceeded to the house of Lieutenant-Governor Hutchison, who was compelled to flee to save his life. They completely gutted his house, stamped upon the chairs and mahogany tables until they were wrecked, smashed the large, gilt-framed pictures, and tore up all the fruit-trees in his garden. Governor Hutchinson was a native of the province, was its historian, and with his library perished many invaluable historical manuscripts which he had been thirty years collecting. The mob cut open the beds and let the feathers out, which they scattered with his clothes, linen, smashed furniture, and pictures in the street.

That this outrage had been incited the day before by the preaching of the Rev. Dr. Mayhew, a Puritan divine, did not lessen its atrocity in the eyes of Englishmen. He had held forth on the text, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you;" and the mob came very near obeying his instructions literally. A great many respectable citizens were shocked, or appeared to be shocked, at this violence and excess. They held town meetings of abhorrence, a guard was organized to prevent such outrages in the future, and rewards were offered for rioters. But it is quite significant that, although the rioters were well known, as the historians assure us, no one was punished. Two or three were arrested, but were rescued by their friends, and it was found impossible to proceed against them.

I love that "appeared to be shocked." Does it not capture the essence of Dr. Johnson's hypothesis? As a more recent thinker put it: "Guilty as sin, free as a bird, it's a great country."

But we now reach the heart of the problem, which is that not all Americans are Whigs, and not all Englishmen are Tories.

The history of the Whig-Tory conflict is best told as a series of three civil wars: one east of the pond in the 17th century, one across the pond in the 18th, and one west of the pond in the 19th. So the American Revolution: a civil war with an ocean in the middle. As Fisher describes:

The whole question of the taxation of the colonies was raised again; witnesses, experts on trade, all sorts of persons familiar with the colonies, including Franklin, were called to the bar of the House, examined, and cross-examined. The agents of the different colonies were constantly in attendance in the lobbies. No source of information was left unexplored. The ablest men of the country were pitted against each other in continual debates, and colonial taxation was the leading topic of conversation among all classes. There were two main questions: Was the Stamp Act constitutional? and, if constitutional, was it expedient? It was the innings of a radical section of the Whigs, and, being favorable to liberalism and the colonies, they decided that the Stamp Act was not expedient. They accordingly repealed it within a year after its passage. But they felt quite sure, as did also the vast majority of Englishmen, that Parliament had a constitutional right to tax the colonies as it pleased, and so they passed what became known as the Declaratory Act, asserting the constitutional right of Parliament to bind the colonies "in all cases whatsoever;" and this is still the law of England.

The rejoicing over the repeal of the Stamp Act was displayed, we are told, in a most extraordinary manner, even in England. The ships in the Thames hoisted their colors and houses were illuminated. The colonists had apparently been able to hit a hard blow by the stoppage of trade. The rejoicing, however, as subsequent events showed, was not universal. It was the rejoicing of Whigs or of the particular ship-owners, merchants, and workingmen who expected relief from the restoration of the American trade. It was noisy and conspicuous. There must have been some exaggeration in the account of the sufferings from loss of trade. It is not improbable that Parliament had been stampeded by a worked-up excitement in its lobbies; for very soon it appeared that the great mass of Englishmen were unchanged in their opinion of proper colonial policy; and, as was discovered in later years, the stoppage of the American trade did not seriously injure the business or commercial interests of England.

But in America the rejoicing was, of course, universal. There were letters and addresses, thanksgivings in churches, the boycotting associations were instantly dissolved, trade resumed, homespun given to the poor, and the people felt proud of themselves and more independent than ever because they could compel England to repeal laws.

The colonists were certainly lucky in having chanced upon a Whig administration for their great appeal against taxation. It has often been said that both the Declaratory Act and the repeal of the Stamp Act were a combination of sound constitutional law and sound policy, and that if this same Whig line of conduct had been afterwards consistently followed, England would not have lost her American colonies. No doubt if such a Whig policy had been continued the colonies would have been retained in nominal dependence a few years longer. But such a policy would have left the colonies in their semi-independent condition without further remodelling or reform, with British sovereignty unestablished in them, and with a powerful party of the colonists elated by their victory over England. They would have gone on demanding more independence until they snapped the last string.

In fact, the Whig repeal of the Stamp Act advanced the colonies far on their road to independence. They had learned their power, learned what they could do by united action, and had beaten the British government in its chosen game. It was an impressive lesson. Consciously or unconsciously the rebel party among them was moved a step forward in that feeling for a distinct nationality which a naturally separated people can scarcely avoid.

Such a repeal, such a going backward and yielding to the rioting, threats, and compulsion of the colonists, was certainly not that "firm and consistent policy" which both then and now has been recommended as the true course in dealing with dependencies. The Tories condemned the repeal on this account, and in the course of the next ten or fifteen years ascribed to it the increasing coil of colonial entanglement.

This is the very nub of the issue. What's fascinating here is that we have two *practical* theories of how to deal with dependencies. One says that the most effective way to retain a dependency is to redress its grievances, tolerate its errors, and understand its complaints. The other says that the "true course" is a "firm and consistent policy."

This is not a *moral* disagreement. This is a case of "is," not of "ought." Both parties in England agree - or, at least, appear to agree - on the goal: American colonies that acknowledge the authority of Parliament. The Whigs think the most effective means to this end is to persuade America that England is really their friend, by making concessions when concessions are demanded. The Tories think the most effective means to this end is to use firm and consistent force, to show the Americans that they have no alternative.

After the war, the Whig theory became generally accepted in Britain. This answers question four: why the British have no hard feelings. They have no hard feelings because they believe the war resulted from a British mistake. The other week we read the first paragraph in [Macaulay's History of England](#), that famous archetype of Whig history. From the second:

It will be seen how, in two important dependencies of the crown, wrong was followed by just retribution; how imprudence and obstinacy broke the ties which bound the North American colonies to the parent state; how Ireland, cursed by the domination of race over race, and of religion over religion, remained indeed a member of the empire, but a withered and distorted member, adding no strength to the body politic, and reproachfully pointed at by all who feared or envied the greatness of England.

Later, of course, England followed Macaulay's advice and made concessions in Ireland. As a result, the Irish have enjoyed many years of peace and have rewarded the British Empire with their eternal devotion and love. Not.

History is not science. Nor is government. Neither the American experiment nor the Irish is a general case with all variables controlled. They are more like parenting - every kid is different. Nonetheless, you'll find that most parenting experts - a few progressives excepted - indeed endorse the "firm and consistent" approach. And most parents consider it obvious.

From a purely intellectual standpoint, the Whig theory of government is attractive because it is *not* obvious. In fact, it's counterintuitive. If you want to keep your colonies, set them free. It's almost a Sting song. And there is a place in this theory for the intellectual. It demands explanation. Whereas the "firm and consistent policy" is, again, obvious. And who ever made a living by explaining the obvious?

On the other hand, the Whig theory has another attraction, of a more practical sort.

Suppose the Whig theory is right and the Tory theory is wrong. In that case, the Tories are working

against their own interests. Unusual, certainly. But not unheard of.

Suppose the Whig theory is wrong and the Tory theory is right. In that case, the Tories are advancing their own interests. And the Whigs are...

See, here's the funny thing. There's a natural alliance between the American patriot party and the British Whigs. They are both, after all, Whigs. You'd expect some solidarity. Why don't the British Whigs just endorse the American rebels?

Because it's not 2008, is why. In the 21st century, encouraging an enemy in arms against your own government is normal politics. The word *treason* is almost funny. In the 18th, it was a different matter:

The doctrine, exclusively American in its origin, that rebels were merely men in arms fighting for an idea, mistaken or otherwise, who, when once subdued, were to be allowed to go their way like paroled prisoners of war, had not yet gained ground. Rebellion was at that time a more serious thing than it has since become under the American doctrine of the right of revolution. Most of the colonists could remember the slaughter and beheading inflicted in England on the rebels under the Pretender of 1745. The frightful hanging, torturing, and transportation of men, women, and even children, for such rebellions as that of Monmouth, were by no means yet forgotten. There was not a colonist who had not heard descriptions of London after a rebellion, with the bloody arms and hindquarters of rebels hung about like butchers' meat, the ghastly heads rotting and stinking for months on the poles at Temple Bar and on London Bridge, with the hair gradually falling off the grinning skulls, as the people passed them day by day.

If the Whigs in Parliament had openly sided with the rebels, dreams of the *Shortest-Way* would have danced in the eyes of the Tories. The [pro-American stance](#) taken by the likes of Burke (who later redeemed himself with the Reflections, but was always a Whig) was in fact the most effective way for a British politician to support the rebels: not on the grounds that they deserve independence, but on the grounds that conciliation is the most effective way to prevent it, as military coercion cannot possibly work. (Does this sound at all familiar?)

We see here also why the American patriots never described themselves as Whigs, and nor did their friends in Britain. If we think of the revolutionaries as Whigs, we are tempted to ask who is in the driver's seat - the ragtag armies and mobs in America, or the British intellectuals who encouraged their rebellion. We are tempted to see the revolution as a continuation of British politics by other means - much as our Republicans and Democrats of today might find themselves backing opposing armies in some insignificant country halfway around the world. (Obviously, this could never happen, but it would be very disturbing.)

You'll note that the Whig theory of the American revolution cannot in any way be regarded as directly proven. America was not conciliated into a return to the fold. In the Whig mind, this of course is because

Whig conciliation was not really tried. Or at least not tried enough. A higher dose, no doubt, would have cured the patient.

However, the Tory theory is disproved indirectly, because the Tories tried to fight a war and failed. One of the two must be right, so the Whig theory is proven - indirectly. A very typical piece of Whig logic.

There is only one problem. Suppose I am a civil engineer and I send a letter to Caltrans, warning them that serious design flaws in the new Bay Bridge will cause it to collapse. If they hire me, I will fix it for them. They ignore my letter. The bridge collapses. This makes me a prophet, or at least a "whistleblower."

On the other hand, suppose an acetylene torch with my fingerprints on it is found around the base of the bridge. This puts the matter in a different light, n'est ce pas?

And so, for the failure of the Tories to suppress the American Revolution to be regarded as evidence for the Whig theory of conciliation, it sure would be nice to know that the reason that the Tories failed isn't that *the Whigs prevented them from succeeding*.

I am neither a specialist in the period, nor a historian at all. So I will simply point out one undisputed fact in the matter, which is that two of the leading British generals, [Howe](#) and [Cornwallis](#), were Whigs - in fact, Whig MPs. For the rest, I will leave you in Fisher's hands. Perhaps he is right, and perhaps he isn't.

What's really interesting is that *no one seems to care*. After all, we live in a world which is more or less ruled by the US government - whether through its military power, or its "moral leadership." Washington is not without critics. And you'd think that anti-Americans everywhere would leap at an interpretation of history that presented the American project as more or less fraudulent from day one.

And perhaps they will. Perhaps Sydney George Fisher will "go viral." Perhaps by next week Ayman al-Zawahiri will have a printout in his cave. (Unfortunately, the *True History* has a lot of bad page scans, but you can also try his *Struggle for American Independence*, a later two-volume expansion: [I](#), [II](#). I'm afraid no Arabic translation is available.)

But I doubt it. Because the *True History*, as a loyalist or Tory history, is a reactionary history. It would afford rich amusement to any reactionary anti-Americans that might bump into it. However, since there are only about fifteen reactionary anti-Americans left in the world, none of whom is under the age of 60, I think Google can put off that server upgrade for a while.

What is reactionary anti-Americanism, anyway? Charles Francis Adams expresses it well in his essay [A National Change of Heart](#) (1902):

I recalled my first experiences in England far back in the "sixties," — in the dark and trying days of our Civil War; and again, more recently, during the commercial depression, and contest over the free

coinage of silver, in 1896. Then, especially in the earlier period, nothing was too opprobrious — nothing too bitter and stinging — for English lips to utter of America, and men and things American. We were, as the Times, echoing the utterances of the governing class, never wearied of telling us, a "dishonest" and a "degenerate" race, — our only worship was of the Almighty Dollar. A hearty dislike was openly expressed, in terms of contempt which a pretence of civility hardly feigned to veil. They openly exulted in our reverses; our civilization was, they declared, a thin veneer; democracy, a bursted bubble.

In the 1960s, too, nothing was too opprobrious for English lips to utter of America. But were we a degenerate race of barbarians, ruled by the mob? Au contraire. Now, America was not democratic *enough*. We had become reactionary fascist capitalist pigs. And in between, as Adams describes, there was a honeymoon:

And now what a change! — and so very sudden! Nothing was too good or too complimentary to say of America. Our representatives were cheered to the echo. In the language of Lord Rosebery, at the King Alfred millenary celebration at Winchester, on the day following the McKinley [funeral], the branches of the great Anglo-Saxon stock were clasping hands across the centuries and across the sea; and the audience applauded him loudly as he spoke.

Ah, the "great Anglo-Saxon stock." As Hunter S. Thompson put it, we've certainly learned a lot about race relations since then.

So in the course of a century, we see Britain passing from anti-Americanism, through pro-Americanism, back to anti-Americanism. Is this a reversal? Did the pendulum swing, then swing back? But when we look at the actual political motifs in the two kinds of anti-Americanism, we see very little in common - besides of course hatred of America.

Clearly it's this word *anti-American* that's confusing us. If we split it in half we can see the trend clearly. To be *counter-American* is to resist American political theory. To be *ultra-American* is to accept American political theory so completely that you become more American than America itself, and you feel America is not living up to her own principles.

Thus we have a monotonic trend: increasing acceptance of American political theory. Adams has an interesting explanation:

The first was the outcome of our gigantic, prolonged Civil War. At one stage of that struggle, America — loyal America, I mean — touched its lowest estate in the estimation of those called, and in Great Britain considered, the ruling class, — the aristocracy, the men of business and finance, the army and navy, the members of the learned professions. None the less, they then saw us accomplish what they had in every conceivable form of speech pronounced "impossible." We put down the Rebellion with a strong hand; and then, peacefully disbanding our victorious army, made good our every promise to

pay. We accomplished our results in a way they could not understand, — a way for which experience yielded no precedent. None the less, the dislike, not unalloyed by contempt, was too deep-rooted to disappear at once, much more to be immediately transmuted into admiration and cordiality. They waited. Then several striking events occurred in rapid succession, — all within ten years.

I am no admirer of President Cleveland's Venezuela diplomacy. I do not like brutality in public any more than in private dealings. Good manners and courtesy can always be observed, even when firmness of bearing is desirable. None the less, bad for us as the precedent then established was, and yet will prove, there can be no question that, so far as Great Britain was concerned, the tone and attitude on that occasion adopted were productive of results at once profound and, in some ways, beneficial. The average Englishman from the very bottom of his heart respects a man who asserts himself, — provided always he has the will, as well as the power, to make the self-assertion good.

This, as a result of our Civil War, they felt we had. We had done what they had most confidently proclaimed we could not do, and what they, in their hearts, feel they have failed to do. Throughout our Rebellion they had insisted that, even if the conquest of the Confederacy was possible, — which they declared it manifestly was not, — the pacification of the Confederates was out of the question. They thought, also, they knew what they were talking about. Had they not for centuries had Ireland on their hands? Was it not there now? Were they not perpetually floundering in a bottomless bog of Hibernian discontent? Would not our experience be the same, except on a larger scale and in more aggravated form? The result worked out by us wholly belied their predictions. Not only was the rebellion suppressed, but the Confederates were quickly conciliated. The British could not understand it; in the case of the [Transvaal](#) they do not understand it now. They merely see that we actually did what they had been unable to do, and are still trying to do. The [Spanish war](#) showed that our work of domestic conciliation was as complete as had been that of conquest.

In other words, they love us because we're bad-asses. Quite a contrast to the present-day theory of anti-Americanism! But hardly refuted by it - quite a bit of bad-assery has flowed under the bridge since the [Venezuela arbitration](#). Supposedly Eisenhower used barnyard language on the phone to Anthony Eden in the [Suez crisis](#). Eden was not an uncultured man, he was surely familiar with the old counter-American tradition, and I suspect he muttered once or twice to himself that if Palmerston and Russell had just bit the bullet and recognized the freakin' Confederacy, none of this would be happening.

Adams' point boils down to the truism that a rational actor, if forced to take sides in a conflict, should choose the side more likely to win. (Recently, another prominent statesman expressed the same point in [more equestrian terms](#).)

Thus we understand ultra-Americanism: in a world where all the real shots are called in Washington, ultra-Americanism is the most effective way to influence said calls.

First, you ally yourself with the ultra-Americans in America proper, of which there has never been any

shortage. (What is Howard Zinn? An Eskimo?) By definition, power in America is moving in the direction of these actors, so you are on the winning team. Second, you add your weight to the winning team, thus entitling yourself to some kind of payback, by expressing the following sentiment *ad nauseam*: America, we hate you, and if you don't start living up to American principles, we will continue to hate you.

Of course, none of this is a conscious strategy - it just happens to work. You might be surprised how many Americans ascribe their support for ultra-American politics to this phenomenon, which enables the likes of a Barack Obama to talk about "America's moral leadership." As a counter-American might put it, if America is a moral leader, you really have to wonder who the moral followers are. Has the planet really sunk so low? Yes, I'm afraid it has.

If you hate America but you're tired of being an ultra-American, especially now that everyone else is one, why not consider a switch to the counter-American persuasion? I have just the perfect book for you. It's called [Memoirs of Service Afloat](#), and it is the Great Confederate Novel, or would be if it was fiction. If you have ever felt yourself tempted to use the phrase "Universal Yankee Nation" in a disparaging sort of way, run, do not walk, to Admiral Semmes. Bear in mind, however, that many of your other opinions will need to change.

But we note something else in Adams' presentation - it is quite inconsistent with the Whig theory of the American Revolution. No wonder the British are impressed! Macaulay has just been telling them that Americans cannot be conquered and pacified by mere military force. Along comes the Universal Yankee Nation, and does just that. Perhaps it's just Yankees proper who are invulnerable, like the [Lord's Resistance Army](#), to bullets.

And we are reminded, once again, of the *Shortest-Way*:

Sir Roger L'Estrange tells us a story in his collection of Fables, of the Cock and the Horses. The Cock was gotten to roost in the stable among the horses; and there being no racks or other conveniences for him, it seems, he was forced to roost upon the ground. The horses jostling about for room, and putting the Cock in danger of his life, he gives them this grave advice, "Pray, Gentlefolks! let us stand still! for fear we should tread upon one another!"

There are some people in the World, who, now they are unperched, and reduced to an equality with other people, and under strong and very just apprehensions of being further treated as they deserve, begin, with Aesop's Cock, to preach up Peace and Union and the Christian duty of Moderation; forgetting that, when they had the Power in their hands, those Graces were strangers in their gates!

So we see that when Whigs rebel against Tories, Tories should "stand still! for fear we should tread upon each other." When the shoe is on the other foot, however, "those Graces were strangers in their gates."

This is not a matter of the *merits* of the rebel causes in the American Revolution and the Civil War. As a progressive, of course, you believe (not very strongly) that the first rebellion was just, and you believe

(very strongly) that the second was unjust. These are matters of morality, over which we cannot argue.

The question is the *physical efficacy* of coercive suppression in both cases. Your theory of history, which of course you did not invent but have received, assures you that coercion could not have worked in the first case. No theory is required to know that it worked in the second. If you were truly a believer in the Calvinist Providence, like your Whig forebears of old, the problem would be solved: God, whose ways are mysterious but whose arms are invincible, is on the side of the just. Therefore it is futile to attempt to overcome a just cause, whereas an unjust one must be resisted with all our might - God helps those who help themselves.

You have long since given up this belief. But its corollary persists - out of sheer habit, I must assume. I can find no other explanation. And since the belief, true or false, is clearly central to any strategy for world peace - most of today's wars being insurgencies of one sort or another - we have to resolve it.

In our pursuit of the Whig theory of war, we have advanced from the early 17th century to the late 19th. Let's pull just a little way into the 20th, and pick an episode which everyone will recognize, but hopefully few have strong attachments to.

[Joseph Tumulty](#), a New Jersey politician, was one of Woodrow Wilson's advisers - think [Colonel House](#), minus 20 IQ points. In 1921 he published an adoring political memoir, a genre somewhat new to history, called [Woodrow Wilson As I Know Him](#).

It includes the following passage, which I'd like to think at this point is self-explanatory. If you get bored, you can skim, but don't be discouraged - there is a punchline.

No one standing on the side-lines in the capital of the nation and witnessing the play of the ardent passions of the people of the Irish race, demanding that some affirmative action be taken by our government to bring about the realization of the right of self-determination for Ireland, it seemed as if the American President, Woodrow Wilson, who first gave utterance to the ideal of self-determination for all the oppressed peoples of the world, was woefully unmindful of the age-long struggle that Irishmen had been making to free their own beloved land from British domination. But to those, like myself, who were on the inside of affairs, it was evident that in every proper and legitimate way the American President was cautiously searching for efficient means to advance the cause of self-government in Ireland and to bring about a definite and satisfactory solution of this complicated problem.

[...]

Long before the European war the President and I had often discussed the Irish cause and how to make his influence felt in a way that would bring results without becoming involved in diplomatic snarls with Great Britain. He was of the opinion that the Irish problem could not be settled by force,

for the spirit of Ireland, which for centuries had been demanding justice, was unconquerable. He pointed out to me on many occasions when we discussed this delicate matter, that the policy of force and reprisal which the English Government had for centuries practised in had but strengthened the tenacious purpose of the Irish people and had only succeeded in keeping under the surface the seething dissatisfaction of that indomitable race. I recall that at the conclusion of one of our talks after a Cabinet meeting, shaking his head as if he despaired of a settlement, the President said: "European statesmen can never learn that humanity can be welded together only by love, by sympathy, and by justice, and not by jealousy and hatred." He was certain that the failure of England to find an adjustment was intensifying feeling not only in our own country, but throughout the world, and that the agitation for a settlement would spread like a contagion and would inevitably result in a great national crisis.

[...]

In discussing the matter with me, he said: "The whole policy of Great Britain in its treatment of the Irish question has unfortunately been based upon a policy of fear and not a policy of trusting the Irish people. How magnificently the policy of trust and faith worked out in the case of the Boers. Unfortunately, the people of Ireland now believe that the basis of England's policy toward them is revenge, malice, and destruction. You remember, Tumulty, how the haters of the South in the days of reconstruction sought to poison Lincoln's mind by instilling into it everything that might lead him in his treatment of the South toward a policy of reprisal, but he contemptuously turned away from every suggestion as a base and ignoble thing. Faith on the part of Great Britain in the deep humanity and inherent generosity of the Irish people is the only force that will ever lead to a settlement of this question. English statesmen must realize that in the last analysis force never permanently settles anything. It only produces hatreds and resentments that make a solution of any question difficult and almost impossible. I have tried to impress upon the Englishmen with whom I have discussed this matter that there never can be a real comradeship between America and England until this issue is definitely settled and out of the way." Many times in informal discussions with British representatives that came to the White House the President sought to impress upon them the necessity for a solution, pointing out to them how their failure was embarrassing our relations with Great Britain at every point. I am sure that if he could with propriety have done so, Woodrow Wilson would long ago have directly suggested to Great Britain a settlement of the Irish question, but, unfortunately, serious diplomatic obstacles lay in the way of an open espousal of the Irish cause. He was sadly aware that under international law no nation has the right to interest itself in anything that directly concerns the affairs of another friendly nation, for by the traditions of diplomacy such "interference" puts in jeopardy the cordial relations of the nations involved in such controversy.

Long before he became president, Woodrow Wilson had eloquently declared his attitude with reference to self-government for Ireland and had openly espoused the cause of Irish freedom. In a speech delivered at New Brunswick, New Jersey, on October 26, 1910, he said:

Have you read the papers recently attentively enough to notice the rumours that are coming across the waters? What are the rumours? The rumours are that the English programme includes, not only self-government for Ireland, but self-government for Scotland, and the drawing together in London or somewhere else of a parliament which will represent the British Empire in a great confederated state upon the model, no doubt, of the United States of America, and having its power to the end of the world. What is at the bottom of that programme? At the bottom of it is the idea that no little group of men like the English people have the right to govern men in all parts of the world without drawing them into real substantial partnership, where their voice will count with equal weight with the voice of other parts of the country. This voice that has been crying in Ireland, this voice for home rule, is a voice which is now supported by the opinion of the world; this impulse is a spirit which ought to be respected and recognized in the British Constitution. It means not mere vague talk of men's rights, men's emotions, and men's inveterate and traditional principles, but it means the embodiment of these things in something that is going to be done, that will look with hope to the programme that may come out of these conferences. If those who conduct the Government of Great Britain are not careful the restlessness will spread with rapid agitation until the whole' country is aflame, and then there will be revolution and a change of government.

In this speech he plainly indicated that his plan for the settlement of the Irish question was the establishment of some forum to which the cause of Ireland might be brought, where the full force of the public opinion of the world, including the United States, could be brought to play in a vigorous and whole-hearted insistence upon a solution of this world-disturbing question. As we read the daily papers, containing accounts of the disturbances in Ireland, what a prophetic vision underlay the declaration contained in the speech of Woodrow Wilson in 1910!

If those who conduct the Government of Great Britain are not careful the restlessness will spread with rapid agitation until the whole country is aflame, and then there will be revolution and a change of government.

I recall his passionate resentment of the attitude and threats of Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Unionist forces in the British Parliament, when he read the following statement of Carson carried in the American Press, after the passage of Home Rule through the House of Lords: "In the event of this proposed parliament being thrust upon us, we solemnly and mutually pledge ourselves not to recognize its authority. I do not care two pence whether this is treason or not." Discussing Carson's utterance the President said: "I would like to be in Mr. Asquith's place. I would show this rebel whether he would recognize the authority of the Government or flaunt it. He ought to be hanged for treason. If Asquith does not call this gentleman's bluff, the contagion of unrest and rebellion in Ireland will spread until only a major operation will save the Empire. Dallying with gentlemen of this kind who openly advocate revolution will only add to the difficulties. If those in authority in England will only act firmly now, their difficulties will be lessened. A little of the firmness and

courage of Andrew Jackson would force a settlement of the Irish question right now."

I swear to God, I have elided nothing except where indicated. Tumulty segues directly from the unconquerable spirit of the Irish to the "firmness and courage of Andrew Jackson." There is not even a segue. It's just bam, bam. Check it for yourself - [page 397](#).

Did you catch, also, that bit about "how magnificently the policy of trust and faith worked out with the Boers?" Yeah - trust, faith, and concentration camps. What Wilson means, as in his reference to the South, is that after the Boer war Britain devolved a large amount of local responsibility on the South African government. After, of course, delivering a thorough and comprehensive ass-whooping, with "the firmness and courage of Andrew Jackson."

Mr. Tumulty, of course, was an Irish ward-boss political hack. He was not writing for 2008. But he made the wonderful gaffe of emitting the Whig theory of revolution and the Whig theory of rebellion in a single breath, where we can see how oddly they fit together. The Whig theory of rebellion turns out to just be the Tory theory of revolution. They can coexist, but only with a distinction between (justified) revolution and (unjustified) rebellion that is implausible to say the least.

And yet, as a progressive, you believe them both, and you will never confuse the two. Imagine, for example, that some confused conservative intellectual had responded to the crimes of [Timothy McVeigh](#), or [Eric Rudolph](#), or [Byron de la Beckwith](#), with Wilsonian rhetoric about deep-seated grievances, or age-old struggles, or what-not. These men were not revolutionaries. They were rebels. That is, they were right-wing political criminals, rather than left-wing ones. They deserved to be crushed. And somehow this did not prove hard at all. Nor did right-wing intellectuals experience any difficulty in choosing not to excuse their acts.

Here's a fact that may have escaped your attention. *There has never been a successful right-wing insurgency.* That is, there has never been any successful movement employing the tactics of guerrilla or "urban guerrilla" (or "terrorist") war, in which the guerrilla forces were to the political right of the government forces. To some extent you can classify Franco in Spain as a successful right-wing rebel, but his forces were more organized and disciplined than the government's - Franquismo was a coup that turned into a rebellion, and it succeeded in the end only because, for unusual reasons, England and the US declined to intervene against it.

For example, if oppression and injustice really are the cause of insurgent movements, why was there never anything even close to an insurgency in any of the Soviet-bloc states? Excepting, of course, Afghanistan - a rather suspicious exception. You may be a progressive, but you can't be such a progressive that you believe there was no such thing as Communist oppression. Yet it never spawned any kind of violent reaction. What up with that, dog?

The obvious answer is just Defoe's. *"When they had the Power in their hands, those Graces were*

*strangers in their gates.*" The cause of revolutionary violence is not oppression. The cause of revolutionary violence is *weak government*. If people avoid revolting against strong governments, it is because they are *not stupid*, and they *know they will lose*. There is one and only one way to defeat an insurgency, which is the same way to defeat any movement - make it clear that it has no chance of winning, and no one involved in it will gain by continuing to fight.

I mean, think about it. You hear that in country X, the government is fighting against an insurgency. You know nothing else. Which side would you bet on? The government, of course. Because it is stronger by definition - it has more men and more guns. If it didn't, it wouldn't be the government.

So insurgency in the modern age is not what it appears to be. It is an illusion constructed for a political audience. If Fisher is right, it was not the Continental Army that prevailed in 1783, but the alliance of the Continental Army and the British Whigs. Together they produced a new Whig republic to replace the old one that had collapsed with Cromwell's death. Neither could conceivably have achieved this mission alone.

Insurgency, including what we now call "terrorism," is thus a kind of theater. Guerrilla theater, you might say. It exists as an adjunct to democratic politics, and could not exist without it. (I exclude partisan campaigns of the [Peninsular War](#) type, in which the guerrillas are an adjunct to a war proper.)

The goal of an insurgency is simply to demonstrate that the violence will continue until the political demands of its supporters are met. The military arm produces the violence. The political arm explains, generally while deploring the violence, that the violence can be stopped by meeting the demands - and only by meeting the demands.

What's so beautiful about this design, at least from the Devil's perspective, is that it requires no coordination at all. It is completely distributed. There is no "command and control." It often arouses suspicion when politicians and terrorists are [good friends](#). With the insurgency design, both can benefit from each others' actions, without any incriminating connections. They do not even need to think of the effort as a cooperation.

Insurgents and politicians need not even share a value system. There is no reason at all, for example, to think that Ayman al-Zawahiri shares any values with American progressives. I have a fair idea of the kind of government that Sheikh al-Zawahiri would create if he had his druthers. I can certainly say the same for progressives. They have nothing at all to do with each other - regardless of anyone's middle name.

Yet when Sheikh al-Zawahiri [attributed](#) the Democratic victory in the 2006 elections to the mujahedeen, he was objectively right. The Democrats won because their prediction that Iraq would become a quagmire for the US military (which everyone and his dog knows is a Republican outfit) turned out to be true. Without the mujahedeen, who would have turned Iraq into a quagmire? Space aliens?

To make a proper feedback loop, the efforts of the politicians must assist the insurgents, and the efforts

of the insurgents must assist the politicians. The al-Zawahiri effect - which is not exactly a unique case - is a good example of the latter. The former is provided by a tendency in Whig politics that we can call *antimilitarism*.

Antimilitarism assists the "armed struggle" in the most obvious way: by opposing its opponents. All things being equal, any professional military force will defeat its nonprofessional opponent, just as an NBA team will defeat the women's junior varsity. The effect of antimilitarism is to adjust the political and military playing field until the insurgents have an equal, or even greater, chance of victory.

Wars in which antimilitarism plays an important role are often described as "asymmetric." The term is a misnomer. A real "asymmetric" war would be a conflict in which one side was much stronger than the other. For obvious reasons, this is a *rara avis*. A modern asymmetric war is one in which one side's strength is primarily military, and the other's is primarily political. Of course this does not work unless the political and military sides are at least nominally parts of the same government, which means that all asymmetric wars are civil - although they may be fought by foreign soldiers on foreign territory.

How does antimilitarism do its thing? As always in war, in any way it can. In the case of Lord Howe we see what looks very much like deliberate military incompetence. Military mismanagement may occur at the level of military leadership, as in the case of Lord Howe, or in civil-military relations, as with McNamara. The military may win the war and its civilian masters may then simply surrender, as in the case of [French Algeria](#).

The most popular approach today, however, is to alter the *rules* of war. War is brutal. If you were a space alien, you might expect a person opposed to this brutality to ameliorate it, or at least attempt to, by: (a) deciding to support whichever side is the least brutal; (b) promoting rules of war which minimize the incentive for brutal conduct; and (c) encouraging the war to end as quickly as possible with a decisive and final result.

Modern progressivism does not resemble any of these actions. In fact, it resembles their polar opposite. It is certainly motivated by opposition to brutality, but the actions are not calculated to achieve the effects. In a word, it is antimilitarism.

For example, the modern US military has by far the highest lawyer-to-soldier ratio in any military force in history. It requests legal opinions as a routine aspect of even minor attacks. It is by no means averse to trying its own soldiers for [judgment calls](#) made in the heat of battle, a practice that would strike Lord Howe as completely insane. (Here is a [personal narrative](#) of the consequences.) Meanwhile, its enemies relish the most [barbaric tortures](#). And which side does the progressive prefer? Or rather, which side do his objective actions favor?

Adjusting the rules of war in this way is an excellent strategy for the 21st-century antimilitarist. He does not have to actually express support for the insurgents, as his crude predecessors of the 1960s did. (As

Tom Hayden put it, "We are all [Viet Cong](#) now.") Today anyone who can click a mouse can learn that the NLF was the NVA and the NVA were [cold-blooded killers](#), but this knowledge was controversial and hard-to-obtain at the time. The people who knew it were not, in general, the smart ones. "We are all al-Qaeda now" simply does not compute, and you don't hear it. But nor do you need to.

An arbitrary level of antimilitarism can be achieved simply by converging military tactics with judicial and police procedure. Suppose, for example, Britain was invaded by the Bolivian army, in a stunning seaborne coup. Who would win? Probably not the Bolivians, which is why they don't try it.

But suppose that the Bolivian soldiers have the full protection of British law. The only way to detain them is to arrest them, and they must be charged with an actual crime on reasonable suspicion of having committed it. Being a Bolivian in Britain is not a crime. You cannot, of course, shoot them, at least not without a trial and a full appeal process. Any sort of indiscriminate massacre, as via artillery, airstrikes, etc, is of course out of the question. Etc.

So Britain becomes a province of Bolivia. War is always uncertain, but the Bolivians certainly ought to give it a shot. What do they have to lose? A few soldiers, who might have to spend a little time in a British jail. Not exactly the Black Hole of Calcutta. So why not?

And this is how antimilitarism produces war. War is horrible, and no one is willing to fight in it unless they have a chance of winning. Antimilitarism gives the insurgents that chance. And this is the other half of the feedback loop.

Now we're ready to answer the question that you've probably forgotten about: what is the most successful Protestant denomination in the United States?

"Successful" is a tricky word. Should we count it statistically, by mere numbers? But I am a reactionary - headcount and warm bodies mean nothing to me. Better to count it by influence and importance. Whose counsels are heard in the corridors of power? To what sect do the rich, famous and fashionable belong? Who controls the prestigious institutions?

But an even trickier word is "denomination." The problem is that denominations don't always seem to mean that much. In many cases, they seem to be meaningless labels inherited from the past. To define people as members of separate sects, you'd expect them to disagree about something important. When was the last time you saw, say, a Congregationalist having it out with an Episcopalian? Do Unitarians and Methodists castigate each other in furious theological catfights?

Um, no. I suspect the major reason for this is the [ecumenical movement](#). It's unsurprising that this would result in a convergence of opinion. In practice today, in the US, there are two kinds of Protestant: [mainline](#) (ie, ecumenical), and [evangelical](#). (Confusingly, the people described as "evangelical" in the 19th century are the ancestors of today's mainliners - I prefer to say "traditionalist.") As one would expect from the history of the great Christian faith, these two sects hate each other like cats and dogs. Mystery

resolved.

And as the name suggests, mainliners are more socially prestigious and far more likely to be found in positions of influence or authority. Does this answer our question? Not quite.

The thing about mainline Protestant beliefs is that they are not only shared by Protestants. You can find Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and quite a few atheists who hold essentially the same worldview as the mainline Protestants. What is a "moderate Muslim?" A Protestant Muslim, more or less.

For the last century and a half, one of the most influential American sects has been the Unitarians. The beliefs held by Unitarians have changed over time, but modern Unitarians (or [Unitarian Universalists](#)) believe that you can be a Unitarian while being any religion, or no religion at all. Of course, if you are a Muslim or a Catholic, you need to discard almost all the traditional beliefs of these sects, often retaining just the name. But since Unitarians have done more or less the same to their own beliefs, it's no sweat, man.

The neat thing about primary sources is that often, it takes only one to prove your point. If you find the theory of relativity mentioned in ancient Greek documents, and you know the documents are authentic, you know that the ancient Greeks discovered relativity. How? Why? It doesn't matter. Your understanding of ancient Greece needs to include Greek relativity.

One of the discoveries that impelled me to start this blog was an ancient document. Well, not that ancient, actually. It's from 1942. It is of unquestionable authenticity. In fact, it is still hosted by the same organization that wrote it. If you're an old UR reader you have seen this before. If you're an open-minded progressive, you may be surprised. The document is [here](#).

The program of the Federal Council is immediately recognizable as the modern progressive agenda. But that adjective is not used (except in its dictionary sense). Nor is the other adjective that is generally associated with the same program, *liberal*. (I really hate using this word - it makes me sound like Rush Limbaugh.)

Instead, what is the adjective our reporter uses to describe this program? *Super-Protestant*. In other words, we have a candidate for the most successful Protestant denomination in the US today. That denomination is *progressivism itself*.

Progressives, at least the majority of progressives, do not think of themselves as a religious movement. In fact, presumably for adaptive reasons, they have discarded almost every trace of theology, though there is still some lingering fondness for the Prince of Peace. But the line of descent from the English Dissenters to Bill Moyers is as clear as that from chimp to man.

After some failed experiments I coined the name *Universalism*, for progressivism understood as a Protestant sect, and have been using it here for a while. I am still not sure about this word, though it is

appropriate for several reasons theological and mundane. It seems inoffensive, and progressives will often describe themselves as small-u universalists. But *progressive* is what its adherents call themselves, and it seems polite to respect this. I may just go back and forth.

Whatever you call it, progressivism is not just a religious movement. It is not just a matter of spiritual opinion. Like classical Islam, it is a complete way of life. And it comes with a political arm - Whiggery. Whether you believe the Dissenter-Whig complex is good or evil, you cannot avoid admitting that it is the most successful religious and political movement in the history of the known universe.

So that's one answer to our question. There is an even more disturbing answer, though.

Another way to measure success is by *fidelity of transmission*. While Universalism is most certainly descended from the 17th-century American Puritans (read [this book](#) if you don't believe me), your average Puritan would be absolutely horrified by progressive beliefs. As would just about anyone in the 17th century. But who is the closest?

Actually, there is a 17th-century of extremist Dissenters whose beliefs closely track modern progressivism. They are not identical - that would be too much to expect - but you will have to work hard to find any point on which the two conflict, at least to the point where someone might get into an argument. Many superficial rituals and traditions have been discarded, but modern members of this sect are certainly progressives. And the sect, though young by Dissenter standards, has been quite influential ever since the writing of the *Shortest-Way*.

I refer, of course, to the [Quakers](#). If the Time reporter had described the program of the Federal Council as *super-Quaker*, he might well have confused his audience, but his theology would have been if anything more accurate. The history of mainline Protestantism in America is more or less the history of its Quakerization. Basically, we are all Quakers now. Even I find Quaker writings remarkably sympathetic, and I'm a reactionary Jacobite.

There is a reason, though, that they were expelled from England. Here, in this [fascinating 1917 discussion](#) of Quakers and World War I (which in the great Quaker style, both innocent and shameless, is hosted by... the Quaker Heritage Press), is an example of what creeps some people out about the Quakers:

It should be noted, in the first place, that in practice the Quaker attitude upon this issue [the war] is no more than that of Socialists, of whom some are ardent nationalists and some inveterate pacifists. The Friends have their patriotic and military heroes. Betsy Ross, who made our first flag, was a member of the society. Thomas Mifflin, a major general and Washington's first aide-de-camp, was a Quaker; so was Major General Nathaniel Greene; so was Jacob Brown, a Bucks county schoolmaster who rose to be commander-in-chief of the United States army. Robert Morris financed the Revolution largely by means of Quaker loans. John Bright, one of the foremost of English Quakers, justified the American war to exterminate slavery. Whittier's abolition poems were militant to the

last degree. Even William Penn proposed an international "league to enforce peace," requiring compulsion by arms if necessary. The doctrine of pacifism, nevertheless, always has been vital in the principles of Quakerism, and one of the curious chapters in American history deals with the strange expedients which members of the society employed to make their genuine love of country harmonize with their beliefs by supporting necessary projects of defense which they could not officially countenance. Franklin gives an illuminating account of "the embarrassment given them (in the Pennsylvania assembly) whenever application was made to grant aids for military purposes." Unwilling to offend the government, and averse to violating their principles, he says, they used "a variety of evasions," the commonest one being to grant money "for the king's use" and avoid all inquiry as to the disbursement. But once, when New England asked Pennsylvania for a grant to buy powder, this ingenious device would not serve:

They could not grant money to buy powder, for that was an ingredient of war; but they voted an aid of 3000 Pounds, and appropriated it for the purchasing of bread, flour, wheat "and other grain." Some of the council, desirous of giving the House still further embarrassment, advised the governor not to accept the provision, as not being the thing he had demanded; but he reply'd, "I shall take the money, for I understand very well their meaning -- other grain is gunpowder." Which he accordingly bought, and they never objected to it.

If this makes no sense to you, black powder of the time came in "corns", ie, grains. The story of "other grain," which I would be prepared to accept as apocryphal (Franklin is hardly a trustworthy source), is rather famous among Quaker-haters. Note also William Penn's "league to enforce peace," of which I was entirely unaware until five minutes ago. Ya learn something new every day.

Even I find it hard to restructure my brain to think of progressivism as a religious movement. Frankly, the proposition that our society, far from advancing into a bright future of rationality and truth, is slipping inexorably into the iron grip of an ancient religious sect, is one I find almost impossible to contemplate. One thought-experiment for this purpose, however, is to imagine that - perhaps through the action of evil aliens - every progressive (whether or not he or she self-identifies as a "Christian") was converted automatically into a traditionalist, and vice versa. Except, of course, for you.

You'd suddenly realize that you lived in a world in which all the levers of power, prestige, and influence were held by *dangerous religious maniacs*. At least, people you consider dangerous religious maniacs. Being a progressive and all.

Well, exactly. I am not a progressive. But I am also not a traditionalist. I am not a Christian at all. I believe it is worth some effort to try to wake up from all this historical baggage.

We are now prepared to consider the subject we started with, *world peace*.

From a semiotic perspective (I didn't go to Brown for nothing, kids), the fascinating thing about *world*

*peace* is that, while these two little words are remarkably precise and their compound is hardly less exact, the phrase is not without its Empsonian edge. It reminds us of two concepts which are not logically connected: a *goal* in which Planet Three is free from the state of human interaction known as war, and a *strategy* for achieving that goal.

This strategy is generally known as *pacifism*. In 19th-century and 20th-century history, pacifism is associated with a *movement* - ie, a group of people acting collectively, if not within any fixed organizational structure - which might be called the *internationalist* movement. While this inevitably fuzzy category embraces an enormous set of individuals and projects across the last two hundred years, I think it's a fair summary to say that an internationalist believes that the best way to achieve world peace is to build global institutions which act in the interest of humanity as a whole. Tennyson's [Locksley Hall](#) is the classic expression:

Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furled  
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.  
Here the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,  
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapped in universal law.

On an issue as important as *world peace*, there is certainly no point in confusing ourselves. So I object to the word *pacifism*. This sign, by joining two signifieds in one signifier - the *goal* of a world without war, and the *strategy* of Locksley Hall internationalism - sneaks in three assumptions which, while they may very well be true, strike me as quite nonobvious.

One: internationalism is the only strategy which can achieve the goal. Two: internationalism is an effective strategy with which to achieve the goal. Three: internationalism is not the principal obstacle to the achievement of the goal.

If you have actually read this far in the post, without skimming even a little, I'd like to think that you know Whiggery and Quakerism when you see it. So let me suggest an alternative to the Locksley Hall strategy for world peace: a *return to classical international law*.

Of course, our internationalists talk of nothing but international law. But what they mean is *modern* international law. They believe, good Whigs that they are, that the changes they have made in the last century are *improvements*. Quakerization is always an improvement, and international law has certainly been quite thoroughly Quakerized.

By "classical," I mean anything before World War I. But a century is a nice dividing line. Let's take as our text, therefore, [Elements of International Law](#), 3rd edition, 1908, by George B. Davis. I know nothing about this book or its author, but it is obviously a standard text. There are little bits of proto-Universalism to be found in it, but they are easily identified and discarded. For the most part it contains all the wisdom on statecraft of the classical European world, and it is very good at citing its sources. It is

certainly not a mere collection of the personal opinions of George B. Davis, whoever he was.

Here, for example, is classical international law on guerrilla warfare:

**Guerillas.** The term guerilla is applied to persons who, acting singly or joined in bands, carry on operations in the vicinity of an army in the field in violation of the laws of war. They wear no uniform, they act without the orders of their government, and their operations consist chiefly in the killing of picket guards and sentinels, in the assassination of isolated individuals or detachments, and in robbery and other predatory acts. As they are not controlled in their undertakings by the laws of war, they are not entitled to their protection. If captured, they are treated with great severity, the punishment in any case being proportioned to the offence committed. Their operations have no effect upon the general issue of the war, and only tend to aggravate its severity. Life taken by them is uselessly sacrificed, and with no corresponding advantage.

Quelle difference! Here, on the rightfulness of war:

**Rightfulness of War.** With the inherent rightfulness of war international law has nothing to do. War exists as a fact of international relations, and, as such, it is accepted and discussed. In defining the law of war, at any time, the attempt is made to formulate its rules and practices, and to secure the general consent of nations to such modifications of its usages as will tend towards greater humanity, or will shorten its duration, restrict its operations, and hasten the return of peace and the restoration of the belligerent states to their normal relations.

Friends, this is the sweet music of reason, scanned, de-Quakerized and presented for your perusal by the good progressives behind Google Books - who do much better than they know.

I cannot quote this entire book. If you care about the subject - and who doesn't? - it is simply worth reading. You can skip the chapters on diplomatic protocol, treaties, etc. War and sovereignty are your main concerns.

Classical international law, while never perfect, was simply a beautiful piece of engineering. It solved, not perfectly but quite effectively, a problem that today strikes us as unsolvable: enforcing good behavior among sovereign nations, *without a central enforcer*. You might call it a peer-to-peer architecture for world peace.

I'm afraid what we have now is more a client-server approach. It works, sort of. It does not strike me as stable or scalable. International law was designed for a world of equals. It broke down when one nation - first Great Britain, and later the United States - took it upon itself, for motives that were superficially charitable and fundamentally Whiggish, to act as a global enforcer. At that point, it ceased to be an instrument of peace and independence, and became one of domination and war. "Other grain."

If the entire tradition of classical international law were condensed down to two words, they might well

be the Latin words *uti possidetis*. If there is a single phrase that is the key to world peace, it is this one. Amazingly enough, it even has a Wikipedia page, although the classical concept is confused with the modern, and quite oxymoronic, one of *uti possidetis juris*.

The idea of *uti possidetis* is the principle that every government is legitimate and sovereign. All governments are *de facto*. Their borders are defined by the power of their military forces. If two states disagree on their borders, it is up to them to settle the dispute. Their settlement should be respected by all. As Davis puts it:

Treaties of peace resemble ordinary treaties in form, in the detailed method of preparation, and in binding force. They differ from ordinary treaties, and from private contracts, in respect to the position of the contracting parties, who, from the necessities of the case, do not enter them upon equal terms. This in no respect detracts from their obligatory character, which cannot be too strongly insisted upon. "Agreements entered into by an individual while under duress are void, because it is for the welfare of society that they should be so. If they were binding, the timid would be constantly forced by threats or violence into a surrender of their rights, and even into secrecy as to the oppression under which they were suffering. The [knowledge] that such engagements are void makes the attempt to extort them one of the rarest of human crimes. On the other hand, the welfare of society requires that the engagements entered into by a nation under duress should be binding; for, if they were not so, wars would terminate only by the utter subjugation and ruin of the weaker party."

In other words, exactly as they terminated in the 20th century. If they terminated.

When either belligerent believes the object of the war to have been attained, or is convinced that it is impossible of attainment; or when the military operations of either power have been so successful as to determine the fortune of war decisively in its favor, a general truce is agreed upon, and negotiations are entered into with a view to the restoration of peace.

You see the flavor of these rules. They are designed for a world of *genuinely independent states* - as opposed to British or American *protectorates*. Under the rule of *uti possidetis*, statehood is an objective description. No one asks: should Hamas have a state? One asks: is Gaza a state? Under classical international law, the answer is clearly "yes."

Let's take a brief look at how this plan would create peace in the Middle East. First, the borders between Israel and its neighbors are permanently fixed. They are simply the present lines of demarcation, as set at the end of the 1967 war. In the West Bank there is an area of fuzzy jurisdiction - Israel maintains what might be called an imperfect occupation. Gaza is its own state. I suspect Israel would find it prudent to evacuate most of the West Bank and put it in the same status as Gaza. Call it Ramallah.

The US is completely neutral in these disputes. It gives Israel no aid. It gives the Palestinians no aid. It

gives no one any aid. It does not need protectorates, "friends," etc. It has the H-bomb and Angelina Jolie. Others can love it for the latter or fear it for the former. Or possibly the reverse. It's up to them.

The Middle East, and specifically the area around Israel, is actually an area of great natural stability. The area is stable because the state which [does not want war](#), Israel, is much stronger than its aggressive, [irredentist](#) and [revanchist](#) neighbors, Gaza and Ramallah. Therefore, there are two possibilities.

One, Gaza and Ramallah recognize that they live next to the 800-pound gorilla. They watch their steps. They do not shoot rockets over the border, and they prevent their citizens from doing so. And there is no war.

Two, Gaza and Ramallah persist in attacking Israel. Under classical international law, Israel exercises its [right of redress](#) and does whatever it takes to stop the attacks. If "whatever it takes" means that Israel has to convert the human population of Gaza into biofuel, so be it. The basic principle of classical international law is that [every citizen of an enemy state is an enemy](#).

Of course, the law of war is intended to make combat humane, and the [basic principle of humanitarian war](#) is that

No forcible measures against an enemy which involve the loss of human life are justifiable which do not bear directly upon the object of which the war is undertaken, and which do not materially contribute to bring it to an end.

In other words, if Gazans are really so crazed with lust for Jewish blood that they will never stop blowing themselves up in cafes until the last Gazan is processed into a tankful of biodiesel, biodiesel it is. Otherwise, of course, these actions would be quite unjustifiable.

Of course, Gazans are not really this crazy. They are normal people. They would take option 1 in a heartbeat, and the only reason they haven't already is that they are just doing their jobs. Hating Israel is the national industry of Palestine. That is, via American and European aid, it generates more or less the entire Palestinian GDP. If Palestinians stop attacking Israel, if they just settle down and live their lives like the normal people they are, there will be no reason for anyone to give them money. And the money will stop.

Ah, you cry, but justice! The Palestinians cry for justice! Well, perhaps it is just for Israel to give the Palestinians money, or land, or cheezburgers, or something. I would like to think that this money should come from Israel, not from Washington. But if the Palestinians want money, or land, or cheezburgers, they will have to find some way of extracting these goods from Israel, or whoever else, on their own. Because the world of classical international law is not the world that is ruled by Uncle Sam, dispenser of justice to all.

This is the genius of classical international law. It is based on the concept of actual sovereignty. When

you establish your Quaker "league for enforcing peace," or even your British "balance of power," you establish an international super-sovereign. Which is a world government. Which is not, in the hands of the Quakers, a workable design. It might be a workable design in the hands of the Nazis - but would you want it to be?

The Palestinian problem is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Quakerism. Quakers believe that peace can be created by redressing grievances. When this principle is pointed toward the left, it becomes *no justice, no peace*. When it is pointed toward the right, it becomes *appeasement*. For example, [this New Zealand activist](#), who has Quaker written all over him, has produced a brilliant reinvention of *Lebensraum*:

An artificial state for four million displaced Palestinians to govern themselves over several disconnected pieces of poor quality land not wanted by Israel is not viable in any meaningful sense of the word.

Even if all the initial grievances are absolutely just by some objective standard, the cycle of grievance and reward will quickly attract gangsters and create a mafia grievance factory.

The tragedy is that Mr. Minto and his ilk are so close to seeing the true principle of peace: peace is learning to live with the world as it is, not as you want it to be. You'd think a Quaker would be able to see this in a flash. But I'm afraid power has corrupted them.

Do the Palestinians find themselves with "poor quality land"? Then agriculture is probably not their metier. Dubai has some pretty crappy land, as well. Its residents spend far less time brooding over the subject of Jews. Perhaps a simple solution would be for Dubai to annex Gaza - contiguous borders, while preferable, are hardly essential in the 21st century. Forget about the past. Live in the future.

It is almost impossible to overestimate how politically dependent the world's nations are on the US. I suspect that if we embraced the principles of classical international law overnight, next week would see military coups in almost every country in the world. In the present world, a military government in, say, Brazil, would be ostracized and isolated into oblivion with remarkable speed. In the world of classical international law, the US does not care what form of government is practiced in Brazil. It only cares that Brazil does not invade it, harass its shipping, welsh on its debts, etc. There is a [lot of order](#) to restore in Brazil, and a lot of prestige to be won by restoring it. At least in Brazil. And why should it matter what Washington thinks of Brazil? Answer: it shouldn't.

The world of 2008 has one major sovereign state, the US. There are two smaller ones, Russia and China, which have passed through Communism to a system of government that might almost be described as *neoreactionary*. By avoiding dependency on American aid, the oil kingdoms of the Gulf also retained a certain level of sovereignty. Iran and its satellites are trying to achieve stable sovereignty by building nuclear weapons, and being insanely aggressive toward America. Hopefully their aggression will stop after they succeed, but who knows.

The salient financial feature of the present world is the gigantic trade deficit between the democratic world and the neoreactionary world - in favor of the latter. This is not a coincidence. The Gulf states are neoreactionary because they have oil, which has enabled them to preserve something vaguely like their traditional forms of government, rather than becoming just more Third World protectorates of the State Department. Russia too has oil, which after Communism had the same effect. And China has that real *rara avis*, a healthy capitalist industrial base, a consequence of its bold resistance to democracy.

This financial imbalance is oddly reminiscent of the situation between the Communist and Western worlds before the collapse of the former. Of course, it could just be a coincidence. Don't get your hopes up. This one will take a while.

There was a funny article the other day in the Times. It seems [Kuwaitis have noticed](#) that they have democracy, that Dubai doesn't, and that the latter seems to be rather better off for it. (Don't miss the pictures of Kuwait's "financial district" - sidesplitting.) Not that Kuwait has much democracy. It's a constitutional monarchy. But Dubai is an absolute monarchy, and the difference is, um, remarkable. Especially since Kuwait has way more oil than Dubai.

The great wave of Whiggery has washed to the end of the world and the top of the beach. Its source is not moral righteousness, but mere power. That power is waning. It still looks like the future, but not as much as it used to. Patches of sand are starting to show through the water. Will another wave come? Or will the water just wash back? And if so, will it wash back slowly, or will it all just disappear one day, the way Communism did?

But this is already too long. Continue to [part 6](#).

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/05/ol5-shortest-way-to-world-peace.html>

## Part 6: the lost theory of government

May 22, 2008

*[If you're using Firefox and you see a gray box in the middle of the post, it is Blogger strangeness. Click on the post title and it goes away.]*

The best way to understand government is to assume everything you know about it is nonsense. Or so at least I claimed [last week](#). Let's demonstrate it by solving the problem from scratch.

Growing up in the modern Western world, you learned that in all pre-modern, non-Western societies, everyone - even the smartest and most knowledgeable - put their faith in theories of government now known to be nonsensical. The divine right of kings. The apostolic succession of the Pope. The Marxist evolution of history. Etc.

Why did such nonsense prosper? It outcompeted its non-nonsensical competitors. When can nonsense outcompete truth? When political power is on its side. Call it *power distortion*.

And why, dear open-minded progressive, do you think your theory of government, which you did not invent yourself but received in the usual way, is anything but yet another artifact of power distortion, adapted to retain your rulers in their comfortable seats?

Probably because there is a categorical difference between modern liberal democracy and the assorted monarchies, empires, dictatorships, theocracies, etc, which practiced the black art of official mind control. The priests of Amun tolerated no dissent. They flayed the heretic, the back-talker, the smartmouth, and stretched his still-living flesh to crack and writhe in the hot African wind, till the hyena or the crocodile came along to finish him. But now they are all pushing up the asphodels, and Google hasn't even thought about deleting my blog.

You think of freedom of thought as a universal antibiotic, a sure cure for power distortion. It certainly allows me to post my seditious blasphemies - for now.

But as a progressive, your beliefs are the beliefs of the great, the good and the fashionable. And as we've seen over the past few weeks, power can corrupt the mind in two ways: by coercion, or by seduction. The Whig, the liberal, the radical, the dissenter, the progressive, protests the former with great umbrage - especially when his ox is being gored. Over the past four centuries, he has ridden the latter to power. He is Boromir. He has worn the Ring and worked it. And it, of course, has worked him.

Today's late Whiggery, gray and huge and soft, lounges louche on its throne, fastened tight to the great plinth of public opinion that it hacked from the rock of history with its own forked and twisted tongue. The mass mind, educated to perfection, is sure. It has two alternatives: the Boromir-thing, or Hitler. And who wants Hitler? Resistance is more than useless. It is ridiculous. The Whig cackles, and knocks back

another magnum of Mumm's.

And a few small rats wear out our incisors on the stone. Today we'll learn the real principles of government, which have spent the last four centuries sunk under a Serbonian bog of meretricious liberalism. ("[The funk... of forty thousand years.](#)") This is a bit short for a UR post, but parenting is a bit of a time sink. We'll have to wait until next week to see what government is today.

The two, of course, have nothing to do with each other. Nor is this likely to change soon. Nor can you do anything about it. So why bother? Why think about government?

The only defense I can offer is Vaclav Havel's idea of "[living in truth.](#)" As a fellow cog in the global public supermind, you are bombarded constantly and from every direction with the progressive theory of government, with which all humans who are not ignorant, evil or both must agree by definition, and which makes about as much sense as the Holy Trinity. If you are ready to be the nail that sticks up and is hammered down, you can be a "conservative," which ties up a few of the loose ends, and unties others. It also makes you a social pariah, unless most of your neighbors are named "Earl."

This shit is stressful. Most of us already have stressful lives. Do we need it? We don't. The nice thing about understanding government is that it gives you an off button for the endless political yammering. While it may replace this with a bit of despair as regards the future, the future is a long way off. And not entirely without hope, but that's another post.

In any case: government.

First, let's establish what a government is. A government is a *sovereign corporation*. It is [sovereign](#) because its control over its territory is not subject to any higher authority. It is a [corporation](#) because it has a single institutional identity. All governments in history fit this definition, unless their sovereignty is compromised by some stronger power. In this case, that power is the true sovereign, and your analysis should be aimed at it.

Second, what makes a government good or bad? The easiest way to think about this problem is to think *subjectively*. Assuming you have no power over the government's decisions, under what kind of government would you prefer to live? Given two governments A and B, what would make you move or want to move from A to B, or vice versa?

The key is that we are evaluating a government based on *what it does*, not *what it is*. As Deng Xiaoping - probably the greatest statesman of the 20th century - put it: "Who cares if the cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice?"

The subjective approach asks whether the government catches mice. It does not ask who the government's personnel are, or how they are selected, or how they are managed. Perhaps they are all Dinka warriors from the middle of nowhere, Sudan, chosen for their impassive visages as they execute

the brutal Dinka ritual of auto-hemicastration with no implement but their own fire-hardened fingernails. If they govern well, so much the better.

Your subjective desires for government may be different from mine. They probably are. In a world of good governments, subjective preferences would reduce to the trivial and cosmetic. If I am in the market for fast food and I see a Burger King next to a McDonalds, I will go with the King. Why? Does it matter?

Fast food is a fine metaphor for government. You'd think managing a sovereign corporation is probably more complicated and difficult than operating a fast-food chain. Heck, operating a nonsovereign US state is probably harder than flipping burgers. And if B is harder than A, you'd think anyone who can pull off B would ace A.

But if I saw a McDonalds next to a Calmeat, Mickey would be my man. Of course, there is no Calmeat. We do not live in a world where the State of California sees fit to operate restaurants, fast or otherwise. There is no state burger. Even as an open-minded progressive, however, I'm afraid you will have to concede that if there was a Calmeat, it would either be either horrible or horribly overpriced, and probably both.

Why? It will become obvious, if it isn't already. But what it tells us - if this isn't already obvious - is that we don't live in a world of good government. California is better-governed than nine-tenths of the Earth's surface. And there is no way its government could flip a decent burger. As Mark Twain [put it](#):

Omar Khayam, the poet-prophet of Persia, writing more than eight hundred years ago, has said:

"In the four parts of the earth are many that are able to write learned books, many that are able to lead armies, and many also that are able to govern kingdoms and empires; but few there be that can keep a hotel."

Twain's quote does not strike me as authentic - but I quail at the notion of Calstay. In any case: not only do we not live in a world of good government, we live in a world of *disastrously bad* government. If the 20th century does not go down in history as the golden age of awful government, it is only because the future holds some fresher hell for us.

So we are not concerned with the subtleties of good government. We are not interested in *excellent* government. It would be nice, but we would be satisfied with mere competence - perhaps with whatever enables McDonald's to survive in a world that contains not only BK but also In-n-Out, even though its burgers taste like boiled cardboard. Our goal is the mere *basics*.

Here are the basics: a government should be *secure*, *effective*, and *responsible*. None of this is rocket science. The only secret is that there is no secret.

Let's define and analyze these qualities individually, assuming the others in each. When we explain how

to make a government responsible, we'll assume it is secure and effective. When we explain how to make it secure, we'll assume it is effective and responsible. Etc.

Let's start with effectiveness. Effectiveness is the ability to accomplish what you're trying to do. Under what design is a government most effective?

We can think of effectiveness as a measure of good management. A well-managed enterprise hires the right people, spends the right amount of money on them, and makes sure they do the right things. How do we achieve effective management?

We know one simple way: find the right person, and put him or her in charge. This single, frail being, our *administrator*, holds final decision-making authority - the Roman *imperium* - over budget, policy, and personnel.

In the military world, this is called *unity of command*. In the (nonsovereign) corporate world - and in the nonprofit world that opposes it - this individual is the *CEO*. Even that most anarchic of human endeavors, the *open-source project*, tends to follow the administrator design.

Why does individual administration work? When said individual is a douche, it doesn't. There is no reliable formula for good management. But there are many reliable formulas for bad management. A better question is: why does management by committee *not* work?

Divided control of any human enterprise tends to fail because of a phenomenon generally known, around the office, as *politics*. Politics always emerges when management breaks down. An individual manager, with undivided control of some enterprise, can only succeed by making the enterprise succeed. Replace one manager with two - the unorthodox administrative design known as "two-in-a-box," a disaster I personally have experienced - and either has a new way to succeed: making the other fail. The more cooks, the worse the broth.

In every human endeavor outside government itself, undivided administration is well known to produce optimal results. If Peet's could beat Starbucks, Southwest JetBlue, or In-n-Out Mickey D's, by adopting a "separation of powers" or a "constitution" or some other architecture of leadership by consensus, one of them would certainly have tried it.

Contemplate, dear friends, the great heap of rococo procedural ornamentations that have replaced the simple principle of personal decision in the modern Western government. Montesquieuan separation of powers is the least of it. Outside the military, in which the principle of command still functions to some extent, it is simply impossible to find anyone with unified responsibility for getting anything done. And even military officers, while they have some vestiges of *imperium* - rapidly being sucked away by the judicial system - seldom control anything like their own budgets, and have zero power over personnel.

So: the modern aversion to individual management cannot be motivated by effectiveness. Undivided

administration is more effective, period. We can only explain the penchant for collective decision-making as a function of responsibility or security. It is hard to see how it has anything to do with security. It must be a matter of responsibility.

But, in a system where no individual can be connected reliably with any success or failure, where is the responsibility? As none other than Woodrow Wilson [put it](#), in 1885:

It is quite safe to say that were it possible to call together again the members of that wonderful Convention [of 1787] to view the work of their hands in the light of the century that has tested it, they would be the first to admit that the only fruit of dividing power had been to make it irresponsible.

Wilson himself, of course, had a great deal of undivided power. Nor did he use it responsibly. When we think of sovereign executives, we tend to think of bad examples. We think of Hitler, not of Frederick the Great. We don't think of [Sultan Qaboos](#) or [Lee Kuan Yew](#) or [Hans-Adam II](#). If you think this is a coincidence, think again. But perhaps a thought-experiment will help.

Washington, especially since it governs not only the United States but also most of the world, is just too huge to serve as a good thought-experiment for government. It's easier and more fun to think in terms of California, if California could somehow be a sovereign state. Assuming security and responsibility, how could we produce effective government in California?

The answer: find the world's best CEO, and give him undivided control over budget, policy and personnel. I don't think there is any debate about it. The world's best CEO is [Steve Jobs](#).

Which would you rather live in: California as it is today, or Applefornia? Which would you rather carry: the iPhone, or the Calphone? I rest my case.

So let's segue into responsibility. Assuming a government is responsible and secure, we know how to make it effective: hire Steve. But how do we make it responsible?

Steve, after all, is a turbulent fellow. He is moody at best. He could easily go around the bend. And he is already a notorious megalomaniac, a tendency that total *imperium* over the Golden State - including its new military forces, whose heads are shaved, whose garb is white linen, and whose skill in synchronized martial-arts demonstrations is unmatched even on the Korean peninsula - can hardly ameliorate.

A responsible, effective government has three basic parts. One is the front end: all the people who report to Steve. Two is the middle: Steve himself. Three is the back end: the people Steve is responsible to.

Apple itself, like all public corporations in the modern system, has a two-level back end: a board of directors, elected (in theory) by a body of shareholders. There is no reason to copy the details of this system. Corporate governance in the US today is nothing to write home about. It is the principles that

matter.

Call the back end the *controllers*. The controllers have one job: deciding whether or not Steve is managing responsibly. If not, they need to fire Steve and hire a new Steve. ([Marc Andreessen](#), perhaps.)

This design requires a substantial number of reasonably cogent controllers, whose collective opinion is likely to be trustworthy, and who *share a single concept of responsibility*.

What happens if the controllers disagree on what "responsible" government means? We are back to politics. Factions and interest groups form. Each has a different idea of how Steve should run California. A coalition of a majority can organize and threaten him: do this, do that, or it's out with Steve and in with Marc. [Logrolling](#) allows the coalition to micromanage: more funding for the threatened Mojave alligator mouse! And so on. That classic failure mode, parliamentary government, reappears.

Call a controller model with a single shared concept of responsibility *coherent*. How, with an impossibly fuzzy word like "responsibility," can we round up a large number of intelligent individuals who share a common definition? The task seems impossible. And our whole design relies on this coherent back-end.

Actually, there's one way to do it. We can define responsibility in *financial* terms. If we think of California as a *profitable* corporation, a capital asset whose purpose is to maximize its production of cash, we have a definition of responsibility which is not only precise and unambiguous, but indeed quantitative.

Moreover, this definition solves a second problem: how do we select the controllers? If our controllers are the parties to whom the profits are actually paid, and their voting power is proportional to the fractions they receive, they have not only a shared definition of responsibility, but an incentive to apply that definition in practice.

We have, of course, reinvented the [joint-stock company](#). There is no need to argue over whether this design works. It does. The relevant question is: in the context of government, does this financial definition of responsibility actually match the goal we started out with?

In other words: will an effectively managed government (remember, we are assuming security and effectiveness), which is responsible only in the sense that it tries to maximize its profits in the infinite term, actually provide the good customer service that is our goal? Will it catch mice for us? Or will it flay us, and hang us out to dry, etc?

As a progressive, you consider undivided government ("dictatorship") the root of all evil. It is impossible to enumerate the full list of reasons behind this belief. It's like asking you why you prefer a romantic candlelight dinner for two at a simple, yet elegant, French restaurant, to being dragged alive behind an 18-wheeler at highway speed until there is nothing on the rope but a flap of bloody skin. When we add the abominable and astonishing suggestion that said government should actually *turn a profit*, we reach

maximum horror. But if we are not willing to question even our deepest beliefs, our minds are hardly open.

First, it helps to remember that profitability is hardly antithetical to good customer service. Again, try the restaurant analogy. If all restaurants were nonprofits, do you think we would have better food, or worse? How does a nonprofit restaurant differ from Calmeat, which has no institutional incentive to keep its diners coming back? Perhaps if the restaurant is a small cooperative run by people who really love food, it will continue to shine. California is not a small anything, and my own interactions with its employees have revealed no such passion.

Second, I suspect that your deepest fear about undivided government is that it will in some way prove *sadistic*. It will torment and abuse its residents for no reason at all. Perhaps, for example, Steve will decide to massacre the Jews. Why not? It's been done before!

Think about this for a minute. Steve is responsible to his controllers, who evaluate his performance based on his stewardship of one asset: California. The value of California is the sum of the value of its shares. If one goes up or down, so does the other.

Which is worth more? California, or California infested by Jew-eating crocodiles? Which can be made to produce more revenue? The former, clearly. Jews pay taxes. Crocodile dung doesn't. And from the perspective of either Steve or the Jews, what is the difference between crocodiles and stormtroopers? At least the former will work for free.

Perhaps this is skipping ahead slightly, but one way to understand why Stevifornia will not be sadistic and aggressive is to explain why the Third Reich and the Soviet Union were. Sadism was not profitable for Hitler or Stalin - not that they cared, all that much. But they cared a little. Money meant power, and Hitler and Stalin certainly cared for power.

The sadistic side of these states is best understood as part of their security model. Hitler and Stalin were not gods. They could not shoot lightning bolts or resist bullets. They rose to and stayed in power by ruthless intimidation, up to and certainly including murder. Stalin didn't kill all those Old Bolsheviks because they had bad breath or had made passes at his wife. In the 20th century's "totalitarian" states, murder foreign and domestic was an essential strut in the Leader's security design. We will not be reproducing this element. But I digress.

Third, as a progressive, you think of government as a *charitable* institution. You think of its purpose as *doing good works*. And indeed, today's governments do many good works. They also do many things that are not good works but purport to be, but that is beside the point. Let's assume that all its good works are good indeed.

Clearly, good works are not compatible with turning a profit. It is easy to see how California improves its bottom line by refraining from the massacre of Jews. It is hard to see how it improves its bottom line by

feeding the poor, healing the lame, and teaching the blind to see. And indeed, it doesn't.

So we can separate California's expenses into two classes: those essential or profitable for California as a business; and those that are unnecessary and wasteful, such as feeding the poor, etc, etc. Let them starve! Who likes poor people, anyway? And as for the blind, bumping into lampposts will help them build character. Everyone needs character.

I am not Steve Jobs (I would be very ill-suited to the management of California), and I have not done the math. But my suspicion is that eliminating these pointless expenses alone - without any other management improvements - would turn California, now drowning in the red, into a *hellacious, gold-spewing cash machine*. We're talking dividends up the wazoo. Stevifornia will make [Gazprom](#) look like a pump-n-dump penny stock.

And suddenly, a solution suggests itself.

What we've done, with our separation of expenses, is to divide California's spending into two classes: essential and discretionary. There is another name for a discretionary payment: a dividend. By spending money to heal the lame, California is in effect paying its profits to the lame. It is just doing it in a very fiscally funky manner.

Thus, we can think of California's spending on good works as profits which are disbursed to an entity responsible for good works. Call it Calgood. If, instead of spending \$30 billion per year on good works, California shifts all its good works and good-workers to Calgood, issues Calgood shares that pay dividends of \$30 billion per year, and says goodbye, we have the best of both worlds. California is now a lean, mean, cash-printing machine, and the blind can see, the lame can walk, etc, etc.

Furthermore, Calgood's shares are, like any shares, [negotiable](#). They are just financial instruments. If Calgood's investment managers decide it makes financial sense to sell California and buy Google or Gazprom or GE, they can go right ahead.

So without harming the poor, the lame, or the blind at all, we have completely separated California from its charitable activities. The whole idea of government as a doer of good works is thoroughly phony. Charity is good and government is necessary, but there is no essential connection between them.

Of course, in real life, the idea of Calgood is slightly creepy. You'd probably want a few hundred special-purpose charities, which would be much more nimble than big, lumbering Calgood. Of course they would be much, much more nimble than California. Which is kind of the point.

We could go even farther than this. We could issue these charitable shares not to organizations that produce services, but to the actual individuals who consume these services. Why buy canes for the blind? Give the blind money. They can buy their own freakin' canes. If there is anyone who would rather have \$100 worth of free services than \$100, he's a retard.

Some people are, of course, retards. Excuse me. They suffer from mental disabilities. And one of the many, many things that California, State of Love, does, is to hover over them with its soft, downy wings. Needless to say, Stevifornia will not have soft, downy wings. It will be hard and shiny, with a lot of brushed aluminum. So what will it do with its retards?

My suspicion is that Stevifornia will do something like this. It will classify all humans on its land surface into three categories: guests, residents, and dependents. Guests are just visiting, and will be sent home if they cause any trouble. Residents are ordinary, grownup people who live in California, pay taxes, are responsible for their own behavior, etc. And dependents are persons large or small, young or old, who are not responsible but need to be cared for anyway.

The basic principle of dependency is that a dependent is a [ward](#). He or she surrenders his or her personal independence to some guardian authority. The guardian holds *imperium* over the dependent, ie, controls the dependent's behavior. In turn the guardian is responsible for the care and feeding of the dependent, and is liable for any torts the dependent commits. As you can see, this design is not my invention.

At present, a large number of Californians are wards of the state itself. Some of them are incompetent, some are dangerous, some are both. Under the same principle as Calgood, these dependents can be spun off into external organizations, along with revenue streams that cover their costs.

Criminals are a special case of dependent. Most criminals are mentally competent, but no more an asset to California than Jew-eating crocodiles. A sensible way to house criminals is to attach them as wards to their revenue streams, but let the criminal himself choose a guardian and switch if he is dissatisfied. I suspect that most criminals would prefer a very different kind of facility than those in which they are housed at present. I also suspect that there are much more efficient ways to make criminal labor pay its own keep.

And I suspect that in Stevifornia, there would be very little crime. In fact, if I were Steve - which of course I'm not - I might well shoot for the goal of providing *free crime insurance* to my residents. Imagine if you could live in a city where crime was so rare that the government could guarantee restitution for all victims. Imagine what real estate would cost in this city. Imagine how much money its owners would make. Then imagine that Calgood has a third of the shares. It won't just heal the lame, it will give them bionic wings. But I digress.

So we move on to our third essential: security. (Note that this is [Arnold Kling's objection](#) to the above design, which I've given the cute name of [neocameralism](#).)

Security is the art of ensuring that your decision process cannot be compromised by any force, domestic or foreign. Steve, for instance, is entirely indifferent to the opinions of Stevifornians, except inasmuch as those opinions affect his quarterly numbers. This is the ideal "type 3" state: you think what you want, and Steve does what he wants. The government neither controls public opinion, nor is controlled by it.

If nothing quite like a neocameralist government has ever existed in history, the reason is not hard to figure out. How do you secure an intricate decision mechanism like the above? What happens if the controllers decide to fire Steve, and Steve doesn't want to go? How does Steve remain in power if a million Stevifornians storm the presidential palace, and the guards side with the crowd and turn their guns around?

Fortunately, we do not have to design a solution that will protect [Charles X](#) (no relation to Malcolm) from the machinations of the treacherous [Marmont](#). The neocameralist state never existed before the 21st century. It never could have existed. The technology wasn't there.

Secure neocameralism depends on a *cryptographic decision and command chain* (CDCC). Once the world has cryptographically secure government, it will wonder how it ever lived without it.

In the world of today, the security of all governments is dependent on *mere personal loyalty*. The US Army could take over Washington tomorrow, if it wanted to. It certainly cannot be compelled to obey the President, the Supreme Court, the Congress, or anyone else. It so happens that the US military has a strong tradition of loyalty - a tradition that was tested, for example, in the case of the [Bonus Army](#). Would today's Army fire on an American mob? Especially a mob that shared its political orientation? Hopefully we will not find out.

The only reason that we accept this appalling and dangerous state of affairs is that we don't know there's an alternative. But there is, actually - in the form of [permissive action links](#). This is an old Cold War design that implements the command side of a CDCC, for nuclear weapons only. (The control codes are in the [President's pocket](#).)

In a full CDCC government, the sovereign decision and command chain is secured from end to end by military-grade cryptography. All government weapons - not just nukes, but everything right down to small arms - are inoperable without code authorization. In any civil conflict, loyal units will find that their weapons work. Disloyal units will have to improvise. The result is predictable, as results should be.

Cryptographic command of the military has a critical effect on political dynamics: it makes public opinion irrelevant. Today, even the most militaristic of military despotisms has to invest considerable effort in persuading, cajoling or compelling the public to support it, because the army is inevitably drawn from that public. Witness Marmont, who decided his chances were better with Orleans than Artois.

This is the final blow in the elimination of politics. Men enter politics because they have a lust for power. Good men as well as bad men lust for power, and sometimes it does happen that good men lust for power, seize it, and use it to do good things. But it is more the exception than the rule. And the lust for power is an eminently practical one - if no power is available, no one will bother to scheme for it.

Take Apple, for example. Mac users, such as myself, are tied to its vagaries. For example, the battery for

the MacBook Pro is shite. It's disposable. I believe it may actually be made of toilet paper, chewing gum, and old paper clips. I go through two a year, and I hardly use them.

How do I cope with this appalling injustice? I deal. Why do I deal? Because even if I went on to the right forums and whipped up a screaming mob and persuaded them to march around and around and around 1 Infinite Loop, chanting slogans and burning old batteries, I know that it would have absolutely no impact on Steve's handling of the problem. (Which I suppose he doesn't think is a problem at all.) In fact, it would probably make him more stubborn.

There is simply no way for anyone outside Apple to influence Apple's decision process by the use of force. Apple is not sovereign. It does not have a white-robed black-belt army. It relies on the security forces of Uncle Sam, or at least Cupertino. But the problem is solved, anyway. And I consider this a good thing.

Cryptography applies to the back end as well: the decision side. If the controllers vote to refuse to renew Steve's key, and anoint Marc instead, Steve will no longer have command of the army. He won't even have command of his office door. He will have to call security to let him out of the building. (If you doubt that this is technically feasible, [it is.](#))

Once we realize that 21st-century technology is needed to implement the neocameralist design, we understand why good old [cameralism](#), Frederick the Great style, was the best that previous centuries could do. What Whigs call [absolute monarchy](#) (and non-Whigs just call monarchy) collapsed the controllers and the administrator into a single royal person, solving the decision problem quite neatly - and introducing a nasty biological variable into the responsibility mix. And on the command side it relied on loyalty, which was not always there.

Was royalism a perfect system? It was not. But if we imagine a world in which the revolutions and civil wars of the last four centuries had never happened, it is hard not to imagine that world as happier, wealthier, freer, more civilized, and more pleasant. At least if you're an unregenerate Jacobite like me.

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## Part 7: the ugly truth about government

May 29, 2008

[Last week](#), dear open-minded progressive, we worked through a clean-room redesign of government. The result had no resemblance to present institutions - and little resemblance to past ones. Should this surprise you? Do you expect history's fruits to be sweet?

Today we'll look at what those fruits actually are. Perhaps you didn't spend your eleventh-grade civics class hanging out behind the goalposts smoking cheeba. (If you are still in eleventh-grade civics class, it's much more exciting if you're stoned.) Perhaps you even read the Times on a regular basis. (The Times is even more awful when you're stoned.) Perhaps you assume, by default, that the vast parade of facts poured into your head by this and other such reliable sources must constitute at least a basic understanding.

You would be incorrect in this. And we have a Mr. Machiavelli, who is to government as Isaac Newton is to physics, Barry Bonds is to baseball, and Albert Hofmann is to LSD, to [tell us why](#):

He who desires or attempts to reform the government of a state, and wishes to have it accepted and capable of maintaining itself to the satisfaction of everybody, must at least retain the semblance of the old forms; so that it may seem to the people that there has been no change in the institutions, even though in fact they are entirely different from the old ones. For the great majority of mankind are satisfied with appearances, as though they were realities, and are often even more influenced by the things that seem than by those that are.

So, for example, the Roman [Principate](#), and even to some extent the [Dominate](#), preserved the forms of the old Republic. If Rome under Augustus had had a New York Times, it would have been full of the doings of the Senate and the consuls. The Senators said this. The consuls did that. When in reality, everything that mattered went through Augustus. If the entire Senate had fallen through a manhole in the Forum, nothing would have changed - except, of course, that the illusion of the Republic could no longer be maintained.

(The Romans even had a word for a monarch - the good old Latin [Rex](#). No Roman emperor, however dissolute, autocratic or hubristic, ever adopted the title of king. "Emperor" is simply an anglicization of [Imperator](#), meaning "Commander" - ie, a general.)

Often when the illusion ceases to delude anyone, it persists as a linguistic convention - especially on the tongues of officials. So in British official language one still may speak as if the Queen were the absolute personal ruler of the UK, when in fact she has no power at all. No one is confused by this. It is just a quaint turn of speech. Still, it has its effect.

Power is a shy beast. She flees the sound of her name. When we ask who rules the UK, we are not

looking for the answer, "the Queen." The Queen may rock, but everyone knows she doesn't rule. Parting this thin outer peel, we come on the word "Parliament," with which most of us are satisfied. This is your official answer. The Queen holds *nominal* power. Parliament holds *formal* power. But does this tell us where the *actual* power is? Why should we expect it to? Since when has it ever?

Power has all the usual reasons to hide. Power is delicious, and everyone wants it. To bite into its crisp, sweet flesh, to lick its juices off your lips - this is more than pleasure. It is satisfaction. It is fulfillment. It is meaning. The love of a bird for a caterpillar is a tenuous and passing attachment next to the bond between man and power. Of course power, like the caterpillar, may have other defenses - poison-filled spines, and the like - but why not start with camouflage? Why look like anything more than a stick or a leaf?

Of course, as a progressive, you have all sorts of ideas about where power is hiding. It is in the hands of the corporations, the crooked politicians, the bankers, the military, the television preachers, and so on. It would be unfair to denigrate all of these perspectives as "conspiracy theories," and it is also unfair to denigrate all conspiracy theories as false. Lenin, for instance, was a conspirator. So were Alger Hiss, Benedict Arnold, even [Machiavelli himself](#).

Nonetheless, the best place to hide is usually [in plain sight](#). For example, Noam Chomsky once wrote a book called [Manufacturing Consent](#), which argues that corporations exercise power by controlling the mass media. The phrase is borrowed from Walter Lippmann's [Public Opinion](#) - a book which every progressive will do well to read. La Wik has a fine summary:

When properly utilized, the manufacture of consent, Lippmann argues, is useful and necessary for modern society because "the common interests"—the general concerns of all people—are not obvious in many cases and only become clear upon careful data collection and analysis, which most of the people are either uninterested in or incapable of doing. Most people, therefore, must have the world summarized for them by those who are well-informed.

Since Lippmann includes much of the political elite within the set of those incapable of properly understanding by themselves the complex "unseen environment" in which the affairs of the modern state take place, he proposes having professionals (a "specialized class") collect and analyze data and present the conclusions to the decision makers. The decision makers then take decisions and use the "art of persuasion" to inform the public about the decisions and the circumstances surrounding them.

Who is Lippmann's "specialized class?" Is it Chomsky's corporate CEOs? Rupert Murdoch, perhaps? Au contraire. It is folks like Lippmann himself - journalists. (Lippmann described his analysis and persuasion agency, somewhat infelicitously, as an "Intelligence Bureau.")

Thus we have two candidates for who is "manufacturing consent." It could be the corporate executives to

whom the journalists report. Or it could be the journalists themselves, in plain sight. Or, of course, both - in the true [Agatha Christie style](#). As political detectives, we may ask: which of these parties has the [means, motive, and opportunity](#)?

But I am getting ahead of myself. Starting from the usual first principles, we are attempting to understand our system of government. What one word, dear progressives, best describes the modern Western system of government?

You probably said "democracy." If you got two words, you might say "representative democracy." So our progressive scratch-monkey, Mr. Stross, explains the success of democracy in terms of its supposed advantages, [here](#). (He actually comes surprisingly close to the truth - as we'll see in a little bit.)

Words mean whatever we want them to. But if we interpret the phrase *representative democracy* to mean a political system in which power is held by the representatives of the people as chosen in democratic elections, the United States is a representative democracy in just the same sense that the Roman Empire was a republic, the United Kingdom is a kingdom, and the Chinese Communist Party is communist.

In fact, dear progressive, you fear and loathe democracy. Moreover, you are right to do so. Representative democracy is a thoroughly despicable system of government. It is dangerous and impractical at best, criminal at worst. And you hate it like the poison it is.

But you don't hate it under this name. You hate it under the name of *politics*. Think of the associations that the words *political*, *partisan*, *politician*, and so on, produce in your mind. You say: George W. Bush *politicized* the Justice Department. And this is a brutal indictment. If you hated black people the way you hate politics, you might say George W. Bush *negroized* the Justice Department, and the phrase would carry the same payload of contempt.

Similarly, when you hear antonyms such as *apolitical*, *nonpartisan*, *bipartisan*, or even the new and truly ludicrous [post-partisan](#), your heart thrills with warmth and affection, just as it would if you were a racist and you heard the words *Nordic*, *Anglo-Saxon*, or *amelanistic*. And as it does when you hear the word *democracy*. You certainly would never say that George W. Bush *democratized* the Justice Department.

And yet, when you hear the phrase "apolitical democracy," it sounds slightly off. Can we have democracy without politics? *Representative* democracy without politics? What would that even mean? That there are no parties, perhaps? So let me get this straight - two parties is good, one party is bad (very bad), no parties at all is - even better? La Wik has a curious page for [non-partisan democracy](#), in which some of these issues are explored, in the typical disjointed and unenlightening manner.

This is simply one of these contradictions that we find in the modern, progressive mind. You have probably wondered, idly, about it yourself. Since, as we've seen, progressivism is an essentially religious movement, the mystery of politics, that necessary evil of democracy, slides neatly into the same lobe of

your brain that was in less enlightened days reserved for the great questions of theology. How can God be three persons at once? A wondrous mystery indeed.

Two fresh yarns in the Pravda illustrate the irony beautifully. In [the first](#) (which we've linked to before), our brave reporter is positively amused to find a native tribe so benighted that they might imagine they'd be better off without democracy. In [the second](#), our fearless correspondent is shocked that, in darkest North America, the savages are so backward and credulous as to entertain the preposterous belief that counting heads amidst the mob is a sensible way to select responsible public officials.

Let's probe a little deeper into this mystery. If the actions of our democratic governments are not to be ascribed to the venal machinations of politicians, who is responsible for them? Who, in the ideal apolitical, nonpartisan, or post-partisan state, calls the shots? We are back to the basic question of power, which Lenin once summarized as "[Who? Whom?](#)" (This made more sense in English when we still used the word "whom." What Lenin meant was: who rules whom?)

So if politicians should not rule, who - dear progressive - should? If we continue our pattern of two-word answers, the answer is: *public policy*.

To the progressive - rather ironically, considering the history - Lenin's question is completely inappropriate. You reject the idea that government means that "who" must "rule" "whom." Rather, you believe that government, when conducted properly in the public interest, is an *objective* discipline - like physics, or geology, or mathematics.

It does not matter "who" the physicists, geologists, or mathematicians are. There is no German physics, liberal geology, or Catholic mathematics. There is only correct physics, correct geology, and correct mathematics. The process and criteria by which physicists separate correct from incorrect physics is quite different from that for geology or mathematics, and none of these processes is perfect or works instantaneously. But all have an obvious tendency to progress from error and ignorance to truth and knowledge.

Needless to say, if the United States were blessed with a Department of Mathematics - honestly I'm not sure why it isn't, but we can rest assured that if this wrong is ever righted, it will stay righted - it would be thoroughly inappropriate and irresponsible for George W. Bush to "politicize" the Department's deliberations on topology, computability, game theory, etc.

Public policy, of course, must not contradict physics, geology or mathematics. But these are not its main linchpins. When we look inside the magic box of *public policy*, we see fields such as *law* and *economics* and *ethics* and *sociology* and *psychology* and *public health* and *foreign policy* and *journalism* and *education* and...

And when we look at the history of these fields, we tend to see one of two things. Either (a) the field was

more or less invented in the 20th century (sociology, psychology), or (b) its 20th-century principles bear very little relation to those of its 19th-century predecessor (law, economics). We saw this two weeks ago, for example, with [international law](#). But again, I am getting ahead of myself.

As a progressive, you regard the fields of public policy as more or less *scientific*. The 20th century is the century of *scientific public policy*. And just as there is no German physics or Catholic mathematics, there is no German public policy or Catholic public policy. There is only public policy. There is no "who." There is no rule. There is no [world domination](#). There is only [global governance](#).

So we see why it's inappropriate for George W. Bush to "politicize" the Justice Department. It is because the Justice Department is staffed with *legal scholars*. Is George W. Bush a legal scholar? Is a boar hog an F-16? When politics intrudes on the realm of science, it's more than just a violation. It's a kind of rape. One is instantly reminded of the Nazi stormtroopers, dancing around their flaming piles of books. One, if one is an American, is also reminded of the mindless jockery that ruled one's high-school years. Do you, dear progressive, have any hesitation about picking a side in this dispute? Of course not.

Thus we see the fate of representative, political democracy, which survives as a sort of vestigial reptile brain or fetal gill-slit in the era of scientific government. In classic Machiavellian style, the form *democracy* has been redefined. It no longer means that the public's elected representatives control the government. It means that the government implements scientific public policy in the public interest. (Public policy is in the public interest by definition.)

We may summarize the whole in Lincoln's concise phrase: *government of the people, by the people, for the people*. All governments are *of the people* (they also provide animal control). The people being what they are, *by the people* turns out to be a bad idea. But we can still have government *for the people*, which gives us two out of three, which ain't bad. Since it is both *of the people* and *for the people*, and *demos* after all just means *people*, we can keep the good old word for our modern, scientific democracy.

You may already know all this, but perhaps it's worth a brief tour of how this system evolved.

The basically criminal nature of the old, political form of democracy has been discovered and rediscovered many times in American (and before that, of course, British) history. In his [American Creation](#), the popular historian Joseph Ellis summarizes the Founders' judgment on democracy: "an alien, parasitic force." This of course would be their judgment as of the 1790s, not the 1770s, at which point they had had plenty of experience with said parasitic force. Any premodern history of the period - I recommend Albert Beveridge's four-volume life of John Marshall ([I](#), [II](#), [III](#), [IV](#)) - will show you why. There is a reason you didn't learn much about the [First Republic](#) in that eleventh-grade civics class.

The Second Republic, or Constitutional period, saw a return to government by enlightened aristocrats, first under the [Federalists](#) and later under the [Jeffersonians](#), who rather cleverly rode a wave of mob agitation into office and then ruled in a distinctly Federalist style (a trick that would later be repeated).

This [era of good feelings](#) lasted until the election of ur-politician [Andrew Jackson](#), who among other works of genius invented the [spoils system](#) - the unabashed selection of political loyalists for government jobs.

The following period of political turmoil, while distinguished by occasional flashes of sanity (such as the best [system of government finance](#) in history) and ameliorated by gridlock between North and South, which preserved a remarkably small and simple Washington, degenerated into the mass military insanity of the 1860s. Many Northern intellectuals, such as [Henry Adams](#), had assumed that the defeat of the [Slave Power](#) would heal all the woes of the Federal City and transform it into the shining light it was meant to be. Au contraire.

Instead, in the Union period or Third Republic, what was by 20th-century standards a remarkably limited government, but by 18th-century standards an almost omnipotent one, fell into the hands of [ethnic machines](#), [corrupt politicians](#), [quasicriminal financiers](#), [sinister wire-pullers](#), [unscrupulous journalists](#), [vested interests](#), and the like. History, which of course is always on the side of the winners, has written this down as the [Gilded Age](#).

For all its faults, the Gilded Age system created perhaps the most responsible and effective government in US history. Architecture is always a good clue to the nature of power, and Gilded Age buildings, where they still stand, are invariably decorative. The country's prosperity and productivity was, of course, unmatched. Its laws were strict and strictly enforced - nothing like today's festering ulcers of crime were imaginable.

An English journalist of Tory bent, [G. W. Steevens](#), wrote an excellent travelogue of Gilded Age America - [Land of the Dollar](#). (It's very readable, especially if you don't mind the N-word.) Steevens, in 1898, was unable to locate anything like a slum in New York City, and his intentions were not complimentary. It's an interesting exercise to compare the hyperventilations of a Gilded Age social reformer like [Jacob Riis](#) - the title [How The Other Half Lives](#) may ring a bell - to the world of [Sudhir Venkatesh](#). Riis's tenement dwellers are sometimes less than well-scrubbed. They can be "slovenly." They drink a lot of beer. Their apartments are small and have poor ventilation - ventilation, for some reason, seems to be a major concern. All these horrors still afflict the present-day residents of the Lower East Side, who are hardly in need of anyone's charity.

But the Gilded Age political system was, again, criminal. In other words, it was democratic. The old American system is probably best compared to the government of China today. While they evolved from very different origins, they have converged in that universal medium, corruption. Government serves as a profit center, but (unlike in neocameralism) the distribution of profits is informal. The dividends are fought over with a thousand nontransparent stratagems. Since China is not a democracy, vote-buying is not practiced there. It was certainly practiced here.

And the bosses and plutocrats were not, by and large, cultured men. Sometimes I feel this is the main

objection of their enemies. The American intellectual aristocracy simply could not tolerate a world in which their country was governed by these corrupt, boorish thugs. So, as aristocrats will, they plotted their revenge.

I mentioned "reform" earlier. And Machiavelli, if you scroll back to the top, uses the same word. Of course, he simply meant "change the form of." He implies no connotations. But notice, dear progressive, your associations with the word "reform." Like "nonpartisan" and all those other good words, it is connected with the happy part of your brain. La Wik's [reform](#) page is not bad.

Politically, the deepest roots of the present regime are found in the [Liberal Republicans](#) and the [Mugwumps](#) of the early Union period. The cause they are most associated with is [civil service reform](#), which removed the President's power to staff the civil service and replaced it with competitive examinations - which tended to select, of course, scions of said aristocracy.

La Wik has many other discussions of early [progressivism](#): the [settlement movement](#), the [Fabians](#), the [muckrakers](#). You were probably exposed to large doses of this in your 11th-grade civics class. (If you are still in 11th-grade civics class, take an extra hit for this material. You'll need it.)

It is interesting to go back and read, say, [Lincoln Steffens](#), today. Unfortunately Google Books has failed us on his [Shame of the Cities](#), but [here is a sample](#). And Steffens' [Autobiography](#) (really a series of rants drawn loosely from his life) is easily obtainable. What comes through is, most of all, a tremendous sense of smugness and arrogance. Steffens, for example, will be talking to Teddy Roosevelt. A close personal friend. But the Pres doesn't always take Steffens' advice. He compromises, sometimes. That's because he's weak, or ignorant, or corrupt, or maybe all three.

Steffens' tone only works if you think of him as the underdog. But underdogs are infrequently found in the Oval Office, and hindsight indeed shows us that this underdog won. Which makes him the overdog. And while its long-departed ghost is easily recognizable in the rhetoric of, say, a Michael Moore, a brief glance at Steffens' work will show you that nothing like the political tradition he is attacking exists in the world today. (To the extent that there are [ethnic political machines](#), they are firmly in the hands of Steffens' successors.)

Whereas Steffens' tradition has flourished. He was the mentor, for example, of Walter Lippmann. If you traced the social network of modern journalism, all the lines would go back to Steffens and his cronies. And the lines lead overseas, as well: Steffens went to Russia in 1919, and he loved it. As he wrote in 1930:

Soviet Russia was a revolutionary government with an evolutionary plan. Their plan was not by direct action to resist such evils as poverty and riches, graft, privilege, tyranny and war, but to seek out and remove the causes of them. They were at present only laying a basis for these good things. They had to set up a dictatorship, supported by a small, trained minority, to make and maintain for a few generations a scientific rearrangement of economic forces which would result in economic

democracy first and political democracy last.

"Economic democracy." Contemplate this concept, dear reader. Whatever "economic democracy" may be, it certainly has nothing at all to do with the practice of entrusting control of the state to elected representatives.

Steffens then allows Lenin, whom he is interviewing, to deliver a few paragraphs on the necessity of murdering the bourgeoisie, and finally delivers his famous line:

"So you've been over into Russia?" asked [Bernard Baruch](#), and I answered very literally, "I have been over into the future, and it works." This was in Jo Davidson's studio, where Mr. Baruch was sitting for a portrait bust. The sculptor asked if I wasn't glad to get back. I was. It was a mental change we had experienced, not physical. Bullitt asked in surprise why it was that, having been so elated by the prospect of Russia, we were so glad to be back in Paris. I thought it was because, though we had been in heaven, we were so accustomed to our own civilization that we preferred hell. We were ruined; we could recognize salvation, but could not be saved.

Indeed, what Steffens calls "applied Christianity," and UR readers will recognize as our good old friend, creeping Quakerism, is seldom far beneath the surface in his work. I think you get the drift, but let us summarize. (Note that "propaganda" is not yet a term of abuse in 1930.)

In Russia the ultimate purpose of this conscious process of merging politics and business is to abolish the political state as soon as its sole uses are served: to make defensive war abroad and at home and to teach the people by propaganda and by enforced conditions to substitute new for old ideas and habits. The political establishment is a sort of protective scaffolding within which the temporary dictatorship is building all agriculture, all industries, and all businesses into one huge centralized organization. They will point out to you from over there that our businesses, too, are and long have been coming together, merging trusts into combines, which in turn unite into greater and greater monopolies. They think that when we western reformers and liberals resist this tendency we are standing in the way of a natural, inevitable economic compulsion to form "one big union" of business. All that they have changed is the ownership, which they (and Henry Ford) think is about all that's wrong. Aren't they right to encourage the process? Aren't we wrong to oppose it?

Note this recycling of ideas through Russia. There is nothing Russian at all about the dream Steffens is purveying. It is all in [Edward Bellamy](#). From day one, a substantial and influential section of the American intelligentsia were the patrons, intellectual and political, of the Soviet Union, which spent all eighty years of its life manfully trying to implement Bellamy's vision.

Imagine how, say, libertarians would react if Russia decided to turn itself into a libertarian utopia. Imagine how easily they might come to overlook the matter if achieving the libertarian utopia turned out to involve, oh, just a little bit of good old Russian-style killing. In self-defense, of course. Libertarians

believe in self-defense. Don't they? And besides, we're just killing *government officials*... and so on.

Your understanding of the bond between the American aristocracy and the Soviets has been distorted by both right and left. The left has done everything possible to bury their complicity in the monstrous crimes of their Slavic epigones. The right has assisted them by misrepresenting the structure of this complicity, which was never - even in such clear-cut cases as [Alger Hiss](#) - a simple matter of treason. The American side was always the senior partner in the marriage. The prestige of their distinguished Western patrons was a key ingredient in the Soviet formula for legitimacy and internal control, and the growing staleness of the alliance contributed far more, I think, to the Soviet collapse than most today admit.

Anyway, let's briefly finish up our origin myth, which ends, of course, in 1933. An excellent history of the period is supplied by the historian (and Progressive) [James Truslow Adams](#), who followed his four-volume [March of Democracy](#) with two volumes of yearbooks, written every year and not (so far as I can determine) edited afterward, covering each year to 1948. This provides a pleasant hindsightless feel found in few other treatments of the period. In his history of 1933, Adams reports:

Nothing much was known about Roosevelt, except his smile. As [William Allen White](#) wrote at the time of his inauguration, "we are putting our hands in a grab-bag. Heaven only knows what we shall pull out." With the disingenuousness apparently required of a Presidential candidate, his campaign speeches had not disclosed his real views...

Well, that's putting it mildly. In fact they had disclosed [other views](#), which were not his real views. (As [Marriner Eccles](#) put it, "given later developments, the campaign speeches often read like a giant misprint, in which Roosevelt and Hoover speak each other's lines.") Apparently White, for some reason, knew the story behind the script. Of course, if you don't believe in democracy, there is no reason not to treat it with contempt.

Adams, with only a mild glaze of sycophancy, reports the results:

[FDR] was, in fact, with the help of what he considered the best expert advice, although always making final decision himself, trying experiments, and occasionally he frankly said so. In these experiments he has been motivated by two objects - one the overcoming of the depression, and the other the making over of the economic organization of the nation, the latter being what he called in his campaign speeches "the New Deal." It is this which appears - it is too soon to speak positively - his chief objective, and it is difficult as yet to judge what his conception of the new society may be. In his first year he has shown enormous courage but has, apparently, not seldom changed his point of view, as well as his advisers.

As the latter loomed large in the administration, to a considerable extent displacing the regular Cabinet in public sight, the so-called "[brain trust](#)" requires some comment. Of recent years college professors have been more and more frequently called into consultation as "experts." Hoover made

frequent application to them when President; Roosevelt did the same as Governor of New York; and foreign governments have done likewise. However, they have never been so in the forefront of affairs as since Roosevelt entered the White House, and this, together with the vagueness of what the "New Deal" might signify, helped to hinder the restoration of confidence. The lack of ability to foresee the future, to say nothing in too many cases of the absence of personal integrity, had indeed thrown the "big business men," the bankers and captains of industry, into the discard, but on the other hand the American has never had much belief in the practical ability of a professor, and the "experts" have disagreed among themselves as notably as doctors are said to do.

Moreover, Roosevelt chose many of his advisers from the distinct radical or left-wing group, the names of most of them being utterly new to the public. At first among the chief of these appear to have been Professor [Raymond Moley](#), Doctor [R. G. Tugwell](#), and [A. A. Berle, Jr.](#), all of Columbia University, New York. In the summer of 1933 there were added to these and many others Professor G. F. Warren of Cornell, a leading advocate of the "commodity dollar," and Professor J. H. Rogers of Yale. At least twenty or thirty others could be mentioned. It is to the "brain trust" that we owe the carrying out of the vague "New Deal," or as a great admirer of the President prefers to call it, "the Roosevelt Revolution." What the final result may be, no one can yet say, but as we shall see at the end of the chapter, they have presented a staggering bill for the American citizen to pay.

Indeed. I doubt there is a more succinct history of the birth of "public policy." I date the Fourth Republic and the Progressive period to 1933.

We can read this story in two ways. We can read it as the coming of modern, scientific government in the United States. Or we can read it as the transfer of power from political democracy to the American university system - which, just for the sake of a catchy catchword, I like to call the Cathedral.

[Albert Jay Nock](#) had no doubts on the matter. Allow me to reproduce a section of his [diary](#) from 1933:

*29 October* -- And so Brother Hitler decides he will no longer play with the League of Nations. This leaves the League in "rather a shattered state," as [Artemus Ward](#) said of the Confederate army after Lee's surrender. "That army now consists of [Kirby Smith](#), four mules, and a Bass drum, and is movin rapidly tords Taxis."

*30 October* -- Public doings in this country are beyond all comment. Roosevelt has assembled in Washington the most extraordinary aggregation of quacks, I imagine, that was ever seen herded together. His passage from the scene of political action will remove the most lively showman that has been seen in America since the death of P.T. Barnum. The absence of opposition is remarkable; Republicans seem to have forgotten that the function of an Opposition is to oppose. I say this in derision, of course, for our politics are always bi-partisan. I have talked with many people; no one has any confidence in Roosevelt's notions, but the "organs of public opinion" either praise him or are silent; and no one expects that Congress will call him on the carpet. The only certain things are that

his fireworks will cost a lot of money, and that they will enlarge our bureaucracy indefinitely. Most of the big Federal slush-fund that the taxpayers will create next year will go to local politicians, nominally for "improvements," unemployment or what not, but actually for an increase of jobs and jobbery. This ought to build up a very strong machine for the next campaign, as I am convinced it is meant to do - and all it is meant to do - and no doubt it will. I notice that the new move of [juggling with the price of gold](#) has been turned over to the [R.F.C.](#) instead of to the Treasury; thus making the R.F.C. a personal agent of the President.

*31 October* -- To my mind, there was never a better example of getting up a scare in order, as Mr. Jefferson said, to "waste the labours of the people under the pretence of taking care of them." Our improvement, such as it is, was under way in June, and there is no evidence whatever that Mr. Roosevelt's meddling has accelerated it. One is reminded of the headlong haste about framing the Federal Constitution, on the pretext that the country was going to the dogs under the Articles of Confederation; when in fact it was doing very well indeed, as recent researches have shown. All this is a despicable trick. The papers say that in this business of meddling with the gold market, Roosevelt is influenced by the theories of [Irving Fisher](#). It reminds me that when I was in Europe I heard that one of Hitler's principal lieutenants is a chap that I used to know pretty well; the only name I can think of is Helfschlager, and that is not right. His family are the big art-dealers in Munich - [Hanfstängl](#), that's it. I got well acquainted with him in New York, and saw him afterward in Munich, and came away with the considered belief that he is a fine fellow and uncommonly likable, but just as crazy as a loon. I have long had precisely that opinion of Fisher. Therefore if it is true that Irving Fisher is to the front in America and Helfschlager in Germany, I think the future for both countries looks pretty dark.

Don't miss La Wik on [Irving Fisher](#). The page demonstrates the dichotomy perfectly.

So, as so often here on UR, we have two ways to see reality. Either power has passed into the hands of the Cathedral, or it has disappeared and been replaced by mere science. "Public policy." Of course, you know what I think. But what do you think?

If we can conceive the Cathedral as an actual, non-divinely-inspired, political machine for a moment, suspending any resentment or reverence we may feel toward it, not assuming that the policies it produces are good or bad or true or false, we can just admire it from an engineering perspective and see how well it works.

First: if there is one pattern we see in the public policies the Cathedral produces, it's that they tend to be very good at creating *dependency*. We can observe the dependency system by imagining what would happen if Washington, DC, out to the radius of the Beltway, is suddenly teleported by aliens into a different dimension, where its residents will live out their lives in unimaginable wealth, comfort and personal fulfillment. We here on Earth, however, see the Federal City disappear in a flash of light. In its

place is a crater of radioactive glass.

What would happen? Many, many checks would no longer arrive. Children would go hungry - not just in North America, but around the world. Old people would starve. Babies would die of easily preventable diseases. Hurricane victims would squat in squalor in the slums. Drug companies would sell poison, stockbrokers would sell worthless paper, Toys-R-US would sell little plastic parts designed to stick in my daughter's throat and choke her. Etc, etc, etc.

Washington has made itself *necessary*. Not just to Americans, but to the entire world. Why does Washington want to help the survivors of Cyclone Nargis? Because helping is what it does. It dispenses love to all. Its mission is quite simply to do good, on a planetary basis. And why does the government of Burma want to stop it? Why turn down free help, including plenty of free stuff, and possibly even some free money?

Because dependency is another name for *power*. The relationship between dependent and provider is the relationship between client and patron. Which is the relationship between parent and child. Which also happens to be the relationship between master and slave. There's a reason Aristotle devotes the [first book of the Politics](#) to this sort of kitchen government.

Modern Americans have enormous difficulty in grasping hierarchical social structures. We grew up steeped in "applied Christianity" pretty much the way the Hitler Youth grew up steeped in Hitler. The suggesting that slavery could ever be or have been, as Aristotle suggests, natural and healthy, is like suggesting to the Hitler Youth that it might be cool to make some Jewish friends. Their idea of Jews is straight out of [Jud Süß](#). Our idea of slavery is straight out of [Uncle Tom's Cabin](#). If you want an accurate perspective of the past, a propaganda novel is probably not the best place to start. (If you want an accurate perspective of American slavery, I recommend Eugene Genovese's [Roll, Jordan, Roll](#), which is a little Marxist but only superficially so. No work like it could be written today.)

Legally and socially, a slave is an adult child. (There's a reason the word [emancipation](#) is used for the dissolution of both bonds.) We think of the master-slave relationship as usually sick and twisted, and invariably adversarial. Parent-child relationships can be all three. But they are not normally so. If history (not to mention evolutionary biology) proves anything, it proves that humans fit into dominance-submission structures almost as easily as they fit into the nuclear family.

Slavery is an extreme, but the general pattern is that the patron owes the client protection and subsistence, while the client owes the patron loyalty and service. The patron is liable to the public for the actions of the client - if they offend, he must make amends. In return, he has the right, indeed the obligation, to regulate and discipline his clients. He is a private provider of government. Thus Aristotle: slavery is government on the micro-scale. Heed the Greek dude.

So comparing the social paternalism of Washington to the classical relationship between master and

slave is not at all farfetched, or even particularly pejorative. And if it is pejorative, it is because the 20th-century imitation often seems to resemble less a functional paternal bond than a dysfunctional one: less parent-child than parent-teenager. With many of Washington's clients, foreign and domestic, there is plenty of subsistence and even protection, but precious little loyalty, service, discipline or responsibility.

We are now in a position to understand the relationship between Washington and Rangoon. Rangoon (I refuse to call it "Yangon" - the idea that a government can change the name of a city or a country is a distinctly 20th-century one) refuses to accept the assistance of the "international community" because it does not want to become a client.

You'll find that any sentence can be improved by replacing the phrase "international community" with "State Department." State does not impose many obligations on its clients, but one of them is that you can't be a military government - at least not unless you're a left-wing military government with friends at Harvard. The roots of the present Burmese regime are basically [national-socialist](#): ie, no friends at Harvard. Burma cannot go directly from being an enemy to being a rebellious teenager. It would have to go through the helpless-child stage first. And that means the end of the generals.

(One reason the [Jonah Goldbergs of the world](#) have such trouble telling their right from their left is that they expect some morphological feature of the State to answer the question for them. For anyone other than Goldberg, Stalin was on the left and Hitler was on the right. The difference is not a function of discrepancies in administrative procedure between the KZs and the Gulag. It's a function of social networks. Stalin was a real socialist, Hitler was a fake one. Stalin was part of the international socialist movement, and Hitler wasn't. But I digress.)

What, specifically, will happen if Burma admits an army of aid workers? What will happen is that they'll make friends in Burma. Their friends will not be the people in power - not quite. But they will probably be close to it. Thus the ties between the "international community" and all kinds of alternatives to the generals will be strengthened. Since the latter's position is already precarious at best, much better if a few of the victims have to eat mud for a month or two. They will fend for themselves in the end. People do.

And why is Washington playing this game? Just because it does. In that golden city are armies of desks, each occupied by a dedicated public servant whom the Cathedral has certified to practice public policy, whose job it is to care about Burma. And he or she does. That's what Washington does. As George H. W. Bush put it, "Message: I care."

When our patron's suffering clients are actually American citizens, this pattern - as Nock predicted, correctly - generates votes. Before the New Deal, vote-buying in America was generally local and informal. Retail, you might say. After 1933, it was wholesale.

But however much of a client it becomes (I really can't imagine the generals can hold out that much longer), Burma will never export electoral votes. Statehood is unimaginable. So why does Washington

continue to molest the generals, in pursuit of the love and fealty of the Burmese people? Just because it does. There is adaptive value in "applied Christianity." That adaptive value derives from its domestic application. There is little or no adaptive value in restricting the principle to domestic clients, and it involves a level of conscious cynicism which is not compatible with the reality of progressivism. So the restriction does not evolve.

Thus the neo-Quakerism which supplies the ethical core of progressivism, and is evangelized with increasingly relentless zeal by the Cathedral's robeless monks, is completely compatible with the acquisition and maintenance of political power. Not only does the design work - I find it hard to imagine how it could work any better. Which does not mean that "applied Christianity" is evil, that the Burmese generals are good, or that their suffering subjects would not be better off under Washington's friendly umbrella.

Second, let's observe the relationship between the Cathedral and our old friend, "democracy." Since 1933, elected politicians have exercised minimal actual control over government policy. Formally, however, they have absolute control. The Cathedral is not mentioned in the Constitution. Power is a juicy caterpillar. Maybe it looks like a twig to most of us birds, but Washington has no shortage of sharp eyes, sharp beaks, and growling bellies.

We can see the answer when we look at the fate of politicians who have attacked the Cathedral. Here are some names: [Joseph McCarthy](#). [Enoch Powell](#). [George Wallace](#). [Spiro Agnew](#). Here are some others: [Ronald Reagan](#). [Richard Nixon](#). [Margaret Thatcher](#).

The first set are politicians whose break with the Cathedral was complete and unconditional. The second are politicians who attempted to compromise and coexist with it, while pulling it in directions it didn't want to go. The first were destroyed. The second appeared to succeed, for a while, but little trace of their efforts (at least in domestic politics) is visible today. Their era ends in the 1980s, and it is impossible to imagine similar figures today.

What we see, especially in the cases of McCarthy and Powell (the [recent BBC documentary](#) on Powell is quite good) is a tremendous initial burst of popularity, trailing off into obloquy and disrepute. At first, these politicians were able to capture large bases of support. At least 70% of the British electorate was on Powell's side. This figure may even be low.

But Powell - [Radio Enoch](#) aside - never had the tools to preserve these numbers and convert them into power. Similar [majorities](#) of American voters today will tell pollsters that they support Powellian policies: ending immigration, deporting illegals, terminating the [racial spoils system](#). These majorities are stable. No respectable politician will touch them. Why? Because they cannot afford to antagonize the Cathedral, whose policies are the opposite.

Recall La Wik's simple summary of the Lippmann system:

The decision makers then take decisions and use the "art of persuasion" to inform the public about the decisions and the circumstances surrounding them.

Of course, all politicians in all Western countries depend on the official press to promote and legitimize their campaigns. Powell and McCarthy had no direct channel of communication with the Powellists and McCarthyists. They had to rely on the BBC and on ABC, NBC and CBS respectively. It's rather as if the US attempted to invade the Third Reich by booking passage for its soldiers on the Imperial Japanese Navy.

The OP (known to most bloggers as the "MSM") is part of the civil-service complex around the Cathedral - call it the Polygon. An institution is in the Polygon if it defers to the Cathedral on all disputable questions. Because to a devotee of the Cathedral, its perspectives are beyond question, no two devotees can disagree on any serious matter - unless, of course, both sides of the disagreement are represented in the Cathedral itself. And the Cathedral is not exactly noted for disagreeing with itself. At least, not from an external perspective.

You will not see the Times attacking Harvard, for example, or the State Department. They all have the same ant smell, as it were. The Times is not formally a government institution, as the BBC is, but it might as well be. If American journalism were coordinated into a Department of Information - as it was in [World War I](#) and [World War II](#) - and journalists were granted GS ranks, very little in their lives would change. As civil servants, they would be exactly as immune to political pressure as they are at present, and they would have exactly the same access to government secrets that they have at present.

The Cathedral's response to these dissident politicians thus took two forms, one fast and one slow. Both would have been effective; together, they were devastating. First, the "art of persuasion" - more dramatically known as [psychological warfare](#) - convinced their supporters that the politicians themselves were sick, awful, and weird, and so by extension was anyone who followed them. Second, the Cathedral itself adapted to the doctrines of Powell and McCarthy by making opposition to them an explicit tenet of the faith.

Since the Cathedral educates the world's most fashionable people, and since it holds power and power is always fashionable, Cathedrism is fashionable more or less by definition. Of course, if you were fashionable, you knew instantly that Powell and McCarthy were on the slow boat to nowhere. But the unfashionable are always the majority, and they are not unfashionable because they choose to be. They are unfashionable because they can't pull off fashionable.

As it became clear to all that Powell and McCarthy were "not done," their fans disappeared. Their bases of support had been a mile wide and an inch deep. Their attacks on the Cathedral were pathetic and doomed, like taking on the Death Star with a laser pointer. Personally, both men were mercurial and unstable - Powell was a genius, the last real statesman in British politics, while McCarthy was an old-school hard-drinking politician with [Roy Cohn](#) on his team - and it is no surprise that none of their colleagues emulated their suicidal bravado.

As for the second class, the Thatchers and Nixons and Reagans, in terms of their own personal outcomes they were smarter. They attacked the Cathedral not across the board, but on single issues on which their support was overwhelming. Sometimes they actually prevailed, for a while, on these points - Reagan got his military buildup, Thatcher got deregulation, Nixon [defeated North Vietnam](#).

Of course, the Nixon administration also created [EPA](#), initiated the [racial spoils system](#), and imposed [wage and price controls](#). Thatcher got Britain [inextricably](#) into the EU. And so on. These semi-outsider politicians provide a valuable service to the Cathedral: while opposing a few of its policies, they validate all the others as a bipartisan consensus, which everyone decent is obligated to support. They thus do the heavy lifting of persuading their supporters, who probably wouldn't read the Times even if they did trust it, to change with the changing times. And the times are always changing. And we just can't not change with them, can we?

To the extent that democratic politics still exists in the Western world, it exists in the form of the two-party system. The parties have various names, which they have inherited from history. But there are only two parties: the Inner Party, and the Outer Party. It is never hard to tell which is which.

The function of the Inner Party is to delegate all policies and decisions to the Cathedral. The function of the Outer Party is to pretend to oppose the Inner Party, while in fact posing no danger at all to it. Sometimes Outer Party functionaries are even elected, and they may even succeed in pursuing a few of their deviant policies. The entire Polygon will unite in ensuring that these policies either fail, or are perceived by the public to fail. Since the official press is part of the Polygon and has a more or less direct line into everyone's brain, this is not difficult.

The Outer Party has never even come close to damaging any part of the Polygon or Cathedral. Even McCarthy was not a real threat. He got a few people fired, most temporarily. Most of them were actually Soviet agents of one sort or another. They became martyrs and have been celebrated ever since. His goal was a purge of the State Department. He didn't even come close. If he had somehow managed to fire every Soviet agent or sympathizer in the US government, he would not even have done any damage. As [Carroll Quigley](#) pointed out, McCarthy (and his supporters) thought he was attacking a nest of Communist spies, whereas in fact he was attacking the American Establishment. Don't bring a toothpick to a gunfight.

McCarthy never even considered trying to abolish the State Department - let alone State, Harvard, the CFR, the Rockefeller Foundation, and every other institution in the same class. By my count, if you lump all his efforts together with the entire phenomenon of McCarthyism, you get about 10 milli-Hitlers. (And not even Hitler, of course, succeeded in the end.)

An essential element in the "art of persuasion" is the systematic propagation of the exact opposite of this situation. Devotees of the Inner Party and the Cathedral are deeply convinced that the Outer Party is about to fall on them and destroy them in a new fascist upheaval. They often believe that the Outer Party

itself is the party of power. They can be easily terrified by poll results of the type that Powell, etc, demonstrated. There are all kinds of scary polls that can be conducted which, if they actually translated into actual election results in which the winners of the election held actual power, would seriously suck. That's democracy for you.

But power in our society is not held by democratic politicians. Nor should it be. Indeed the intelligentsia are in a minority, indeed they live in a country that is a democracy, indeed in theory their entire way of life hangs by a thread. But if you step back and look at history over any significant period, you only see them becoming stronger. It is their beliefs that spread to the rest of the world, not the other direction. When Outer Party supporters embrace stupid ideas, no one has any reason to worry, because the Outer Party will never win. When the Inner Party goes mad, it is time to fear. Madness and power are not a fresh cocktail.

And thus we see the role of "democracy" in the Progressive period. Stross says:

Democracy provides a pressure release valve for dissent. As long as the party in power are up for re-election in a period of months to (single digit) years, opponents can grit their teeth and remind themselves that this, too, shall pass ... and wait for an opportunity to vote the bums out.

Democracies don't usually spawn violent opposition parties because opposition parties can hope to gain power through non-violent means.

This is the theory. But since elected politicians in the Cathedral system have, as we've seen, no real power, what we're looking at here is not a pressure release valve, but a *fake* pressure release valve. The regular exchange of parties in "power" reassures you, dear voter, that if the State starts to become seriously insane, the valve will trip, the bums will be thrown out, and everything will return to normal.

In fact, we know exactly what Washington's policies twenty years from now will be. They will certainly have nothing to do with "politics." They will be implementations of the ideas now taught at Harvard, Yale and Berkeley. There is a little lag as the memes work their way through the system, as older and wiser civil servants retire and younger, more fanatical ones take their place. But this lag is getting shorter all the time. And by the standards of the average voter forty years ago, let alone eighty, Washington *already* is seriously insane. What is the probability that by your standards - as progressive as they may be - Washington forty years from now will not seem just as crazed? Fairly low, I'm afraid.

And this brings us to the third point about the public policy apparatus: while appearing unconscious of its audience, it adapts to it. This is the most incriminating point, because there is no good explanation for it, and the trend is quite ominous if projected outward.

Take the recent decision of the California Supreme Court, who have just discovered that the state's Constitution allows people of the same sex to marry. As a matter of policy, I have no objection at all to this. Quite the contrary. I think it's an excellent and sensible policy. I do, however, have an interest in

where this policy came from.

This is what, in the 20th-century progressive public-policy world, we call "law." The craft of the lawyer used to be the craft of discovering how the words of a law were intended, by the officials who ratified the law, to imply that one's client was in the right. I think it's fairly safe to assume that the drafters and ratifiers of the [California Constitution](#) and its various amendments had no such understanding of their work. (Try reading the actual [decision](#). It's a fascinating hunk of boilerplate.)

Nonetheless, the drafters wrought better than they knew. The practice of drafting laws which are vague to the point of meaninglessness, then empowering "judges" to "interpret" them, is simply another way of abolishing politics. Congress legislates this way all the time. All they are doing is to transfer the power of legislation to a more private body, which is not subject to public scrutiny and the other painful woes of politics. The great thing about the gay marriage decision is that no one in California has any idea who made it. I think there are nine people on the California Supreme Court. Who are they? How did they get their jobs? Who the heck knows? No one seems to care at all.

The US Constitution was the first and greatest offender in this department. Its drafters did not even agree on such basic matters as whether a state could leave the Union. In practice, it made the Supreme Court the supreme legislative assembly, which over the last 200 years (mostly over the last 50) has created a body of decisions, perfectly comparable to Britain's [unwritten constitution](#), that we call [constitutional law](#). The idea that this legislative corpus can be derived in some mystical, yet automatic, way from the text of the Constitution is preposterous, and no one holds it.

Instead we have the [Living Constitution](#), which always seems to live to the left. I've never heard anyone, not even the most deranged fundamentalist, propose reinterpreting the Constitution to provide rights to fetuses, an obvious corollary of this approach - if the Inner Party and the Outer Party were symmetric opposites, and the "life" of the Constitution was powered by political democracy.

Of course it is not. It does not rest in formal interpretation of texts. It rests in ethical judgments. It is the job of the legislator to make ethical judgments, and the California Supreme Court is doing its job. It's a pity it has to carpool with such a large bodyguard of lies, but that's the modern world for ya.

And we know where these ethical judgments come from. They are Inner Party judgments, and the Inner Party's ethics are Christian, Protestant, and Quaker in their origins. Fine. We all need ethics, and "applied Christianity" will do as well as anything else. What interests me is *when* these ethical judgments come about.

Imagine, for instance, that the California Supreme Court had decided in, say, 1978, that it was unethical - I mean, unconstitutional - for California to prohibit its male citizens from marrying each other. Is this a thinkable event? I think not. And yet the court's writ ran just as far and was just as powerful in 1978 as in 2008. And ethics, surely, have not changed.

The Living Constitution does not adapt with changes in ethics. It adapts with changes in public opinion - as long as that public opinion is shifting in the direction of "applied Christianity." Public opinion was ready for abortion in 1973 - barely. It was ready for gay marriage in 2008 - barely. It was not ready for gay marriage in 1973. What will it be ready for in 2033? One can see this as a noble concession to the great principle of democracy. One can also see it as the Cathedral getting away with whatever it can get away with, and nothing else.

[Larry Auster](#), probably the most imaginative and interesting right-wing writer on the planet, who also happens to be a converted fundamentalist Christian with all the theopolitical baggage that you, dear open-minded progressive, would expect from such a person, has a good term for this: the [unprincipled exception](#). Briefly, an unprincipled exception is a policy that violates some absolute principle of ethics held by the policymaker, but is not openly acknowledged as such a violation.

For example, dear progressive, why is racism wrong? Racism is wrong because all humans are born simply as humans, having done nothing right or wrong, and it is incompatible with our deeply-held ethical principles to mark these newborn babies with indelible labels which assign them either privileges or penalties which they have not earned. Such as the privilege of being able to drink at sparkling-clean water fountains marked "Whites Only," or the penalty of having to go out back to the horse trough.

We hit that one out of the park, didn't we? Okay. So why is it ethical to label newborn babies as "American" or "Mexican," due to nothing but the descent and *geographical position at birth* of their parents, and give the former a cornucopia of benefits from which the latter is barred - such as the right to live, work, and drink from drinking fountains in the continental United States? What makes Washington think it is somehow ethical to establish two classes of human, "Americans" and "Mexicans," based only on coincidences of birth that are just as arbitrary as "black" versus "white," and treat the two completely differently? How does this differ from racism, Southern style?

You think this is ugly? Oh, we can get worse. Let's suppose the US, in its eagerness to treat these second-class humans, if not quite as well as possible, at least better than we treat them now, establishes a new guest-worker program which is open only to Nigerians. Any number of Nigerians may come to the US and work.

There are certain restrictions, however. They have to live in special guest-worker housing. They have to go to their workplace in the morning, and return before the sun sets. They may not wander around the streets at night. They must carry special guest-worker passes. Obviously, they can't vote. And they are strictly prohibited from using all public amenities, including, of course, drinking fountains.

Is it a more ethical policy to have this program, or not to have it? If you think no Nigerians could be found to take advantage of it, you're quite wrong. If you have the program, should you cancel it, and send the Nigerians home, to a life of continued poverty back in Nigeria? How is this helping them? On the other hand, our program has all the major features of [apartheid](#). And surely no-apartheid is better than

apartheid.

There is a very easy resolution to this problem: adopt the principle that [no person is illegal](#). This rule is perfectly consistent with "applied Christianity." It is taught at all our great universities. It is implied every time a journalist deploys the euphemism "undocumented." And I'm sure there are dozens of ways in which it could be incorporated into our great Living Constitution. There is only one problem: the people are not quite ready for it.

But perhaps in thirty years they will be. Perhaps? I would bet money on it. And I would also bet that, by the time this principle is established, denying it will be the equivalent of racism. Us old fogeys who were born in the 1970s will be convulsed with guilt and shame at the thought that the US actually considered it ethically acceptable to turn away, deport, and otherwise penalize our fellow human beings, on the ridiculous and irrelevant grounds that they were *born somewhere else*.

So the Cathedral wins coming and going. Today, it does not suffer the political backlash that would be sure to ensue if the Inner Party endorsed opening the borders to... everyone. Still less if it actually did so. (Unless it let the new Americans vote as soon as they set foot on our sacred soil, which of course would be the most Christian approach.) And in 2038, having increased North America's population to approximately two billion persons, none of them illegal, and all living in the same Third World conditions which it has already inflicted on most of the planet, our blessed Cathedral will have the privilege of berating the past with its guilt for not having recognized the obvious truth that *no person is illegal*. Ain't it beautiful?

It is. But I have been talking about this Cathedral thing for long enough that I'm not sure you believe it really exists. Well. Do I have a treat for you.

It's not news that I believe the Cathedral is evil. And since it's 2008, you'd expect evil to have not only a name, but a blog. And sure enough it does. Evil's name is [Timothy Burke](#), he is a professor of history (specializing in southern Africa) at Swarthmore, and his blog is [Easily Distracted](#).

The great thing about Professor Burke is that he appears to have a conscience. Almost every post in his blog can be understood as a kind of rhetorical struggle to repress some inner pang of doubt. He is the Good German par excellence. When people of this mindset found themselves in the Third Reich, they were "moderate Nazis." In Czechoslovakia or Poland they "worked within the system." Professor Burke is nowhere near being a dissident, but there is a dissident inside him. He doesn't like it, not at all. He stabs it with his steely knives. He can check out any time. But he can never leave. His position is a high one, and not easy to get.

The entire blog is characterized - indeed it could serve as a type specimen for - the quality that Nabokov called [poshlost](#). Simply an embarrassment of riches. I am saddened by the fact that, as a new parent, I cannot devour the whole thing. But as a case study, I have selected [this](#). The whole post is a treat, but I

am especially tickled by the line:

I am drawn to procedural liberalism because I live in worlds that are highly procedural and my skills and training are adapted to manipulating procedural outcomes.

"Manipulating procedural outcomes." My entire post - maybe even my entire blog - reduced to three words. If you want to know how you are governed, this is it: you are governed by manipulating procedural outcomes. It's perfect. It belongs on someone's tomb.

But don't even click on link if you are not prepared to work up a little steam. Barack Obama's handling of his grandmother was brutal, perhaps, but it really has nothing on the job Professor Burke does on his mother-in-law:

When I talk to my mother-in-law, I often get a clear view of its workings, and the role that mass culture (including the mainstream media) play in providing fresh narrative hooks and telling incidentals to its churnings. In the last two years, for example, every time I talk to her, she wants to return to the story of Ward Churchill. Or she wants to talk about how terrible crime is. Or about the problem of illegal immigrants. And so on. These are immobile, self-reproducing, stories. Their truth in her mind is guaranteed by something far outside the actualities and realities that compose any given incident or issue.

"These are immobile, self-reproducing, stories." I desperately, desperately, want his mother-in-law to find this post, read it, and slap Professor Burke very hard across his overgrown thirteen-year-old face. But I doubt it'll happen.

"Their truth in her mind is guaranteed by something far outside the actualities and realities that compose any given incident or issue." Can even this awful sentence do justice to the twisted mind of Timothy Burke? To the Cathedral as a whole, on which he is just one small gargoyle on a minor, far-flung flying buttress? Dear open-minded progressive, I invite you to read this post - or anything else on Professor Burke's remarkably revealing blog, if you remain undecided - and ask yourself again:

Do I trust the Cathedral? Do I consider it a source of responsible, effective public policy? And, in the long term, is it secure?

[Next](#), we try and figure out what to do if the answer turns out to be "no."

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/05/017-ugly-truth-about-government.html>

## Part 8: a reset is not a revolution

June 5, 2008

So, dear open-minded progressive, we've [established](#) who runs the world: you do. Or rather, people who agree with you do. Or hopefully, people you used to agree with do.

I can hope, right? Today, we'll do a little more than hope. We'll also look at change.

But first, let's nail down our terms. The great power center of 2008 is the *Cathedral*. The Cathedral has two parts: the accredited universities and the established press. The universities formulate public policy. The press guides public opinion. In other words, the universities make decisions, for which the press manufactures consent. It's as simple as a punch in the mouth.

The Cathedral operates as the brain of a broader power structure, the *Polygon* or *Apparat* - the permanent civil service. The Apparat is the [civil service](#) proper (all nonmilitary officials whose positions are immune to partisan politics, also known as "democracy"), plus all those formally outside government whose goal is to influence or implement public policy - ie, [NGOs](#). (There's a reason NGOs have to remind themselves that they're "non-governmental.")

(If we did not have an existing category for the press and universities, we could easily think of them as NGOs - in particular, the system wherein journalists are nominally supervised by for-profit media corporations is purely historical. If the Times and its pseudo-competitors ever fail, as they may well, the responsibility of funding and organizing journalism will fall to the [great foundations](#), who will certainly be happy to pick up the relatively small expense.)

I have blown a lot of pixels on the historical roots of the Cathedral. But this one-minute clip might tell you just as much:

["Hollywood Supports New Deal and NIRA"](#)

That, my dear open-minded progressive, is what we call a [personality cult](#). No, that's not George W. Bush on the flag. If you don't recognize the eagle, he is [this friendly fellow](#). And if you think there is anything ironic about the production (from [this movie](#)), you're dead wrong.

And in what [secret speech](#) was this cult denounced? It never has been. All mainstream thought in the United States, Democrat and Republican alike, descends in unbroken apostolic succession from the gigantic political machine of [That Man](#). (The last of the FDR-haters were purged by Buckley in the '50s.) The Cathedral connection, of course, is [this](#).

Today's Cathedral is not a personality cult. It is not a political party. It is something far more elegant and evolved. It is not even an organization in the conventional, hierarchical sense of the word - it has no

Leader, no Central Committee, no nothing. It is a true peer-to-peer network, which makes it extraordinarily resilient. To even understand why it is so unanimous, why Harvard always agrees with Yale which is always on the same page as Berkeley which never picks any sort of a fight with the New York Times, except of course to argue that it is not progressive enough, takes quite a bit of thinking.

Yet as the video shows us, the Cathedral was born in the brutal hardball politics of the 20th century, and it is still best understood in 20th-century terms. Most historians would agree that the 20th century started in 1914 - much as "the Sixties" denotes the period from 1965 to 1974 - and I don't think it can be declared dead until this last great steel machine finally gums up and keels over. I'd be surprised if this happens before 2020 - or after 2050.

The 20th century prudently and definitively rejected the 19th-century idea that government policies should be formulated by democratically elected representatives (whom you know and loathe as "partisan politicians"). Unfortunately, at least in the United States and the Soviet Union, it replaced the fallacy of representative government with the far more insidious fallacy of scientific government.

Government is not a science because it is impractical to construct [controlled experiments](#) in government. Uncontrolled or "natural" experiments are [not science](#). Any process which is not science, but claims to be science, or claims that its results exhibit the same objective robustness we ascribe to the scientific process, has surely earned the name of *pseudoscience*. Thus it is not at all excessive to describe 20th-century "public policy" as a pseudoscience. A good sanity check is the disparity between its [predictions](#) and its [achievements](#).

Moreover, *all* the major 20th-century regimes maintained, and generally intensified, the underlying mystery of Whig government: the principle of *popular sovereignty*.

Even the Nazis acknowledged popular sovereignty. If the NSDAP had defined its leadership of Germany as a self-explaining proposition, it could have laid off Goebbels in 1933. Instead it went to extraordinary lengths to capture and retain the support of the German masses, and most historians agree that (at least before the war) it succeeded. If you don't consider this an adequate refutation of the principle of [vox populi, vox dei](#), perhaps you are a Nazi yourself.

This is the terrible contradiction in the [political formula](#) of the modern regime. Public opinion is always right, except when it's not. It is infallible, but responsible educators must guide it toward the truth. Otherwise, it might fall prey to Nazism, [racism](#), or other bad thoughts.

Hence the Cathedral. The basic assumption of the Cathedral is that when popular opinion and the Cathedral agree, their collective judgment is infallible. When the peasant mind stubbornly resists, as in the cases of [colonization](#) or the [racial spoils system](#), more education is necessary. The result might be called *guided popular sovereignty*. It wins both coming and going.

In 1933, public opinion could still be positively impressed by group calisthenics displaying the face of the

Leader, eagles shooting lightning bolts, etc, etc. By today's standards, the public of 1933 (both German and American) was a seven-year-old boy. Today's public is more of a thirteen-year-old girl (a smart, plucky, well-meaning girl), and guiding it demands a [very different tone](#).

You are not a thirteen-year-old girl. So how did you fall for this bizarre circus? How can any mature, intelligent, and educated person put their faith in this gigantic festival of phoniness?

Think about it. You read the New York Times, or similar, on a regular basis. It tells you this, it tells you that, it reports that "scientists say" X or Y or Z. And there is always a name at the top of the article. It might be "Michael Luo" or "Celia Dugger" or "Heather Timmons" or "Marc Lacey" or... the list, is, of course, endless.

Do you know Michael or Celia or Heather or Marc? Are they your personal friends? How do you know that they aren't pulling your chain? How do you know that the impression you get from reading their stories is the same impression that you would have if you, personally, saw everything that Michael or Celia or Heather or Marc saw? Why in God's green earth do you see their "stories" as anything but an attempt to "manipulate procedural outcomes" by guiding you, dear citizen, to interpret the world in a certain way and deliver your vote accordingly?

The answer is that you do not trust them, personally. Bylines are not there for you. They are there for the journalists themselves. If the Times, like the Economist, lost its bylines and attributed all its stories to "a New York Times reporter," your faith would not change one iota. You trust Michael and Celia and Heather and Marc, in other words, because they are speaking (quite literally) [ex cathedra](#).

So you trust the institution, not the people. Very well. Let's repeat the question: what is it about the New York Times that you find trustworthy? The old [blackletter](#) logo? The [motto](#)? Suppose that instead of being "reporters" of "the New York Times," Michael and Celia and Heather and Marc were "cardinals" of "the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church?" Would this render them more credible, less credible, or about as credible? Suppose, instead, they were "professors" at "Stanford University?" Would this increase or decrease your trust?

For a hardened denialist such as myself, who has completely lost his faith in all these institutions, attempting to understand the world through the reports and analysis produced by the Cathedral is like trying to watch a circus through the camera on a cell phone duct-taped to the elephant's trunk. It can be done, but it helps to have plenty of external perspective.

And for anyone starting from a position of absolute faith in the Cathedral, there is simply no other source of information against which to test it. You are certainly not going to discredit the Times or Stanford by reading the Times or going to Stanford, any more than you will learn about the historical Jesus by attending a Latin Mass.

And as a progressive, you are no more interested in prying into these questions than the average Catholic is in explaining what makes the Church "One, Holy, and Apostolic." You do not see yourself as a believer in anything. You don't think of the Cathedral as a formal entity, which of course it is not. Its institutional infallibility is a matter of definition, not faith.

Rather, you focus your political energies on the *enemies* of the Cathedral. Perhaps the keystone of the progressive belief system is the theory that the Cathedral, far from being the boss hog, the obvious winner in all conflicts foreign or domestic, is in fact struggling desperately against the dark and overpowering forces of bigotry, religion, ignorance, corruption, militarism, etc. In a word - the Man.

We met the Man last week courtesy of [Lincoln Steffens](#), whose enemies - in the form of Gilded Age blowhards such as [Chauncey Depew](#) - at least really existed, and had real power. When [C. Wright Mills](#) wrote *The Power Elite*, their memory could at least be reasonably invoked. By the Chomsky era, the military-corporate-financial conspiracy was approaching the plausibility, if not the maliciousness, of its international Jewish counterpart. The 20th century's real power elite, of course, are Steffens, Mills and Chomsky themselves.

This is the classic propaganda trope in which resistance becomes oppression. Poland is always about to march into Germany. Every aggressive political or military operation in history has been painted, usually quite sincerely, by its supporters as an act of self-defense.

In reality, active resistance to the Cathedral is negligible. At most there is the Outer Party, which is completely ineffective if not counterproductive (more on this in a bit). The Outer Party can sometimes align itself with small acts of petty corruption, as in [Tom DeLay's K Street Project](#). This can hardly be described as a success. There are also phone-in operations, such as [NumbersUSA](#), which attempt to mobilize the last remnants of unreconstructed public opinion. The Cathedral, which fears the masses much more than it has to, is often demure in revealing its power to just steam right over them, and so it is possible to achieve small victories such as NumbersUSA's in maintaining the status quo. Finally, the initiative process, ironically a relic of early Progressivism itself, grants occasional laurels to a [Howard Jarvis](#) or [Ward Connerly](#).

But most resistance is of the passive, atomized, and inertial sort. People simply tune out. If they are especially determined and wily, they may practice the [Ketman](#) of [Czeslaw Milosz](#). Or they believe, but they don't super-believe. They are the progressive version of [jack Mormons](#). Naturally, even these small, private apathies enrage the fanatical.

Here is another inescapable contradiction. The average progressive, who is not open-minded (most people aren't) and is not reading this, cannot imagine even starting to perform the exercise of imagining a world in which his side is the overdog. Yet the very word "progress" implies that his cause in general tends to advance, not retreat, and history confirms this.

If you were advising a young, amoral, ambitious and talented person to choose a political persuasion solely on the probability of personal success, you would certainly advise her to become a progressive. She should probably be as radical as possible, hopefully without acquiring any sort of a criminal record. But as the case of Bill Ayers shows, even straight-out terrorism is not necessarily a bar to the circles of power (especially if, like [Ayers](#), you started there in the first place).

The only reason to oppose progressivism is some sincere conviction. As [Edith Hamilton](#) said to [Freda Uteley](#): "[Don't expect the material rewards of unrighteousness while engaged in the pursuit of truth.](#)" This has to be one of the finest sentences of the twentieth century.

Any such conviction may be misguided, of course. People being what they are, and progressivism being the creed of the most intelligent and successful people in the world, most opponents of progressivism are in some way ignorant, deluded or misinformed. Often the situation is simple: progressives are right, and they are wrong. This hardly assists the pathetic, doomed cause of antiprogressivism.

In the Post, the liberal historian Rick Perlstein [stumbles on](#) (and then, of course, past) the inconvenient reality of progressive dominance:

Born myself in 1969 to pre-baby boomer parents, I'm a historian of America's divisions who spent the age of George W. Bush reading more newspapers written when Johnson and Richard Nixon were president than current ones. And I recently had a fascinating experience scouring archives for photos of the 1960s to illustrate the book I've just finished based on that research. It was frustrating -- and telling.

The pictures people take and save, as opposed to the ones they never take or the ones they discard, say a lot about how they understand their own times. And in our archives as much as in our mind's eye, we still record the '60s in hazy cliches -- in the stereotype of the idealistic youngster who came through the counterculture and protest movements, then settled down to comfortable bourgeois domesticity.

What's missing? The other side in that civil war. The right-wing populist rage of 1968 third-party presidential candidate George Wallace, who, referring to an idealistic protester who had lain down in front of Johnson's limousine, promised that if he were elected, "the first time they lie down in front of my limousine, it'll be the last one they'll ever lay down in front of because their day is over!" That kind of quip helped him rise to as much as 20 percent in the polls.

It's easy to find hundreds of pictures of the national student strike that followed Nixon's announcement of the invasion of Cambodia in the spring of 1970. Plenty of pictures of the riots at Kent State that ended with four students shot dead by National Guardsmen. None I could find, however, of the counter-demonstrations by Kent, Ohio, townies -- and even Kent State parents. Flashing four fingers and chanting "The score is four/And next time more," they argued that the kids

had it coming.

The '60s were a trauma -- two sets of contending Americans, each believing they were fighting for the future of civilization, but whose left- and right-wing visions of redemption were opposite and irreconcilable. They were a trauma the way the war of brother against brother between 1861 and 1865 was a trauma and the way the Great Depression was a trauma. Tens of millions of Americans hated tens of millions of other Americans, sometimes murderously so. The effects of such traumas linger in a society for generations.

Consider this example. The Library of Congress, which houses the photo archives of Look magazine and U.S. News & World Report, holds hundreds of images of the violent confrontation between cops and demonstrators in front of the Chicago Hilton at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and, from the summer of 1969, of Woodstock. But I could find no visual record of the National Convention on the Crisis of Education. Held two weeks after Woodstock in that selfsame Chicago Hilton, it was convened by citizens fighting the spread of sex education in the schools as if civilization itself were at stake. The issue dominated newspapers in the autumn of 1969 and is seemingly forgotten today.

'68 wasn't a "trauma." It was a coup. It was a classic chimp throwdown in which, using tactics that were as violent as necessary, the New Left displaced the Old Left from the positions of power. ["Up against the wall, motherfucker, this is a stickup."](#) Truer words were never spoken. The victory of Obama, a [Movement](#) man to the core, represents the final defeat of the Stalinist wing of the American left by its Maoist wing. (By "Stalinist" and "Maoist," all I mean is that the New Deal was allied with Stalin and the SDS was aligned with Mao. These are not controversial assertions.)

But I digress. My point is that what we can infer, by our inability to recognize any serious successor in 2008 of George Wallace, the anti-sex-education movement, or the folks who thought that the National Guard's real mistake at Kent State was that they failed to follow up the victory by fixing bayonets and charging, is that these reactionaries *lost*, and their progressive enemies *won*. Generally in any conflict only one side can claim victory. And if after the battle we see that one side still flourishes and the other has been so thoroughly crushed that it is not only nonexistent, but actually forgotten, we sure know which is which.

The great myth of the '60s is that the Movement, somehow, failed. Actually, its foes - not Nixon's silent majority, who never had any real power in the first place, but the Establishment, the old Eleanor Roosevelt liberals, the [Grayson Kirks](#) and [S.I. Hayakawas](#) and [McGeorge Bundys](#), lost almost every battle - including, of course, the Vietnam War itself. The SDSers and Alinskyites suffered hardly at all for their offenses, and moved smoothly and effectively into the positions of power they now hold, almost exactly as described in the [Port Huron Statement](#). (Which is unbelievably windy, even by my standards - scroll to the end for Hayden's actual tactical battle plan.)

The case of the "silent majority" illustrates the system of guided popular sovereignty. A majority of American voters opposed the student movement. Just as a majority of Germans supported Hitler. The majority does not always win. The children of the "silent majority" are far, far less likely to express the views of a George Wallace, a Spiro Agnew or an Anita Bryant than their parents. The same can be said for the grandchildren of the Nazis. The Cathedral defeated both.

(Was this a good thing? I suppose it probably was. I am not a huge fan of George Wallace, or of Hitler. But they are both dead, you know. History is not a judicial proceeding. Quite frankly, I find it amateurish to take sides in the past. We study the past so that we can take sides in the present.)

The progressive is quite satisfied with the defeat of Hitler, which short of making pyramids of skulls, Tamerlane style, was about as complete as it gets. But Wallace is another matter.

To a progressive, progressivism is right and its opposite is wrong. Thus any survival of the "silent majority," any sense in which the world has not yet been completely progressivized, any victory short of unconditional surrender, is a sign to progressives that the world remains dominated by their enemies. More energy is necessary, comrades.

The device of [unprincipled exceptions](#) allows this bogus, self-congratulatory legend of defeat to persist indefinitely. As we've seen, the progressive story can be traced back centuries, and at every moment in its history it has existed in a society which has included reactionary power structures. For example, the concepts of property, corporations, national borders, marriage, armed forces, and so on, are irredeemably unprogressive. Attacking on all these fronts simultaneously would result in nothing but defeat, real defeat.

So the continued existence of these reactionary phenomena provides evidence that progressives are struggling against [dark forces of titanic and unbounded strength](#). You have to be a bit of a reactionary yourself to see the truth: these institutions are simply a matter of reality. So it is reality itself that progressivism attacks. Reality is the perfect enemy: it always fights back, it can never be defeated, and infinite energy can be expended in unsuccessfully resisting it.

Thus Condoleeza Rice, for example, can claim that America is [only now](#) becoming true to its principles. The Times [disagrees](#) - it claims that America is not yet there. Rather, it is treating its illegal immigrants unjustly. Is it just for America to prevent any human being from setting foot on its noble soil? Or is "no person illegal?" The Times is silent on the question. But perhaps in a decade or two the answer will be revealed in our "living constitution." You see how cynical a response this great institution can expect, from a carping denialist such as myself, when it accuses some poor Outer Party shill of "breaking the law."

Anyway. I think I have gone far enough in describing the Cathedral. It is basically a theocratic form of government, minus the literal theology. Its doctrines are not beliefs about the spirit world. But they rest

no less on faith. I certainly cannot see any reason to believe that these people have delivered, are delivering, or will deliver government that is secure, responsible, and effective. I can see plenty of reasons to expect that, as the unprincipled exceptions rise to the surface and are carved away, things will get worse.

In case you are still undecided on whether or not to support the Cathedral, dear open-minded progressive, I offer you a simple test. The test is a little episode in ancient history. The name of the episode is [Reconstruction](#).

The question is: who is right about Reconstruction? Team A: [Eric Foner](#), [Stephen Budiansky](#), and [John Hope Franklin](#)? Or Team B: [Charles Nordhoff](#), [Daniel Henry Chamberlain](#), and [John Burgess](#)? For extra credit, throw [William Saletan](#) in the mix.

Team B has an advantage in that their books are available in one click. They have another advantage: they actually lived through the events they describe. Team A has an advantage in an extra century or so of scholarship, and the vast marketing powers of the Cathedral. You don't actually need to buy their books - their ideas are everywhere. (Budiansky's breathless first chapter is, however, [on line](#).)

Note that there are no factual matters in dispute. The choice is merely one of interpretation. And all the authors linked above are, by any reasonable historical standard, liberals. Who do you find more credible, Team A or Team B? As you'll see, you can hardly agree with both.

If you get the same results from this experiment that I did, you may want to think about strategies for change. Change can be divided into two parts: capturing power, and using it.

My answer for how to use power will not change: I believe in secure, responsible, and effective government. This is not, in my humble opinion, a difficult problem. The difficult problem is how to get from here to there.

Let's start by looking at some ineffective strategies. In my opinion, the most common error made by antiprogressive movements is to mimic the strategies of progressivism itself. The error is in assuming that the relationship between left and right is symmetric. As we've seen, it is not.

The three main strategies for progressive success in the 20th century were violence, [Gramscian](#) or bureaucratic incrementalism, and [Fabian](#) or democratic incrementalism. As antiprogressive strategies, I don't believe that any of these approaches has any chance of success. As (at the very least) distractions, they are counterproductive.

Revolutionary violence in the 20th century has such a strong track record that it's only natural for reactionaries to think of trying it. Furthermore, in Japan, Italy and Germany, the 20th century has three cases of reactionary movements (yes, I know Hitler did not claim to be a reactionary - but he was lying) which achieved success through violence. For a while.

Before their fascist movements rose to power, these countries all had one thing in common. They were monarchies. Is your country, dear reader, a monarchy? If not, I recommend - *strongly* - against any kind of reactionary violence, terrorism, "civil disobedience" (such as tax protesting), or any approach that even starts to smell of the above.

Fascism was a reaction to Communism. (Thus the word "reactionary.") It could exist because of one thing and one thing only: a political and especially *judicial* establishment that was fundamentally reactionary, and willing to turn a blind eye toward antirevolutionary thugs, who used Bolshevik techniques against the Bolsheviks themselves. Is your country, dear reader, equipped with a reactionary judicial establishment? Are you sure? Are you really sure? Because if not, I recommend - *strongly* - against etc.

In a world dominated by progressives, the fascist gate to power is closed, locked, welded shut, filled with a thousand tons of concrete, and surrounded by starving cave bears. Today's Apparatus has entire [departments](#) who do nothing but guard this door, which no one but a few pathetic dorks will even think of approaching. And this is even assuming that a regime which achieved power through fascist techniques would be superior in any way, shape, or form to the Cathedral, a proposition I consider extraordinarily dubious. Give it up, Nazis. Game over. You lose. Frankly, even the real Nazis were no prize, and few of them would regard their modern successors with anything but contempt. There is a reason for this.

We continue to Gramscian incrementalism. This is not without its merits. It even has its successes. I think the most effective arm of the modern "conservative" movement, far and away, has been the [Federalist Society](#). The Federalists are absolutely decent and principled, they have separated themselves as far as possible from the Outer Party, and they have had a real intellectual impact. Frankly, you could do a heck of a lot worse.

On the other hand, it should not be necessary to join the Cathedral to have an intellectual impact on it, and one day it won't be. And as an institutional power play rather than a platform for intellectualizing, the idea of Gramscian reaction is just silly. At best, the Federalists, and their economic counterparts in the [George Mason School](#), might make the Cathedral system work a little more efficiently. But the Cathedral tends to be much better at assimilating them than they are at subverting it - an intention which, you'll note, few of them will admit to.

Gramscian subversion works for a reason: the Gramscian progressive's real goal is power. In order to generate free energy which he can transmute into organizational power, he is ready to push his organization toward ineffective policies, which by virtue of their very ineffectiveness are a permanent source of work for him and his friends. A Gramscian reactionary, working in the same organization as these people and nominally collaborating with them, is forced into one of two options: attacking the progressives and trying to destroy their jobs, which will result in his certain destruction, or finding a way

to betray his own principles, which will result in a comfortable and permanent sinecure. There is little suspense in the decision.

Ultimately, the Gramscian reactionary is in fact a Gramscian progressive. All he is doing is to create jobs for himself and his friends. The Cathedral is happy to employ as many tame libertarians or conservatives as it can find. As LBJ used to put it, better to have them inside the tent pissing out. Hence the infamous [cosmotarians](#). Perhaps if someone found a way to spread their dung on crops, they might have a reason to exist.

We continue to Fabian incrementalism. You can see Glenn Reynolds endorse the Fabian strategy [here](#). I'm afraid I still have a soft spot for the [Instapundit](#), who was perhaps my first introduction to the weird, scary world outside the Cathedral, and a gentle and pleasant introduction it was. But frankly, Reynolds doesn't pretend to be anything but a lightweight, and I see no reason to waste much time on him.

Fabian incrementalism means supporting either the Outer Party, or a minor party such as the Libertarians. By definition, if you are going to take power using the democratic process, you have to support some party or other.

There is an immediate problem with this: as we've seen, modern "democracies" do not allow politicians to formulate policy. It is a violation of their unwritten constitutions, and an unwritten constitution is just as hard to violate as a written one. Therefore, even when the Outer Party manages to win the election and gain "power," what they find in their hands is more or less the same sort of "power" that the Queen of England has.

My stepfather, a mid-level Washington insider who spent twenty years working as a staffer for Democratic senators, caviled vigorously at the idea that the Democrats are the "Inner Party" and Republicans are the "Outer Party." He pointed out that between 2000 and 2006, the Republicans held the Presidency and both houses of Congress.

I pointed out that he was actually underplaying his hand. During this period, Republican nominees also held a majority on the Supreme Court. By the eleventh-grade civics-class "separation of powers" theory, this would have given the Grand Old Party complete domination over North America. Without breaking a single law, they could have: liquidated the State Department and transferred sole foreign-policy responsibility to the Pentagon, packed the Supreme Court with televangelists, required that all universities receiving Federal funds balance their appointments between pro-choice and pro-life professors, terminated all research in the areas of global warming, evolution and sexual lubricants, etc, etc, etc.

Whereas in fact, in all the hundreds of thousands of things Washington does, there was exactly one major policy which the Bush administration and Congress pursued, but their Democratic equivalents would not have: the invasion of Iraq. Which you may support or oppose, but whose direct effect on the

government of North America is hard to see as major. Moreover, this applies only to the first term of the Bush administration. We have no strong reason to believe that a Kerry administration would not have adopted the same policies in Iraq, including the "surge."

Why did the Republicans not use their formal control over the mechanisms of Washington to cement real control, as the Democrats did in 1933? There are many specific answers to this question, but the basic answer is that they never had real power. In theory, the Queen has just [the same power](#) over the UK, and if she tried to use it all that would happen is that she would lose it. Exactly the same is true of our own dear Outer Party, on whatever occasion it should next get into office. It may get into office again. It will never get into power. (Although it retains the power to fill many juicy [sinecures](#).)

There is a more subtle reason that the Outer Party is a rolling disaster: conservatives and reactionaries, whose political positions must be based on principle rather than opportunism (since if they were opportunists, they would always do better as progressives), find it difficult to agree. Progressives always find it easy to agree - as you might have noticed, their disputes are almost always over either tactics or personalities, almost never over principles. There is a reason for this.

Thus progressives have the advantage of spontaneous coordination, the glue that holds the Cathedral together in the first place. Their formula is *pas d'amis a droit, pas d'ennemis a gauche*, and any unbiased observer must applaud at how smoothly they make it work. Their coalitions tend to hold, those of their enemies tend to fracture. Evil is stronger than good, because it is never worried or confused by scruples.

Third, Outer Party politicians who achieve any success are constantly tempted to succeed even more, by replacing their principles with progressive ones and allying with progressives. Since this alliance enables them to outcompete their principled competitors with ease, it takes a very determined figure to avoid it. In the ancient, grinning carapace of Senator McCain, this strategy has surely been pushed to its furthest possible extent - or so at least one would think. Then again, one would have thought the same of the original "compassionate conservative."

We can see a more extreme version of this in the pathetic gyrations of one of the Outer Party's outer parties, the Lew Rockwell libertarians, skewered with deadly aim [at VDare](#) and roasted to a fine crisp [at VFR](#). I don't really agree with the details of Auster's analysis of libertarianism (here is [mine](#)), but our conclusion is the same: the problem with libertarianism is that libertarianism is a form of Whiggery, and [the first Whig was the devil](#). (Furthermore, this idea of presenting Dr. Paul, who so far as I can tell is nothing but a profoundly decent old man, as some kind of public intellectual, and putting his name on [blatantly ghostwritten books](#), reeks of 20th-century politics.)

Fourth, there is another way to succeed in the Outer Party. This might be called the Huckabee Plan. On the Huckabee Plan, you succeed by being *as stupid as possible*. Not only does this attract a surprising number of voters, who may be just as stupid or even stupider - the Outer Party's base is not exactly the cream of the crop - it also attracts the attention of the Cathedral, whose favorite sport is to promote the

worst plausible Outer Party candidates. As usual with the Cathedral, this is a consequence of casual snobbery rather than malignant conspiracy, but it is effective nonetheless. It is always fun to write a human-interest story about a really wacky peasant, especially one who happens to be running for President.

And fifth, the very existence and activity of the Outer Party, this profoundly phony and thoroughly ineffective pseudo-alternative, is far and away the greatest motivator for Inner Party activists, who believe it is a monstrous danger to their entire world. Don't say they don't believe this. I believed in the right-wing menace, the [regs gevaar](#) as it were, for the first quarter century of my life.

Without the Outer Party, the Cathedral system is instantly recognizable as exactly what it is: a one-party state. You'll note that when the Soviet Union collapsed, it wasn't because someone organized an opposition party and started winning in their fake elections. In fact, many of the later Communist states (such as Poland and China) maintained bogus opposition parties, for exactly the same reason we have an Outer Party: to make the "people's democracy" look like an actual, 19th-century political contest.

Without the Outer Party, the legions of Inner Party youth activists we see all over the place are exactly what they appear to be: [Komsomol members](#). They are young, ambitious people who serve the State to get ahead. In fact, often their goal is not to get ahead, but just to get laid. Once it is clear that the Inner Party is just the government, all the fun disappears from this enterprise. There are other ways to get laid, most of them less boring and bureaucratic.

If the Republicans could somehow dissolve themselves permanently and irrevocably, it would be the most brutal blow ever struck against the Democrats. It would make Obi-Wan Kenobi look like [Chad Vader](#). As I'll explain, passive resistance is not your only option, but it is a thousand million times better than Outer Party activism. *Do not support the Outer Party.*

Face it: political democracy in the United States is dead. It died on March 4, 1933, when the following words were uttered:

But in the event that the Congress shall fail to take one of these two courses, and in the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis--broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.

FDR is often credited with "[preserving democracy](#)." He "preserved democracy" in about the same way that the Russians [preserved Lenin](#). More precisely, it was his opponents who preserved the pickled corpse of democracy, when again and again FDR made these kinds of crude threats and they failed to call his bluff. ([Justice Van Devanter](#) has a lot to answer for.)

Democracy sucks. It never worked in the first place. [Pobedonostsev](#) got it [exactly right](#). If you read British

travelers' accounts of 19th-century American democracy, when we had the real original thing and theirs was still heavily diluted with aristocracy, the phenomenon sounds [terrifying and barbaric](#). It sounds, in fact, distinctly Nazi. And where do you think the Nazis got their mob-management technology? By listening to Beethoven, perhaps? By reading Goethe?

And since democracy is dead, the idea of restoring it is doubly quixotic. If you have to pick something dead to restore, at least find something that everyone understands is dead. It would actually be much easier, and certainly far more productive, to restore the Stuarts.

For example, the British writer [Richard North](#), who is not a porn star but the proprietor of [EU Referendum](#), perhaps the world's best blog on the reality of government today, has a fine [two-part](#) essay on the failure of the eurosceptic movement - that is, the movement to rescue the UK from assimilation into the curiously Soviet-like and [thoroughly undemocratic](#) EU.

What astounds Dr. North so much is that no one seems to care. All the Sturm und Drang of the 19th century, all the democratic foofaraw and the jingoism and the socialism and all the rest, and the British people are letting it all just be sucked away into a [creepy-looking building](#) in Belgium, from which all important decisions are handed down by transnational bureaucrats who could sign on as extras in [Brazil II](#) without the cost and inconvenience of a baby mask.

And it's not just the UK. I mean, good lord, Ireland! All the ink that was shed over [Home Rule](#). All the blood, too. The unquenchable Celtic passion of the fiery, irrepressible Celt. And they can scarcely be bothered to give a [tinker's damn](#) whether they are governed from Dublin or from Brussels. What in the world can be going on?

What is going on is that the voters of both Britain and Ireland, though they may not know it consciously, are perfectly aware of the game. As anyone who has read the [Crossman diaries](#) knows, their politicians handed off power to faceless bureaucrats a long, long time ago, just as ours did. The only real question is what city and office building their faceless bureaucrats work in, and what nationality they are. And why should it possibly matter?

So Dr. North concludes his entire well-reasoned discussion with this bathetic *cri de coeur*:

To achieve that happy outcome, though, we have to answer the question that the élites have been evading ever since they decided to take refuge in the arms of "Europe": what is Britain's role in the world?

On reflection, I have come to the view that it is the failure to address this question which has given rise to many of the ills in our society. As have our politicians internalised, so has the population. Lacking, if you like, a higher calling – the sense that there is something more to our nation than the pursuit of comfort, prosperity and a plasma television in the corner – we too have become self-

obsessed, inwards-looking ... and selfish.

In effect, therefore, we are looking for the "vision thing" – a sense of purpose as a nation, a uniting ethos which will restore our sense of pride and reinforce our national identity which the EU has been so assiduously undermining.

What bland shite. Dr. North, here's a modest proposal for your "national identity."

I suggest a Stuart restoration in an independent England. Through some beautiful twist of fate, the Stuart succession has become entangled with the [House of Liechtenstein](#), who just happen to be *the last working royal family in Europe*. The father-son team of [Hans-Adam II](#) and [Hereditary Prince Alois](#) are not decorative abstractions. They are effectively the CEOs of Lichtenstein, which is a small country but a real one nonetheless. As you'll see if you read the links, the last "reform" in Lichtenstein actually *increased* the royal executive power. Take that, 20th century!

And Prince Alois's son, 13-year-old [Prince Joseph Wenzel](#), just happens to be the legitimate heir to the Stuart throne - illegally overthrown in a [coup](#) based on the notorious [warming-pan legend](#). Therefore, the structure of a restoration is obvious. The Hanoverians have failed. They have become decorative pseudo-monarchs. And as for the system of government that has grown up under them, it makes [Richard Cromwell](#) look like a smashing success. Restore the Stuarts under King Joseph I, with Prince Alois as regent, and the problem is solved.

Unrealistic? Au contraire, mon frere. What is unrealistic is "a sense of purpose as a nation, a uniting ethos which will restore our sense of pride..." Frankly, England does not deserve pride. It has gone to the dogs, and that may be an insult to dogs. If England is to restore its sense of pride, it needs to start with its sense of shame. And the first thing it should be ashamed of is the pathetic excuse for a government that afflicts it at present, and will afflict it for the indefinite future until something drastic is done.

For example, according to [official statistics](#), between 1900 and 1992 the crime rate in Great Britain, indictable offenses per capita known to the police, increased by a factor of 46. That's not 46%. Oh, no. That's 4600%. Many of the offenders having been imported specially, to make England brighter and more colorful. This isn't a government. It's a crime syndicate.

Ideally a Stuart restoration would happen on much the same conditions as the [restoration of Charles II](#), except perhaps with an extra caveat: a total [lustration](#) of the present administration. It has not partly, sort of, kind of, maybe, failed. It has failed utterly, irrevocably, disastrously and terminally.

Therefore, the entire present regime, politicians and civil servants and quangocrats and all, except for essential security and technical personnel, should be retired on full pay and barred from any future official employment. Why pick nits? The private sector is full of competent managers. You can import them from America if you need. Don't make the mistake of trying to sweep out the Augean stables. Just [apply the river](#). (If a concession must be made to modern mores, however, I think this time around there

is no need to [hang any corpses.](#))

In order to make a Stuart restoration happen, Dr. North, you have to accomplish one of the following two things. You either need to persuade a majority of the population of England (or Great Britain, if you prefer, but England as a historic jurisdiction without a present government is quite an appealing target) that it needs to happen, or you need to persuade the British Army that it needs to happen. The former is preferable. The latter is dangerous, but hardly unprecedented. Frankly, the present situation is dangerous as well.

Neither of these options involves any of the following acts: starting a new political party, recruiting a paramilitary fascist skinhead stormtroop brigade, or engaging in eternal debates about the policies and procedures of the restored polity.

All of these are crucial, but the third especially. Note the difference between organizing a royal restoration and organizing a democratic revival. The latter, simply because of the open landscape of power it must create, offers an infinite plane across which an arbitrary oil slick of random crackpot ideas can spread out indefinitely, creating a movement with less cohesion than the average pubic hair. (See under: [UKIP.](#)) The former is a single decision. It is far less complicated than voting. Either you want to restore the rightful King of England, or you'd rather take your chances with the faceless bureaucrats. Either you're a neo-Jacobite, or you're not. There are no factions, parties, personality conflicts, etc, etc.

What will the new England look like? You don't even have to think about it. It is not your job to think about it. It is Prince Regent Alois's job - the miracle of absolute monarchy, Stuart style. If he runs the place a quarter as well as he runs Vaduz, if he can get the crime rate per hundred thousand back down to 2.4 from 109.4, historians will be kissing his ass for the next four centuries. Perhaps he can get [Lee Kuan Yew](#) in as a consultant.

You have many difficulties in making a Stuart restoration happen, but perhaps the greatest is that most Englishmen simply have no idea what living in a competently governed country would be like. Liechtenstein, while quite well-run, is too small to serve as an illustration. Singapore is definitely a better bet.

Here is [a speech](#) made last year by [Lee Hsien Loong](#), who just, um, happens to be the son of Lee Kuan Yew. Read this speech, obviously composed by Prime Minister Loong himself (it certainly does not betray the speechwriter's art), and imagine living in a country in which the chief administrator talks to the residents in a normal voice as if speaking to grownups. Yes, men and women of England, this is what American-style democracy has deprived you of. We're sorry. We promise we won't do it again.

This sort of transition in government is what, here at UR, we call a *reset*. It's just like rebooting your computer, when for some reason it gets gunked up and seems to be running slowly. Are you interested in debugging it? Would you like to activate the kernel console, perhaps look at the thread table, check out

some registers, see what virtual memory is doing? Is a bear Catholic? Does the Pope - anyway.

Or perhaps it's a little more like reinstalling Windows. The gunk could be a virus, after all. Rebooting will not remove a virus. Better yet, you could replace Windows with Linux. That way, you won't just get the same virus right away again. I think a Stuart restoration in England is about as close as it comes to replacing Windows with Linux.

There are three basic principles to any reset.

First, the existing government must be thoroughly lustrated. There is no point in trying to debug or reform it. There is certainly no need for individual purges, McCarthy style, or for *Fragebogen* and *Persilscheine* a la 1945. Except for the security forces and essential technical personnel, all employees should be thanked for their service, asked to submit contact information so that they can be hired as temporary consultants if the new administration finds it necessary, and discharged with no hard feelings, an amnesty for any crimes they may have committed in government service, and a pension sufficient to retire.

Second, a reset is not a revolution. A revolution is a criminal conspiracy in which murderous, deranged adventurers capture a state for their arbitrary, and usually sinister, purposes. A reset is a restoration of secure, effective and responsible government. It's true that both involve regime change, but both sex and rape involve penetration.

Of course, a failed reset can degenerate into a revolution. No doubt many involved in the rise to power of Hitler and Mussolini thought of their project as a reset. They were quite mistaken. It is a cruel irony to free a nation of democracy, only to saddle it with gangsters.

There is a simple way to distinguish the two. Just as the new permanent government must not retain employees of the old government, it must not employ or reward anyone involved in bringing the reset about. A successful reset may involve an interim administration which does have personal continuity with the reset effort, but if so this regime must be discarded as thoroughly as the old regime. This policy eliminates all meretricious motivations.

Third, and most important, a reset must happen in a single step. It is not a gradual effort in which a new party builds support by incrementally moving into positions of responsibility, as the Labour Party did in the 20th century. As we've seen, this Fabian approach only works from right to left. The only way for a reactionary movement to acquire power incrementally is to soil itself by participating in political democracy, a form of government it despises as much as any sensible person. Besides, since there is no such thing as a partial reset, there are no meaningful incremental policies that resetters can support. You can restore the Stuarts or not restore the Stuarts, but you can't restore 36% of the Stuarts.

A reset is the result of a *single successful operation*. Ideally, the old regime simply concedes peacefully and of its own free will that it has lost the confidence of the people, and obeys all legal niceties in

conveying full executive power to the new administration. This is more or less the way the Soviet satellites collapsed, for example. It can get more complicated than this, but not much more complicated. Whatever is done, there should be no security vacuum and certainly no actual fighting. Real reactionaries don't go off half-cocked.

There is a simple way to execute a reset without falling into the dead-end trap of politics, and without the assistance of the military. Conduct your own election. Enroll supporters directly over the Internet, verifying their identity as voters. Once you have a solid and unquestionable majority, form an interim administration and request the transfer of government.

And it will happen. You may not even need an absolute majority. The modern regime is quite immune to politics, but it is tremendously sensitive to public opinion. It cannot afford to be disliked. Like every bully, it is a great coward. Especially if it is given a comfortable way out - thus the amnesty and the pension. If you have your majority and still the regime does not concede, this, and only this, is the time to turn to the official elections.

The truth about the people who work for government is that, in general, they despise it. They are demoralized and disillusioned. They have slightly more excitement and energy than your average Stasi employee circa 1988, but not much. Working for the government in 1938 was incredible, unbelievable fun. Working for the government in 2008 is soul-destroying. If you gave the entire civil service an opportunity to retire tomorrow on full pay, nine out of ten would take it, and lick your hand like golden retrievers for the offer.

But this is getting long. Continue to [part 9](#).

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/06/ol8-reset-is-not-revolution.html>

## Part 9: how to uninstall a cathedral

June 12, 2008

I'm afraid, dear open-minded progressive, that we have wandered into deep and murky waters. You thought you were merely in for a bit of philosophical wrangling. Instead here we are, openly conspiring to [restore the Stuarts](#).

The other day in an old book I found a cute little summary of the problem. The book is [Carlton Hayes'](#) *History of Modern Europe*, first published in 1916 and updated in 1924. Writing about modern Europe without mentioning America is a little like writing about the Lakers without mentioning Kobe Bryant, and in the 1924 addendum Professor Hayes simply gives up the ghost and tells us what's happened lately in the Western world. Of course I simply adore these kinds of contemporary digests. Here is the state of Protestant Christianity, circa 1924:

Among Protestant Christian sects there were several significant movements toward cooperation and even toward formal union. Many barriers between them were broken down, at least in part, by the Young Men's Christian Association, which had been founded in the nineteenth century but which expanded very rapidly during and after the Great War. The Salvation Army, dating from about the year 1880, was another factor in the same process: it placed emphasis on spiritual earnestness, on evangelical work among the poor, and on charitable endeavors, rather than on sectarian controversies. There were also various "federations of churches," and in Canada, after the Great War, several Protestant denominations were actually united. Such interdenominational and unifying movements were made easier by the fact that the original theological differences between the various sects were no longer regarded as very important by a large number of church members.

Some Protestants, reacting against the decline of dogma and the doubting of the miraculous and the supernatural, turned increasingly toward Christian Science or towards spiritualism or [theosophy](#). In some countries, and especially in the United States, the current vogue of Darwinism and other theories of evolution caused a new outburst of opposition from stalwart groups of Protestants to the claims of "science," and a stubborn reaffirmation of their fundamental faith in the literal inspiration of the Bible. These "Fundamentalists," as they were called, were fairly numerous in several Protestant denominations, and they contested with their "Progressive" or "Modernist" brethren the control of Protestant churches, particularly the Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, and Methodist.

Now I ask you, dear open-minded progressive: is there anything familiar about this picture?

The YMCA and the Salvation Army are (sadly) no longer major players. But it seems obvious that Professor Hayes is describing our present "red-state" versus "blue-state" conflict. What's weird, however, is that he seems to be describing it as a *theological dispute*. Not exactly the present perception.

Your present-day "Progressive" or "Modernist" may retain some vestigial belief in God. Or not. But she certainly does not think of her faction as a *Christian supersect*. Meanwhile, her "Fundamentalist" adversaries have largely appropriated the label *Christian*. Neither side sees the red-blue conflict as that old staple of European history, the Christian sectarian war.

There are a couple of other interesting details in Professor Hayes' little narrative. One, he finds it noteworthy that the mainstream Protestant sects are for some odd reason *converging*. And indeed in 1924 it was a historical novelty to see Episcopalians and Presbyterians cooperating amicably on "charitable endeavors," forgetting all those nasty old "theological differences." Dogs and cats, living together!

Two, it is clear at least from Professor Hayes' perspective that the "Progressive" or "Modernist" side of this conflict is the main stream of American Protestantism, and the "Fundamentalist" side is a weird, "stubborn" mutation.

To our modern "Fundamentalists" (the term has become so opprobrious that they will respond better, dear open-minded progressive, if you use the word "traditionalist"), the idea that "liberalism" is actually *mainstream Protestant Christianity* is about as off-the-wall as it gets. And it must strike most "Progressives" as equally weird. But here it is in black and white, from a [legendary Columbia historian](#). Obviously, someone is off the wall. Maybe it's me. Maybe it's you. Are you feeling paranoid yet, dear reader?

When dealing with historical movements it's often useful to ask: is this dead, or alive? If the former, what killed it, when, and how? If you cannot find any answers to these questions, it is a pretty good clue that you're looking at something which isn't dead.

And if it's not dead, it must be alive. And if it's alive, but you no longer identify it as a distinct movement, the only possible answer is that it has become *so pervasive that you do not distinguish between it and reality itself*. In other words, you do not feel you have *any serious alternative* to supporting the movement. And you are probably right.

Note that this is exactly how you, dear open-minded progressive, see the modern children of those stubborn "Fundamentalists." You read the conflict asymmetrically. You don't think of yourself as someone who believes in "Progressivism." You don't believe in anything. You are not a follower at all. You are a critical and independent thinker. Rather, it is your fundamentalist enemies, the tribe across the river, who are Jesus-besotted zombie bots.

The first step toward a historical perspective on the conflict is to acknowledge that *both* of these traditions are exactly that: traditions. You did not invent progressivism any more than Billy Joe invented fundamentalism. Thanks to Professor Hayes, we know this absolutely, because we know that both of these things existed 84 years ago, and you are not 84.

And what is the difference between a mere tradition and an honest-to-god religion? Theology. A many-god or a three-god or a one-god tradition is a religion. A no-god tradition is... well, there isn't really a word for it, is there? This is a good clue that someone has been tampering with the tools you use to think.

Because there must be as many ways to not believe in a god or gods as to believe in them. I am an atheist. You are an atheist. But you are a progressive, and I am not a progressive. If we can have multiple sects of Christianity, why can't we have multiple sects of atheism?

Let's rectify this linguistic sabotage by calling a no-god tradition an *areligion*. A one-god tradition is a *unireligion*. A two-god one is a *direligion*. A three-god one is a *trireligion*. One with more gods than you can shake a stick at is a *polyreligion*. And so on. We see instantly that while progressivism (2008 style) is an *anareligion*, it does not at all follow that it is the *one true areligion*. Oops.

Question: in a political conflict between a *direligion* and a *polyreligion*, which side should you support? What about an *areligion* versus a *trireligion*? Let's assume that, like me, you believe in no gods at all.

One easy answer is to say the fewer gods, the better. So we would automatically support the *direligion* over the *polyreligion*, etc. I think the stupidity of this is obvious.

We could also say that all traditions which promote gods are false, and therefore we should favor the *areligion* over the *trireligion*. Unfortunately, even if we assume that the *areligion* is right on the deity question and not even one of the three gods exists, the two could not engage in a political conflict if they did not disagree on many subjects in the temporal plane. Who is more likely to be right on these mundane matters, which actually do matter? We have no reason at all to think that just because the *areligion* is right about gods, it is right about anything else. And we have no reason at all to think that just because the *trireligion* is wrong about gods, it is wrong about anything else. So this is really just as stupid, and I do hope you haven't been taken in by it. (Lots of smart people believe stupid things.)

The second step is to acknowledge the possibility that, on any issue, *both* competing traditions could be peddling misperceptions. In fact, we've just seen it. Neither side wants you to know that progressivism is the historical mainstream of Protestant Christianity. Only in the pages of smelly old books, and of course here at UR, will you find this little tidbit of history. This is pretty standard for religions, which always have a habit of obscuring their own pasts.

Why do both sides agree on this misperception? The fundamentalist motivation is obvious. As a traditionalist Christian, you believe in God. It is obvious that anyone who doesn't believe in God cannot possibly be a Christian. The idea that there could be any kind of historical continuity between people believe in God, and people who don't believe in God, is absurd. It's like saying that Jesus was "just some dude."

But as someone who doesn't believe in God, you have absolutely no reason to accept this argument. Do

you care, dear open-minded progressive, what wacky stuff those wacky fundies believe in? Do you care whether they worship God in one person, God in three persons, God in forty-seven persons, or God in the person of a turtle? Um, no.

No: from the progressive side, there is a very different problem. The problem is that if Progressivism is indeed a Christian [supersect](#), it is also a *criminal conspiracy*.

Assuming you're an American, dear open-minded progressive, you might have forgotten that it's quite literally *illegal* for the Federal Government to "make an establishment of religion." While its authors and ratifiers never meant the clause to mean what it means today, we do have a living Constitution, the law is what it is now, and over the last half-century our friends in high places have been quite enthusiastic about deploying it against their Fundamentalist foes.

Perhaps some perspective can be obtained by replacing the words "Modernist" and "Fundamentalist" in Professor Hayes' narrative with "Sunni" and "Shia." The First Amendment does not say "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of Shiism." More to the point, it does not say "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, until that religion manages to sneak God under the carpet, at which point go ahead, dudes." Rather, the obvious spirit of the law is that Congress shall be *neutral* with respect to the theological disputes of its citizens, such as that described by Professor Hayes. Um, has it been?

If you doubt this, maybe it's time to put on the Fundamentalens. This is a cute optical accessory that transforms all things Sunni into things Shia, and vice versa. When you're wearing the Fundamentalens, progressive institutions look fundamentalist and fundamentalist institutions look progressive.

In the Fundamentalens, Harvard and Stanford and Yale are fundamentalist seminaries. It may not be official, but there is no doubt about it at all. They emit Jesus-freak codewords, secret Mormon handshakes, and miscellaneous Bible baloney the way a baby emits fermented milk. Meanwhile, Bob Jones and Oral Roberts and Patrick Henry are diverse, progressive, socially and environmentally conscious centers of learning - their entire freshman class lines up to sing "[Imagine](#)" every morning.

Would it creep you out, dear open-minded progressive, to live in this country? It would certainly creep me out, and I'm not even a progressive - though I was raised as one.

An America where every progressive in any position of influence or authority was replaced by an equal and opposite fundamentalist, and vice versa, is one you would have no hesitation in describing as a *fundamentalist theocracy*. Which implies quite inexorably that the America we do live in, the real one, can be fairly described as a *progressive atheocracy* - that is, a system of government based on an official areligion, progressivism.

This areligion is maintained and propagated by the decentralized system of quasiofficial "educational" institutions which we, here at UR, have learned to call the *Cathedral*. Today, we'll look, purely in a

theoretical manner of course, at what might take to get rid of this thing. If you find the exercise unpalatable, dear open-minded progressive, just snap the Fundamentalens back on and imagine you're trying to free your government from the icy, inexorable grip of Jesus. (Or the Pope. The resemblance between anti-fundamentalism and its older brother, anti-Catholicism, may be too obvious to mention - but I should mention it anyway.)

Obviously I don't object to the Cathedral on account of its atheism. If a theist can object to theocracy, an atheist can object to atheocracy. I object to the concept of official thought in general, to the details of progressivism in specific, but most of all to the insidious way in which the Cathedral has managed to mutate its way around the "separation of church and state" in which it so hypocritically indoctrinates its acolytes. The Cathedral is the apotheosis of chutzpah. It is always poisoning its parents, then pleading for clemency as an orphan.

I know, I know. We have been through all this stuff before. On the Internet it never hurts to repeat, however, and let's take a brief look at the Cathedral's operations in the case of one [James Watson](#).

Here is the [transcript of an interview](#) between Dr. Watson and [Henry Louis Gates](#). (If you care to go [here](#) you can read Professor Gates' meandering, incoherent summary, and even watch some video.)

Bear in mind that this material, though only recently released, was produced shortly after the [struggle session](#) to which Dr. Watson was subjected early this year. The young firebrands over at [Gene Expression](#) (many of whom themselves work inside the Cathedral, as of course all serious scientists must) had [predictable responses](#):

*Painful to read.*

*Is Watson one of these people who has balls only when he's dealing with people lower down the ladder, and none when he is dealing with people who can do him harm?*

*Had to stop reading almost immediately. Presumably, his confession ended with his execution by a pack of trained dogs.*

*What a simpering, mewling weakling he is in this interview. Terrified and cowed.*

Okay. Obviously, as a bitter and negative person myself, I sympathize with these reactions. But, I mean, if we compare Dr. Watson to [Andrei Sakharov](#) - surely a fair comparison - did Dr. Sakharov go around shouting "Communism is a LIE! BETTER DEAD THAN RED!?" Somehow I doubt it. In fact, neither Watson nor Sakharov were executed by a pack of trained dogs. These guys aren't completely stupid. They know how far to push it.

And Dr. Watson even manages to get Professor Gates, whose career cannot be understood without reference to the color of his skin, to swallow the following harmless-looking red pill:

JW: It was, we shouldn't expect that people in different parts of the world have equal intelligence, because we all know that. And people say that these should be the same. I think the answer is, we don't know.

Q: We don't know. Not that they are.

JW: No, no. I'm always trying to say is that some people ... of left wing persuasion have said that there wasn't enough time for differences... we don't know. That's all.

Q: We don't know.

"*We don't know.*" And we can tell that the pill has gotten deep down inside Professor Gates, it has been swallowed and digested and worked its way through the bloodstream and is starting to produce that awful wiry feeling in the glial cells, by a question he asks earlier:

Q: But imagine if you were an African or an African American intellectual. And it's ten years from now. And you pick up the New York Times ... (Hits Table) and some geneticist says, A, that intelligence is genetic, and B, the difference is measured on standardized tests. Between black people and white people, is traceable to a genetic basis. What would you, as a black intellectual, do, do you think?

Here is the problem: the message our beloved Cathedral has been implanting in all the young smart kids at Harvard and Yale and Stanford, the cream of the crop, the top 1%, not to mention the readers of the New York Times who are the top 10%, is not "*we don't know.*"

Oh, no. The message is "*we do know.* And they *are* equal. In fact, we are so sure they're equal that if you even start to hint that you might disagree, we will do everything we can to destroy your life, and we will feel good about it. Because your opinions are evil and you are, too."

So it's not even a question of ten years from now. White-coated scientists, exercising their papal infallibility through the ordinary magisterium of Times Square, do not need to declare their final and inexorable proof of A and B, thus proving that the Cathedral has been broadcasting mendacity since 1924 - and enforcing it since 1984. We need await nothing. Any intelligent person can already read the contradiction. Professor Gates has said it out loud.

If you accept Dr. Watson's fallback position, his intellectual [Torres Vedras](#) - as Professor Gates does - the Cathedral is already a goner. Its defeat is not a matter for further research. It is a matter of freshman philosophy. The Cathedral has chosen to fortify, not as a minor outpost but as its central keep, the position of not-A and not-B (actually, since not-A *or* not-B would suffice, the typical insistence on both is a classic sign of a weak position). Its belief in the statistical uniformity of the human brain across all subpopulations presently living is absolute. It has put all its chips on this one.

And the evidence for its position is really not much stronger than the evidence for the Holy Trinity. In fact, the Holy Trinity has a big advantage: there may be no evidence for it, but at least there is none against it. There is [plenty of evidence](#) against human neurological uniformity. The question is simply what standard of proof you apply. By the standards that most of apply to most questions of fact, the answer is already obvious - and has been for at least thirty years. If not a hundred.

Moreover, there is a simple explanation for the reason that so many people believe in HNU. It is a core doctrine of Christianity. Even more precisely, it is a core doctrine of the [neo-primitive Christianity](#) that we call Protestantism. And specifically, I believe it to be a mutated and metastasized version of the Quaker doctrine of the [Inner Light](#). Basically, all humans must be neurologically uniform because we all have the same little piece of God inside us. (All the American Protestant sects, or at least all the Northern ones, became heavily Quakerized during the 19th century. But that's a different discussion.)

Thus what we call [hate speech](#) is merely a 20th-century name for the age-old crime of [blasphemy](#). You might have noticed that it is not, and has never been, illegal to be an asshole. No government in history has ever come close to criminalizing rudeness, nastiness, meanness, or even harassment in general - not even in the workplace.

Denying the Inner Light, however, is another matter entirely. It's all too easy to put in the Fundamentals, transport ourselves to [Margaret Atwood](#) world, and imagine the Commander processing an assembly-line of blasphemers with this handy neo-Quaker catchphrase. "Scorned the [Testimony of Equality](#), violated [right ordering](#), denied the Inner Light. Defendant, I think the case is clear. Five years of orientation."

So it is almost impossible for me to answer Professor Gates's question. Asking what a "black intellectual" should do after A and B are demonstrated is like asking what a professor of Marxist-Leninist studies should do after the fall of the Soviet Union. I don't know, dude. What else are you good at?

Professor Gates' entire department consists of the construction of increasingly elaborate persecution theories to explain facts which follow trivially from A and B. Agree on A and B, and the world has no need at all for Professor Gates, nor for any of his colleagues. He seems like a pretty sharp guy. Surely he can find something. If not, there's always pizza delivery.

The trouble is that - as we've just seen - A and B need not be shown to demonstrate the presence of official mendacity. It is sufficient to demonstrate that A and B are plausible. More strongly, it is sufficient to demonstrate that they are not implausible. Because we are constantly being "educated" to believe that they are implausible. The proposition is implied a thousand times for every time it is stated, but progressivism without HNU makes about as much sense as Islam without Allah.

So if refuting a proposition on which the Cathedral has staked its credibility is sufficient to defeat it, and that refutation is agreed on by all serious thinkers - why the heck is it still here?

Duh. If institutional mendacity is its stock in trade, why on earth should refutation bother it? You don't have to look far for other cases in which entire departments of the Cathedral have been devoted to the propagation of nonsense. What do you expect them to do, say "we're sorry, it's true, we are all a bunch of shills, we'll go work as taxi drivers now?"

If the Cathedral can lie now, it can lie then. It doesn't matter what Dr. Watson and his students produce, now or ten years from now. If it is impossible for the New York Times to produce a story saying that A and B are proven, no such story will appear. Rather, the standard of proof will simply be raised and raised again, as of course it has been already.

In other words: if the Cathedral was a trustworthy mechanism for producing and distributing information, we would expect it to correct any newly discovered error, and propagate the correction. But if it was a trustworthy mechanism, it would not *already be* in an obvious error state, have maintained that error state for decades, and show no signs at all of nudging Professor Gates out of the building and into his new career as a marketing executive. Therefore, to expect it to correct its own errors is naive - at best.

And therefore, you and I have two choices. We can accept that we live in a state of systematic mendacity, as people always have, note that it may well be getting worse rather than better, and figure out how to live with it. This would be the prudent choice. It demonstrates genuine wisdom, the wisdom of resignation and healthy personal motivation.

On the other hand, if you have enough time to read these essays, you have enough time to think about solutions. After all, you already live under a government which demands that you invest a substantial percentage of your neural tissue in the meaningless gabble of politics. This lobe should probably be devoted to dance, literature, or shopping. But we are, after all, human. In addition to our healthier and more positive cogitations, we sometimes express resentment. And what more pleasant riposte than to reprogram one's political control module, and turn it against its former botmasters?

So we can separate the problem into two categories. One is a *policy* question: how can the American political system be modified to free itself from the Cathedral? Two is a *military* question (considering war and politics as a [continuum](#)): since the Cathedral does not wish to relinquish power, how can it best be induced to do so? The two are inseparable, of course, but it is convenient to consider them separately. Today we'll look at the first.

There are two basic ways of executing this divorce. We'll call one a *soft reset* and the other a *hard reset*. Basically, a hard reset works and a soft reset doesn't. However, a soft reset is more attractive in many ways, and we need to work through it just to see why it can't work.

In a soft reset, we leave the current structure of government the same, except that we apply the 20th-century First Amendment to all forms of instruction, theistic or "secular." In other words, our policy is

*separation of education and state*. In a free country, the government should not be programming its citizens. It should not care at all what people think. It only needs to care what they do. The issue has nothing to do with theism. It is a basic matter of personal freedom.

You cannot have official education without official truth, ie, *pravda*. Most - in fact, I'd say almost all - of our *pravda* is indeed true. Call it 99.9%. The remaining 0.1% is creepy enough. The Third Reich used the wonderful word *Aufklärung*, meaning enlightenment or literally "clearing-up." Every time I see a piece of public education designed to improve the world by improving my character, I think of *Aufklärung*. But of course, a good Nazi education imparted many true truths as well.

There are four major forms of education in a modern Western society: churches, schools, universities, and the press. Our open-minded progressives have done a fantastic job of separating church and state. I really don't think their work can be improved on. A soft reset is simply a matter of applying the precedent to the other three.

First, let's deal with (primary) schools. This is easy, because they are actually formal arms of the government. To separate school and state, liquidate the public school system, selling all its assets to the highest bidder. For every student in or eligible for public school, for every year of eligibility, compute what the school system was getting and send the check to the parents.

This is budget-neutral for state and family alike, and unlike "vouchers" it does not require Uncle Sam or any of his little brothers to decide what "education" is. If the worst parents in the world spend the money on XBoxes and PCP, it would still be a vast improvement on inner-city schools. The perfect is the enemy of the good.

This leaves us with the Cathedral proper: the press and the universities.

The great thing about our understanding of the "wall of separation" is that it works both ways. The distinction between a state-controlled church and a church-controlled state is nil. In the modern interpretation of the First Amendment, both are equally obnoxious. (Although I suspect most progressives would find the latter especially repugnant.)

The same Amendment prescribes the freedom of the press. But the freedom of the press and the separation of church and state are applied in very different ways. The suggestion of a state-controlled press evokes terrible fear and anger in the progressive mind. The suggestion of a press-controlled state evokes... nothing. Even the concept is unfamiliar. Unless they happen to be [Tony Blair](#), I don't think most progressives have even considered the idea that the press could control the state. No points for guessing why this might be.

And the same principle applies to our "independent" universities. Except briefly during the McCarthy period (about which more in a moment), no one in government has ever considered trying to tell the professors what to think, just as no one in government has ever considered telling the preachers what to

preach. But while professors and preachers are both free to offer policy suggestions, it would be a scandal if the latter's advice was regularly accepted.

Let's take a hat tip from the blogosphere's invaluable inside source in the Cathedral, Dr. "Evil" [Timothy Burke](#), who links [with applause](#) to [how this works](#):

In the early 21st century, there is no limit or constraint on the desire of public constituencies to profit from the perspective of a university-based historian.

Even better, the usual lament of the humanities -- "There is plenty of money to support work in science and engineering, but very little to support work in the humanities" -- proves to be accurate only if you define "work in the humanities" in the narrowest and most conventional way. If, by that phrase, you mean only individualistic research, directed at arcane topics detached from real-world needs and written in inaccessible and insular jargon, there is indeed very limited money.

But for a humanities professor willing to take up applied work, sources of money are unexpectedly abundant.

"Applied work." I love the phrase. It belongs right up there with "manipulating procedural outcomes." And what does Professor Limerick mean by "applied work?"

Another nearly completed project, *The Nature of Justice: Racial Equity and Environmental Well-Being*, spotlights the involvement of ethnic minorities with environmental issues. The center works regularly with federal agencies ranging from the Environmental Protection Agency to the National Park Service.

"The involvement of ethnic minorities with environmental issues!" You can't make this stuff up. I suppose she doesn't mean that they leave [used diapers on the beach](#), or engage in the [ethnic cleansing of pelicans](#). (I don't think I've linked to Ms. Latte before. She appears to be a racist Jewish woman in her fifties. Her signature post is definitely [this one](#).)

Why is it that Professor Limerick is not just regularly called upon to share her *Aufklärung* [with the EPA](#) (don't miss the picture), but apparently quite well compensated for it, whereas Ms. Latte has no such opportunity to contribute her insights on the Mexican-pelican interaction?

Well, a lot of reasons, really. But the main one is that EPA (to sound like an insider, drop the article) recognizes Professor Limerick as an *official authority*. Uncle Sam may not tell the University of Colorado what to do, but the converse is not the case. And if you are a bureaucrat fighting for some outcome or other, and you can bring Professor Limerick in on your side, you are more likely to win. Apparently she is compensated for the service. This is not surprising.

If we lived in a theocracy as opposed to an atheocracy, she might be Bishop Limerick, and her thoughts

would carry just the same weight. They might be different thoughts, of course. They probably would be. (Frankly, I would much rather be governed by the Pope than by these people. At least it would be a change. And I do believe in "change.")

To separate university and state the way church and state are separated, we'd need to make some fairly drastic changes. Of course, all the rivers of state cash that flow to the universities need to be plugged. No grants to professors, no subsidies for students, no nothing. But this is the easy part.

The hard part is that to divorce itself completely, the state needs to stop recognizing the *authority* of the universities. For example, it is staffed largely with university graduates - many of whom are students of Professor Burke, Professor Limerick, and the like. Perhaps there is no way to avoid this, but there is a way to make it not matter: add university credentials to the list of official no-nos in HR decisions. Treat it like race, age, and marital status. Don't even let applicants put it on their resumes. Instead, use the good old system: [competitive examination](#).

Professor Limerick's little pep-talks aside, in some rare cases a government does need to conduct actual research. In that case, it needs to hire actual researchers. Want to hire a chemist? Give her a chemistry test. Nor need this be limited to new employees. Why not reexamine the present ones, to see if they know anything and have any brains?

Okay, that takes care of the universities. Moving on to the press.

There is a simple way for the state to separate itself from the press: adopt the same public communication policies used in private companies. Perhaps the leader in this area is that progressive favorite, Apple. This [Google search](#) tells the story. Apple is unusual in that it actually has many deranged fans who want to extract nonpublic information, but of course the same can be said of governments.

All private companies in the known universe, however, have the same policy: any unauthorized communication with anyone outside the company, "journalist" or otherwise, is a firing offense. Often it will also expose you to litigation. Somehow, even Apple manages to be quite successful in enforcing this policy. In general, it simply doesn't happen. If you are familiar with the area of technology journalism, you know that far from making for dull news, the rarity of leaks makes for extremely spicy and scurrilous trade rags - such as [this one](#). The day US foreign policy is reported a la Register is the day the Cathedral is no more.

When it comes to significant operational details that might affect a company's stock price, leaking information - whether authorized or not - is actually a *crime*. As well it should be. Managements used to be free to leak to the investment community, but this loophole was closed in one of the few positive changes in corporate law in recent years, [Reg FD](#).

The reasoning behind Reg FD is excellent. The problem with selective disclosure of financial information is that it creates a power loop between management and selected investors, allowing big fish to benefit

from inside information that is more or less a payoff. It still happens, I'm sure - the edges of "material information" are fuzzy - but much less. Ideally, Reg FD would be extended to prohibit *any* informal communication with Wall Street. If a company has something to say, its Web site is the place to do it.

In government, selective disclosure creates a power network between the press and its sources. This network does not produce money, but just power. The power is shared between the sources and the journalists. The whole system is about as transparent as mud.

The case that created the modern American system of government by leak was the Pentagon Papers case, in which McNamara's policy shop at DoD (ironically, the ancestor of [Douglas Feith](#)'s much-maligned operation) wrote a study of Vietnam which revealed that the Viet Cong was not a North Vietnamese puppet, had the support of the Vietnamese people, and could never be defeated militarily, especially not by the corrupt and incompetent ARVN. The Joint Chiefs yawned. [Daniel Ellsberg](#) quite illegally leaked his own department's work to the Times, which used it quite effectively to amaze the public - which had no idea that Washington was a place in which the Defense Department might well employ whole nests of pro-VC intellectuals, and regarded the study as a [declaration against interest](#). In the public's mind, the Pentagon was one thing. The fact that it was pursuing a war that its own experts had decided was unwinnable was permanently fatal to its credibility.

The Supreme Court [ruled](#) that the Pentagon could not restrain publication of the study. They did not rule that the Times could not be prosecuted after the fact. But of course it never was. The coup had been accomplished. A new phase of the Fourth Republic was born. Later, the ARVN [defeated](#) the Viet Cong, whose "support" was based on [brutal terror](#), and which was indeed no more than an [arm of the NVA](#). No one cared. Doubtless Ellsberg's conscience was quite genuine, but facts matter. There's a fine line between speaking truth to power and speaking power to truth.

These hidden power networks (I am particularly enchanted by the word "whistleblower," which often simply means "informer") are one of the main tools that civil servants use to govern Washington from below. As a journalist, you maintain a complicated and delicate relationship with your sources, who are your bread and butter. Most of the power is probably on the side of the sources, but it goes in the other direction as well. In any case, no "investigative" journalist has to "investigate" anything - anyone in the government is perfectly happy to feed him not just information, but often what are essentially prewritten stories, under the table.

Eliminating selective disclosure terminates this whole nefarious network. When the US Government has something to say, it says it. And it says it to all Americans at the same time. There is no privileged network of court historians (a journalist is a historian of now) who get secret, special access. This is not a complicated proposition. (The system of officially favored journalists, like so many corruptions of American government, dates largely to FDR. Frankly, these swine have afflicted us too long.)

So that is the soft reset: the separation of education and state. It doesn't sound too hard, does it?

Actually, I think it's impossible. Now that we've explained it, we can look at what's wrong with it.

Consider another attempt to deal with the Cathedral - [McCarthyism](#). One could call it a *crude reset*. The idea was that, while all of these institutions were good and healthy and true, they had been infiltrated by Communists and their dupes. Purging these individuals and organizations - listed in publications such as [Red Channels](#) - would renew America's precious bodily fluids.

Can purging work? One answer is provided by La Wik's page on McCarthyism, which could be rewritten as follows:

During this time many thousands of Americans were accused of being racists or racist sympathizers and became the subject of aggressive investigations and questioning before government or private-industry panels, committees and agencies. Suspicions were often given credence despite inconclusive or questionable evidence, and the level of threat posed by a person's real or supposed racist associations or beliefs was often greatly exaggerated. Many people suffered loss of employment, destruction of their careers, and even imprisonment.

So, in place of *Red Channels*, we have the [SPLC](#), and so on. The "Racist Scare" cannot be called a failure. It is socially unacceptable to express racist ideas in any context I can think of. There are certainly no racist movies, TV shows, etc. The McCarthyists no doubt would have been quite pleased if they could have made socialism as politically incorrect as racism is today. They never had a millionth of the power they would have needed to do so.

The obvious inspiration for McCarthyism was the way in which the New Deal had succeeded in marginalizing and destroying its critics. If you're the Cathedral, this works. If you're an alcoholic senator scripted by a [gay child prodigy](#), it doesn't.

McCarthyism failed for many reasons, but the most succinct is what Machiavelli said: if you strike at a king, you need to kill him. The Cathedral is an institution rather than a person, and certainly no one needs killing. But if you just scratch it, you're just pissing it off. If McCarthy had said: look, we fought the war in the Pacific to save China from the Japanese, and then the State Department handed it to the Russians, this is a failed organization, let's just dissolve it and build a new foreign-policy bureaucracy - he might have succeeded. He was a very popular man for a while. He might well have been able to build enough public support to liquidate State. Or not. But if he'd succeeded, he would at least have one accomplishment to his name.

The soft reset I've described is, with all due respect to Roy Cohn, a much more sophisticated and comprehensive way to attack the Cathedral. It might work. But it probably won't.

First, the power structures that bind the Cathedral to the rest of the Apparatus are not formal. They are mere social networks. If Professor Burke is right that he has real influence in the region he and his

colleagues have devastated - southern Africa - it is probably because he has trained quite a few students who work at State or in NGOs in the area. (If he is wrong, all it means is that it's someone else who has the influence.) Short of firing all these people, there is nothing you can do about this structure. You can't prevent people from emailing each other.

Second, even if we could break down these social networks, we haven't touched the real problem. The real problem is that, as a political form, *democracy* is more or less a synonym for *theocracy*. (Or, in this case, atheocracy.) Under the theory of popular sovereignty, those who control public opinion control the government.

There is no nation of autodidact philosophers. Call them priests, preachers, professors, bishops, teachers, commissars or journalists - the botmasters will rule. The only way to escape the domination of canting, moralizing apparatchiks is to abandon the principle of *vox populi, vox dei*, and return to a system in which government is immune to the mental fluctuations of the masses. A secure, responsible and effective government may listen to its residents, but it has no reason to either obey or indoctrinate them. In turn, their minds are not jammed by the gaseous emanations of those who would seize power by mastering the mob.

So if you manage the Herculean task of separating Cathedral and state, but leave both intact, you have no reason to think that the same networks will not just form over again. In fact, you have every reason to believe that they will.

Third, and worst, the level of political power you would need to execute a soft reset is precisely the same level of power you would need to execute a hard reset. That is: full power, absolute sovereignty, total dictatorship, whatever you want to call it. Except inasmuch as it might be easier to construct a coalition to mandate a soft reset, softness has no advantage. The people who presently enjoy power will resist both with the same energy - all the energy they have. If you have the power to overcome them, why settle for half measures?

In a hard reset, we converge legality and reality not by adjusting reality to conform to the First Amendment, but by adjusting the law to recognize the reality of government power.

First, a hard reset only makes sense with the definition we gave last week: unconditional replacement of all government employees. This will break up your social networks. A hard reset should also be part of a transition to some post-democratic form of government, or the same problems will reoccur. But this is a long-term issue.

Most important, however, in a hard reset we actually *expand* the definition of government. As we've seen, the nominally-independent educational organs, the press and the universities, are the heart of power in America today. They make decisions and manufacture the consent to ratify them. Fine. They want to be part of the government? Make them part of the government.

In a hard reset, all organizations dedicated to forming public opinion, making or implementing public policy, or working in the public interest, are *nationalized*. This includes not only the press and the universities, but also the foundations, NGOs, and other nonprofits. It is a bit rich, after all, for any of these outfits to appeal to the sanctity of property rights. They believe in the sanctity of property rights about as much as they believe in the goddess Kali.

Once they are nationalized, treat them as the public schools were treated in the soft reset. Retire their employees and liquidate their assets. Universities in particular have lovely campuses, many of which are centrally located and should be quite attractive to developers.

The trademarks, however, should be retained and sunk. The former employees of the New York Times can organize and start a newspaper. The former employees of Harvard can organize and start a college. But the former can't call it the New York Times nor the latter Harvard, any more than you or I could create a publication or a college with those names.

The goal of nationalization in a hard reset is not to create official information organs under central control. It is not even to prevent political opponents of a new regime from networking. It is simply to destroy the existing power structure, and in particular to liquidate the [reputation capital](#) that these institutions hold at present.

Harvard and the Times are authorities. Silly as it sounds, their prestige is simply associated with their names. If some former employees of the Times put up a website and call it, say, the *New York Journal*, no one knows anything about this *Journal*. Is it telling the truth? Or is it a fountain of lies? It has to be evaluated on its actual track record.

If the old regime still exists, it could be restored at any moment. However you manage to construct the level of power you would need in order to reset Washington, or any other modern government, broad public opinion will be a significant component of your power base. In a reset, you want to construct this coalition once. You don't want to have to maintain it. Wresting public opinion away from the Cathedral is hard enough. It should not be an ongoing process, especially since the whole point is to ditch this black art of managing the mass mind.

In the Cathedral system, real power is held by the educational organs, the press and the universities, which are nominally outside the government proper. The minimum intervention required to disrupt this system is to withdraw official recognition from the press and the universities. However, any regime that has the power to do this also has the power to liquidate them, along with all other extra-governmental institutions. It is much safer to go this extra mile, rather than leaving the former Cathedral and its various satellites intact and angry.

Most of the historical precedents for this type of operation are pre-20th century. However, before the 20th century, systematic liquidation of information organs was quite common. Henry VIII's [dissolution](#)

[of the monasteries](#) is an excellent example. Slightly farther afield, we have the [suppression of the Jesuits](#). And in the 20th century, though less comparable, we have [denazification](#).

Of course, these steps are all unbelievably extreme by modern American standards. All this means is that they will not happen unless those standards change. And this will not happen until Americans, "Progressive" and "Fundamentalist" alike, are convinced that their government is indisputably malignant and incapable of self-correction, and the only way to improve it is to replace it completely.

And how could this be accomplished? Obviously, it can't be. Continue to [part X](#).

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/06/019-how-to-uninstall-cathedral.html>

## Part 10: a simple sovereign bankruptcy procedure

June 19, 2008

Dear open-minded progressive, as we reach #10 it is time for some administrivia.

First, we are switching to Roman numerals. At least past 10, they are just classier. Also, if anyone wants to provide design suggestions, or what would be even more super-duper graphics, logos, templates, free hosting, free money, free beer, or even just free parenting advice, they may of course contact me at the usual address, linked to over on the right.

I would note, however, that my email responsiveness of late has been unusually poor. In fact, it has been amazingly poor. For some reason I had entertained the idea that being chained to my daughter would enable me to actually *catch up* with the large number of extremely interesting and well-written epistles sitting unanswered, many a few months old, in my inbox. You see why UR is not a good source of financial advice.

However, Sibyl is three months old today. (And her 8ra1n is growing like a prize melon - she pops out of the 0-6 month hats, she is firmly in the 6-9.) She may not scream less, but it seems like she screams less. So I will attempt to work into the pile, probably in reverse order.

Second, there is a second awful truth, which is that for Sibyl's whole life, I haven't even been reading UR's comments section. This is a deed so shameful it is probably unknown in the Western world. In case you accept excuses, however, my excuse is that it is a sort of crude literary device. If it was written in response to its weekly feedback - which, in the past, has often proved much more interesting than the post - UR would be very different. Chatterier, more bloggy, and I suspect less interesting. Or so I claim. We'll never know, though, will we?

I will even be brazen enough to suspect that if I was reading them, the comments would not be quite as good. I do get the impression they haven't degenerated into mindless Web nonsense, puerile flamage, Jew-baiting and ads for spineless anal balloons. But if there is any such content I of course disclaim it. After I am done with this series I will edit out any and all stupid comments. If they are all stupid, there will be none left. Ha. As Terence Stamp put it: "Kneel before Zod! Kneel!"

I will, however, attempt a collective response to the non-stupid comments, unless they are so devastating as to leave me speechless. Please continue leaving them. You may not be enlightening me, at least not immediately, but you are enlightening others.

And speaking of [General Zod](#): if you are finally resolved to consider yourself a pathetic dupe of the Mold, you are of course free to either describe or not describe yourself as a formalist, a reservationist, a restorationist, or even a Mencist. This last coinage sounds faintly ominous and evil, which of course is not true - Mencism is all happiness, smiles, and light. In turn, however, be prepared for the fact that

anyone can accuse you, with perfect accuracy, of neo-Birchery, postfalangism, pseudo-Hobbesianism or even rampant moldbuggery. To paraphrase Barack Obama: if you don't have a knife, don't start a knifefight.

If I had to choose one word and stick with it, I'd pick "restorationist." If I have to concede one pejorative which fair writers can fairly apply, I'll go with "reactionary." I'll even answer to any compound of the latter - "neoreactionary," "postreactionary," "ultrareactionary," etc.

So when I call someone a "progressive," what I mean is that his or her creed is more or less the direct opposite of mine. Of course, we both believe that the sky is blue, apple pie is delicious, and Hitler was evil. And since we are both polite, mature, and open-minded people, we can converse despite our disagreements. But just as there is no such thing as a progressive reactionary, there is no such thing as a progressive restorationist. Or vice versa.

I am comfortable using the word "progressive" because, and only because, I know of no significant population of English speakers for whom it conveys negative connotations. Similarly, when speaking not of the ideas but of the set of people who hold these ideas (or, as they like to put it, "ideals"), the name [Brahmin](#) is time-honored and nonpejorative.

This is not a reference to the [Tam-Brams](#). In fact, there is a fine practical definition of Brahmin in this video, which is long (15 minutes) but I feel worth watching:

["Barack Speaks To HQ Staff & Volunteers"](#)

This is, of course, internal video from the Obama campaign. I don't think it was leaked. I think it was intentionally published, and so it has to be taken with a grain of salt. However, the people in in it are all their real selves. For once, they are not acting. I recognize the meeting. It reminds me a lot of the first post-IPO meeting at the tech-bubble company I worked for.

There is one main difference: a few more blacks (and nowhere near so many Tamils). A few more. And the camera eye, hilariously, stalks and pounces on all the diversity it can find. But it cannot conceal the horrible truth: almost everyone inside the Good One's campaign is white. Maybe one in fifteen is black. Maybe one in twenty. Definitely not one in ten. And I suspect many of these hold positions for which melanin is a job requirement, ie, working with the "community."

And weirdly, given this explanation, there are no, no, no Mexicans. Okay, maybe one or two. The video is grainy. It's hard to tell a Jeremiah Wright from a Cuauhtemoc Cardenas. But I live in San Francisco, I am quite accustomed to encountering a progressive population with a strong Aztlanic contingent (SF State is, after all, the home of the notorious [Third World Strike](#)), and I ain't seeing it. (And isn't that [maneuver with Patti Solis Doyle](#) charming? Doesn't that just show you the maturity level of the whole organization?)

Bell curves being what they are, you need one thing to achieve the Obama team's rarefied whiteness: an ultra-competitive, race-neutral employee filtering process. These people could be the audience at your average Google tech talk. Everyone in the room, whatever their skin color, is not just a Brahmin but a high Brahmin, a status held by anyone obviously smart enough to get a Ph.D, MD, etc, from a top school.

There is no mainstream American university whose general student body is anywhere near this segregated. Or anywhere near this [31337](#), I suspect. I wonder why that is. Isn't it curious, then, that so much of Obama's support should come from our wonderful universities, to which "diversity" is so important?

Surely, dear open-minded progressive, one can disagree honestly on whether employment decisions should be made on the basis of skin color. It is after all a [Humean ought](#). Given how unusual the idea of racial preferences for colored people would have sounded to the Americans of, say, 1908, don't you find it a little unusual that there should be so little, um, variation, in all of these supposedly-independent decisions in Humean ought space, as produced by our glorious variety of supposedly-independent universities?

But I should be fair to pre-President Obama - whom I really like calling the Good One. I feel that if this locution could be persuaded to spread, it might be of some benefit to humanity. Needless to say, I don't mean it satirically.

Because after watching the clip above, my impression is that the Good One is exactly that: good. That is, he is good at his job, which is all you can ask of anyone. More precisely, he talks like a competent manager. If I was working in at a startup and I had a boss who gave pep talks this good, I'd feel quite comfortable with the administration. Management is more than just talk, but can you call the Obama campaign anything but a successful operation? The graphic design alone is brilliant.

There is only one problem: this outfit is very good at winning presidential elections. We have no reason to think it is any good at anything else. The candidate is a great presidential candidate. He will probably be a good president, too. Of course, that is to say he will be good at reading his lines and pretending to be an 18th-century statesman, which is the job of a US President in 2008. Perhaps we should just write in Paul Giamatti, who I'm sure could act the Good One off the stage.

Moreover, the Nazis had an effective campaign team, too. Plus some pretty good graphic design to go with it. Most people don't know it, but the SS dress uniform was designed by [Hugo Boss](#). If design is your criterion, the Third Reich was the best government of the century. In fact, even if *architecture* is your criterion, I will take Nazi architecture over progressive architecture, any day of the week and twice on Sundays.

And since the quality of architecture is indeed a good rule of thumb on which to judge the general quality of government, this is worrisome indeed. But all it means is that the case is an exception to the rule. Like

anyone with any sense, I'd rather be governed by progressives than by Nazis.

(Nazis matter, because a Nazi-like outcome is the most catastrophic failure mode of any restoration effort. Restorationism is to fascism as a bridge is to a pile of rubble in the riverbed. Bridge collapses can be dangerous and unpleasant, but that doesn't make bridges a bad idea.)

But comparing one's enemies to Nazis is old hat. Progressivism has a much better match on the other pole of the totalitarian continuum. The meter lights up like a Christmas tree and the little arm goes all the way to the right. Or left, as it were.

Recently in a used bookstore I found five issues of *Soviet Life* from the mid-late '80s. I had not previously been aware of this publication. I find it quite revealing. Unfortunately for me but fortunately for you, someone has already scanned [three whole issues](#) of *Soviet Life*. So I will not bore you with my endless, Gollum-like chortling over this bibliomaniac coup.

But I thought it'd be fun to share one sweet little piece, from January 1986. Of course, this is a news story, not an ad. (No advertisements sully the pages of *Soviet Life*.)

Georgian plastic surgeon Dr. Vakhtang Khutsidze helps people look younger. Just look at [Edith Markson](#). Would you believe she is 72? Of course not. She is an attractive woman who looks many years younger than her actual age. That's what happens after treatment with [Dr. Khutsidze](#), many of his satisfied patients maintain.

[Edith Markson](#), who has spent several years in the Soviet Union, heard about Dr. Khutsidze's skillful hands when she was in Tbilisi visiting a few of her theater friends. It was then she decided to have cosmetic surgery. Particularly since, as she told local reporters, a face lift would cost several thousand dollars back home in the States. In the USSR the operation costs from 30 to 100 rubles.

"I'm an ordinary American," [Edith Markson](#) said, "and I'm not responsible for official policymaking. Making friends with people from many countries is the best human politics. And now I've added Vakhtang Khutsidze, the Georgian doctor, to my list of friends."

Twenty-five years ago Dr. Khutsidze was one of the first plastic surgeons in the Soviet Union to use the so-called sparing method in nose operations. Ever since then he has performed approximately thousands of these operations. His work, which requires expert surgical skill, has a lot in common with sculpture, the surgeon maintains.

(Please don't skip the Edith Markson links - they really round out the episode. The *Soviet Life* article comes with its own photograph, but I feared younger readers might find it disturbing. Although, frankly, the results are pretty good for "30 to 100 rubles.")

Then, for maximum disorienting effect, skip directly to [this Times story](#) - which appeared on Tuesday. Do

you notice any resemblance? Any at all? Obama, Prince Royal of the Blood, beloved by all God's children but especially the colored ones, from Bolivia to Clichy-les-Bois? What is he, the second coming of Comrade Brezhnev? Is the Times going to continue this kind of coverage after he's elected? That would really be turning the obvious up to 11.

I especially love how the [Times' last piece](#) describes Edith Markson as if she were an ordinary retiree, perhaps a cashier at Macy's or as a dental hygienist, who just happens to have moved to Manhattan in her late '70s "despite the fear of crime, grime, and hassles in the city that never sleeps." Words fail me, dear open-minded progressive, they really do. As my wife, who happens to be a playwright in the city where Edith Markson's [little theater company](#), now essentially a permanent branch of the US Government, remains the 31337, puts it: "does a theater promoter ever really retire?"

And the fact that the two "homeless men" "scooped her up" not just lovingly, not just respectfully, not just adoringly, but no less than "majestically," really takes the cake. Presumably they carry around spare Burger King crowns, to supply stumbling princesses of the arts with the requisite majesty.

I assert, dear open-minded progressive, that attempting to understand the world of today by reading the New York Times (and its fellow authorized channels) is a lot like trying to understand the Soviet Union by reading *Soviet Life*. Any such publication will be informative to a trained student of the period. But a proper appreciation of its real meaning requires significant independent understanding and a willingness to - dare I say it - deconstruct.

For example, the wonderful story of Edith Markson shows us that even still in 1986, the social networks in which a New York Times reporter might travel actually connected *into* the Soviet Union. At least, to her great new friend, Vakhtang Khutsidze - and to the hip young apparatchik who wrote them both up for *Soviet Life*.

Historically this Greenwich Village connection had always run straight from the Cathedral's high Brahmins to the Soviet [nomenklatura](#) - a word that explains Ms. Markson and Dr. Khutsidze with equal precision. By the '80s this, like everything else about the Warsaw Pact, was fraying - but what is Red October without [John Reed](#)? Flash forward to [Judge Guevara](#), and it is all so perfectly clear. It looks like the same thing because it *is* the same thing.

Moreover, if you read the political essays in *Soviet Life* - about a third of the magazine seems to be political content - you realize that the Edith Marksons of the world followed, and did their level best to persuade everyone else to follow, the exact same party line on every political topic that appears in any of my *Soviet Life* issues, from the nuclear freeze to the Middle East to the abominable persecution of the black man.

Of course this last horror, our vast Caucasian conspiracy, has persisted to this day. It almost cost the Good One the nomination. Etc. Etc. Do I really need to mock this any further? But if you are still not

convinced, there are always the [O-Ba-Ma videos...](#)

Dear open-minded progressive: frankly, progressivism is just creepy. Do you really want to associate yourself with it? And if the answer is yes, do you think you'll still want to be associated with it after the Good One's vigorous, musky buttocks have spent a year or two in George W. Bush's Aeron?

If the answer is still yes, I'm afraid you are just not spiritually prepared for the grueling mental ordeal that follows. Deep down inside, you are still a hippie. At the very least, do not continue reading this essay without at least one massive bong hit. Frankly, you'll need it.

Because finally, there are the lines for which the Good One will always, I feel, be known:

I face this challenge with profound humility, and knowledge of my own limitations. But I also face it with limitless faith in the capacity of the American people. Because if we are willing to work for it, and fight for it, and believe in it, then I am absolutely certain that generations from now, we will be able to look back and tell our children that this was the moment when we began to provide care for the sick and good jobs to the jobless; this was the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal; this was the moment when we ended a war and secured our nation and restored our image as the last, best hope on Earth.

Some people are inspired by this kind of emanation. If you are one, how can I fault you? You are probably a pretty nice guy, or gal. There is probably something else in your life besides the Good One - or, of course, his Good Causes. As your attorney, I recommend a real effort to figure out what that thing might be. And maybe focus on it a little more.

For the rest of us, let me note merely that at present, the oceans' cold and inexorable rise, the salty revenge of Gaia's tears, the wave looming over Manhattan, is [three millimeters per year](#). This puts us well within the new DSM-IV guidelines for fulminating hydrophobia. And I see no reason to tolerate such systematic servility to such a blatant case of contagious hypochondria.

This suggests an trivial test, a sort of *pons asinorum*, for any potential restoration. I suggest that as its initial act, any responsible and effective transitional government will set its tone and establish its good faith by assisting the Good One, along with his wife, his people, his wife's people, and frankly anyone who for whatever reason chooses to accompany him, to transfer their lives, pleasantly and with a minimum of personal disruption, to the Good One's scenic paternal homeland: the great African nation of Kenya.

It's entirely possible that Kenya will demand compensation for accepting this crowd. While hard to count in advance, it could easily number in the millions. If so, there is a simple solution: ask the Kenyans how much they want, and pay it. Think of it as a small but symbolic reparation for the vast tragedy of postcolonial Africa.

Of course, there would be no hard feelings on either side of this expatriation. In fact, the Kenyans might well make the Good One president-for-life. His people, the Luo, are riding high these days. And I actually think the Good One might prove a wonderful ruler of Kenya, which if [troubled](#) remains one of the [most beautiful countries on earth](#).

For open-minded progressives who doubt that deporting political opponents has anything to do with responsible, effective government - the value of selective relocation as a security measure can hardly be doubted, of course - I have a question for you.

I'm going to play a magic trick. I'm going to pick a historical period in the recent past, in the memory of many of those now living. And I'm going to pick two sources of information. To you, source A will be a source of automatic, near-absolute reliability. To you, source B will be a blatant outlet of mendacious propaganda, produced by some of the nastiest people in history.

But on the major issue on which the two disagreed, hindsight has provided an answer. At least in my opinion, it is impossible to argue the proposition that source A was right and source B was wrong. And it is trivial to argue the converse. To even debate the issue is a sign of complete detachment from reality. Quite simply, B was right and A was wrong. Even Professor Burke [admits it](#).

Our period is 1965 through 1980. Our source A is the [international press corps](#). Our source B is the [Rhodesian Ministry of Information](#). Our issue is the perspective of postcolonial African governments in general, the liberation movements in specific, and Robert Mugabe to be exact.

Dear open-minded progressive, if you can produce any explanation of this trust failure which is coherent, scholarly, realistic, and consistent with progressive ideals, I will admit defeat. Please do remember that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. I don't like to hear hypotheses that involve UFOs, international Jewish conspiracies, Freemasons, or the like.

In fact, let's whale on UR's favorite crash-test dummy, Professor Burke, for a little while here. As I've said, this man (an [assistant professor at Swarthmore](#)) is my current case study for the fundamentally and irreparably evil character of the Cathedral. He comes across as a perfectly nice guy, of course, and I suspect that's exactly what he is. So was Albert Speer, who once wrote that you can't expect to recognize the Devil when he puts his hand on your shoulder.

You probably think it's excessive to compare Burke to Speer. Oh, no. [Think again](#):

The really major thing, I think, is that the Soweto uprising of 1976 and subsequent campaigns to make South Africa's townships "ungovernable" put the apartheid regime under what proved to be unbearable pressure, largely on the pure grounds of resource limitations. The apartheid state simply couldn't cope in the end with the demands that ungovernability put upon it, even when it put up a pretty good show of having everything under a tight authoritarian lid. Few of us saw this clearly in

1986-87 precisely because the state was putting on such a good performance, but underneath, the leadership was increasingly seeing collapse as inevitable.

Let's review what led to ungovernability. The vast majority of the population without any vote or democratic outlet. An authoritarian state that legally defined almost all dissent as terrorism and gave itself entitlement to retaliate against dissent with imprisonment, torture, and murder. A state which routinely censored all media. A state which ignored property rights of most of its citizens. In short, a state which was in every respect the antithesis of liberalism, in which there was literally no avenue for democratic or liberal protest for the vast majority of its citizens.

Let's review what ungovernability consisted of. Refusal to cooperate with any institution controlled directly or indirectly by the national government. So leaving school, refusing to pay any rents or fees assessed by governmental bodies, refusal to comply with orders from authorities no matter how routine those orders might be, and an embrace of violent resistance to the state and any perceived agents of the state. Making large areas of the country "no-go" areas for civil authorities unless they were accompanied by strong military forces. Murder or threat of murder of suspected collaborators.

As I said, I think it worked. I think it was justified not just because it worked but because there were no other alternatives. The apartheid state and the National Party spent twenty years steadily crushing all other avenues for political change and rewriting the laws and constitution of South Africa so as to define itself as the permanent and unchanging ruler of South Africa.

That's right. Our sweet, jocular D&D-playing history professor has just endorsed the practice of putting car tires full of gasoline around his fellow humans' necks, then [lighting them afire](#). I wonder how many d6 of damage that attack does?

(Professor Burke's historical analysis is also self-serving in the extreme. The proximate cause of the end of apartheid was the [1992 referendum](#) in which a majority of whites effectively voted to hand over their country to the ANC, a decision they would never have taken if they could have known the consequences. This was the victory of the *verligte* or "enlightened" Afrikaners over their *verkrampste* or "narrow" cousins. In other words, it is best seen as a triumph of psychological warfare. No points for telling us who was enlightening the "enlightened.")

As for the wonderful omelet cooked from these eggs, [this headline](#) is a fine summary. See also this [BBC documentary](#), whose title is misleading (the BBC doesn't really mean that the "international community" should never again hand over a First World country to the well-spoken frontman of a [murderous](#) gang), but whose [transcript](#) is glorious:

KEANE: But you see here's what I can't understand, and I've known this country for a long time. It's just the ease with which people kill nowadays.

YOUTH: Yeah.

KEANE: How did that happen?

YOUTH: When I get up, I can go to town or I can took your car.

KEANE: Would it bother you to kill me to get the car?

YOUTH: If you don't want to give me your keys I'll kill you. It's nothing to kill you because of what.. I need the money to survive. You see I need more money. You see it feels like using a gun there's no feeling. There's no feeling. It's just yourself, you're the big boss. You got a gun, no one will tell you shit or f\*\*\* you. No one can tell you f\*\*\* you. If you said f\*\*\* me, I took out my firearm and I shoot you in your ears, then what will you say? You're dead! I will took all the things. If you don't get money, if you don't get a car you're nothing.

KEANE: Do you think that the life that you're living and the way that you're carrying on is what Mandela...

YOUTH: But...

KEANE: No, but hang on a second, is this what Mandela spent 27 years in jail for so you could go around killing people?

YOUTHS: No. No.

KEANE: So why do you still do it?

YOUTH: Because we want money. Listen, listen to me, because it's money. I have to rob this thing now.

KEANE: You want to rob the camera?

YOUTH: Yeah.

KEANE: You could do that, if you wanted, I know you could do that, but it wouldn't achieve any purpose. You might have money for a day and it's just brought trouble on you.

When they suggested stealing the camera we decided to leave. Crime is being fuelled by another legacy of apartheid, poverty. There is democracy, free speech and economic growth. But real wealth is in the hands of the few. Even though millions more now access electricity and water, two million new homes have been built and there are grants for the poorest of the poor, the growing economy hasn't delivered jobs. Official figures say 25% are out of work, though many economists estimate it could be as high as 40%. Millions of South Africans still live in squatter camps.

Sunday afternoon in Soweto:

How many of you live in this shed?

WOMAN: Four.

KEANE: What do you feel about the life you have here?

WOMAN: (translated) Life here isn't good. We've no electricity and so we have to use paraffin which makes the children sick.

KEANE: Do you ever think your life is going to get better, Joseph?

JOSEPH: Maybe my life would change if the Nationalist party came back, not the ANC.

KEANE: I don't believe you, come on, it was a white government that put you down, that treated you terribly. You can't really believe that.

JOSEPH: But in terms of work they didn't oppress us. We didn't struggle for work then.

KEANE: Now do I really think that he is serious about wanting a white government back? I don't think so. Not back to the days of forced removals and passbooks and all of that. But I'll tell you what it does do, when you listen to somebody expressing that kind of anger and frustration, you really get a sense of how the ANC, the people at the top, the elite, have drifted away from their core constituency, the people of the squatter camps, South Africa's dispossessed.

The ANC has indeed drifted away from its core constituency. But that constituency has nothing to do with "Joseph" or "Youth." It consists of Fergal Keane and Timothy Burke. And of course, a few others like them. (Unlike Albert Speer, all these individuals are replaceable.)

What we're seeing here is a power structure which has lost its connection to reality. Its rulers consider it the most ethical and responsible system of government in human history. In fact, it is morally and intellectually bankrupt.

There is no simple procedure for moral and intellectual restructuring. However, this system of government is not just morally and intellectually bankrupt. It is also *financially* bankrupt. This is a disaster, of course, but it gives us a concrete way to think about fixing all three of these problems at once.

A *restoration* is a regime-change procedure designed to safely and effectively reverse the damage which progressivism has inflicted on civilization, acting under the principles of good government that prevailed in theory, if not always in practice, in the late classical or Victorian period, and producing a new era in which secure, responsible and effective government is as easy to take for granted as tap-water you can drink, electricity that is always on, or a search engine that returns porn only if you searched for porn.

A good way to define a restoration is to model it as a *sovereign bankruptcy*. Since a government is just a corporation, albeit one whose rights are protected not by any higher authority but by its own military force, it is subject to the same inexorable laws of accounting.

More specifically, a restoration is a sovereign bankruptcy with *restructuring*. There are always three options in a bankruptcy: restructuring, liquidation, and acquisition. While it can be interesting to wonder what the [People's Liberation Army](#) would do with West Oakland, in general restructuring is the only practical option at the sovereign level.

In any restructuring, a restoration delivers temporary control to a bankruptcy receiver. The receiver's goal is to render the company both solvent and profitable. Solvency is achieved by converting debt to equity, diluting existing equity holders and treating equal commitments equitably. Profitability is achieved by optimizing corporate operations as the receiver sees fit.

In a sovereign bankruptcy, there is one extra quirk. At least in today's real world, the corporation which we are restructuring does not think of itself as a mere corporation. It doesn't even think of itself as a sovereign corporation. It thinks of itself as a mystical pact which echoes across the centuries from

generation to generation, bonding human souls across time, space, language, gender and race. So we can expect its accounting to be a little funky. But accounting, still, is accounting. And not rocket science.

Let's start by taking a closer look at the general principles of restructuring.

First, restructuring starts with an enterprise which is in some way financially broken. Most commonly, it has defaulted on its debts. Sovereign corporations, however, have another failure mode, which is especially hairy and which we'll discuss in a moment.

Second, restructuring assumes an enterprise which is intrinsically profitable. In the sovereign case, this is almost automatic. An asset which cannot produce profits is worthless by definition, and no real country is worthless. Invite people to reside there; tax them; profit.

Third, restructuring produces an enterprise which is unlikely to renege on its commitments. In other words, it creates a new allocation of the future profits of the restructured enterprise. Typically these profits are inherently uncertain, so a common result of restructuring is a company with all equity and no debt.

An equity instrument is one that pays some percentage of a completely unpredictable profit. While we do not know the magnitude of the restructured corporation's future profits, we can still divide them into formal *shares*. These shares are distributed among *beneficiaries*, who receive their *dividends*. Shares are typically allocated according to the commitments made by the bankrupt enterprise.

Fourth, there is no requirement that the bankruptcy receiver preserve any policies, assets, divisions, brands, or employees of the old company. He or she has full operational authority, as of course is normal in the productive economy. Of course, the receiver must be responsible to some board, regulator, or other supervisory agent.

In a sovereign context, it is probably appropriate to capitalize the title: the Receiver. The goal of the Receiver is to convert the bankrupt government into one that produces maximum dividends for its beneficiaries, who may be internal or external. A restoration plan should give the Receiver a set of goals and a timeframe, and let him do the rest.

One way to imagine the Receiver's job is to imagine him endowed with a mythical symbol of power, the Wand of Fnargl. Within the country it controls, the Wand turns its holder into a sort of superhero. He can strike down anything or anyone with a bolt of fire, and he is invulnerable to all attacks. However, the Wand has a serious downside: it is disposable. After two years, it crumbles away to nothing.

Therefore, the Receiver has two years in which he holds full sovereign power. At the end of this period, he should leave a secure, responsible, and effective government which can sustain its sovereignty without recourse to magical instruments. While there is no Wand of Fnargl, its powers are clear, and can be reproduced albeit imperfectly by more mundane technologies. [Sovereignty](#) is a very well-defined

concept. Thus it is a legitimate question to ask anyone what he or she would do, if appointed Receiver and handed the Wand.

For some distance, let's assume we are restructuring the country of Elbonia. At present, Elbonia uses its own fiat currency, it has no formal distribution of benefits or clear ownership structure, its decision-making procedures are byzantine, opaque, and mutable, it is plagued by internal violence, it exercises significant power outside its own borders, and its decisions are often affected by external aggression.

After restructuring, Elbonia will be on a metallic standard. All its financial commitments will be formal. It will be, as America's first Chief Justice liked to put it, [governed by those who own it](#). Its owners will establish precise and immutable decision-making structures. They will eliminate systematic internal violence, and they will neither tolerate external interference [nor interfere themselves](#):

Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers; to consider the Government de facto as the legitimate Government for us; to cultivate friendly relations with it, and to preserve those relations by a frank, firm, and manly policy; meeting, in all instances, the just claims of every power, submitting to injuries from none.

Any restructuring must start with the currency. Elbonia's debts are denominated in its own fiat currency, so it cannot never default. Does that mean it's not bankrupt? No, that means it is sovereign. Bankruptcy is any state of indefensible accounting.

The Elbonian currency is, of course, the [grubnick](#). What is a grubnick? It is certainly not a note certifying that the issuer holds, or will deliver on demand, a specified quantity of anything. Once upon a time, believe it or not, this was considered [rather tacky](#):

The dollar, like so many of the world's greatest, inspires at first sight interest, but hardly affection. From a casual study of the monetary controversy now raging in this country, I had been led to expect that the dollar was a gold dollar, and that Mr Bryan wanted to turn it into silver. It cannot be too widely known that the dollar as he is spent is neither gold nor silver; he is a piece of paper. Not only so, but often a very worn and dirty piece of paper at that. It is astonishing how a dollar will age in three or four years. True, the paper reflects the greatest credit on its inventor; it never tears — though perhaps this is because no strong man ever really tries to tear it — still, it is but a piece of paper after all. It bears on its weather-beaten face an inscription to the effect that there has been deposited in the Treasury of the United States one silver dollar, which will be paid to the bearer on demand. Others of the breed merely assert that the United States of America will pay one dollar, without specifying its material. The mysterious philanthropist who deposited the silver dollar apparently prefers to remain anonymous; while where or how you cash it is left equally dark. It must certainly be somewhere in Washington, whence the United States of America date their promise, but

the American Eagle is too old a bird to give any more precise address. The dollar, so far as my experience goes, is always illustrated, usually with a vignette photograph of some eminent citizen or other, occasionally also with scenes from the life of Columbus or some other appropriate subject. This gives an aesthetic as well as a commercial interest to the dollar, which cannot be too highly prized. Its nominal value is 4s. 2d.

What we see in Mr. Steevens' snarky reporting (from 1898) is a currency in the middle of the transition from old-fashioned [warehouse receipt](#) to our modern, up-to-date [Federal Reserve Note](#) - or grubnick.

From the accounting perspective, what is a grubnick? The answer is simple. It is not a *receipt*, because it does not denote title to some stored object. It is not *debt*, because it does not denote an obligation that is canceled by some delivery. Therefore, it can only be *equity*.

A grubnick, in other words, is a *share*. It is a *fraction* of some great total right. We do not know exactly what it is a share in, because we do not know what rights you would control if you had all the grubnicks in the world. If you manage to buy up all the Federal Reserve Notes in the world, do you own the Federal Reserve? If you get your hands on all the grubnicks, are you the sole and undisputed owner of Elbonia? These questions are without meaning.

In other words, we can define fiat currency as *dubious equity*. Owning a grubnick is like owning a share in [Yukos](#). If you own all the shares of Yukos, you own a lawsuit against the Russian government. What is this worth? It's up to the Russian government. At present the answer appears to be nothing, but Putin might always change his mind.

What we do know is that every dollar is equal to every other dollar. Every five-dollar bill has the same value, whether in dollars or gold or crude oil, as five one-dollar bills. Note that exactly the same is true for grubnicks, Yukos shares, etc, etc. Whatever they may be "worth" (more accurately, exchangeable for), they are amenable to mathematics.

Thus, if there are one trillion dollars in the world, and we accept the (dubious) assumption that if you own all the dollars you own the Federal Reserve, each dollar is a right to one trillionth of the Federal Reserve. Perhaps this is obvious, but it implies some corollaries.

One, creating new dollars does not affect the value of the Federal Reserve, however we choose to measure that value. Nor does it affect the value of Elbonia, Yukos, or any other right. It is common or garden [stock dilution](#). Dilution is often more convenient than transferring shares from old owners to new owners, but the principle is the same. If there exist one trillion dollars and we print ten billion new ones and give them to X, the effect is just as if we replaced each dollars held by anyone but X with 99 cents, added up the spare cents and gave them to X.

Now we can see just how screwy the accounting system of Elbonia is. Imagine a company which chooses to denominate its accounting *in its own stock*. Say Google valued its assets, such as its buildings, in

Google shares. Its debt would be promises to pay Google shares. If it paid dividends, each share might spawn 0.05 new shares. This would be truly perverse accounting. But it would not be as perverse as a system in which Google ran its numbers in terms of shares in an internal tracking stock which represented a subsidiary whose assets and liabilities were not defined at all. That's fiat currency for you.

To restructure this bizarre financial teratoma, we need to (a) fix the number of grubnicks in the world, and (b) define the rights divided among all grubnick holders.

(b) is easy: we convert grubnicks into proper Elbonian equity. In a liquid market, ELBO shares can be converted to gold, crude oil, Hummel figurines, or any other commodity. The only question is: if you start with fraction X of all the grubnicks, what fraction of all the ELBO shares do you end up with? Let's say, quite arbitrarily, that a third of the equity in ELBO will go to present grubnick holders.

(a) is more interesting. Why don't we know how many grubnicks there are in the world? Isn't each one numbered? Indeed, each one is numbered. But the Elbonian Reserve has the power to create more grubnicks, and it always uses this power when it has to.

Thus, when Elbonia promises you a grubnick, that promise is worth exactly as much as a grubnick, because there is no reason for Elbonia to break its promise. But there is also no constraint on Elbonia's ability to promise more grubnicks than it has actually created. Thus we have two kinds of grubnicks: actual grubnicks, and virtual grubnicks. If Elbonia is anything like America, the latter vastly outnumber the former.

For example, when you "deposit" a dollar in a bank, you do not own a dollar. You own a promise of a dollar from the bank. The bank is not the Federal Reserve, but via the FDIC the Federal Reserve "insures" your bank. The FDIC owns very few dollars, certainly not enough to protect all the banks in the world. But the Fed can print as many dollars as it likes. So your dollar "deposit," because it is backed by a chain that ends in a virtual promise from the Fed, is risk-free.

A Treasury bond is risk-free for the same reason - Uncle Sam is implicitly backed by Uncle Sam's own printing press. Thus, the bond is equivalent to a specialized kind of dollar bill, one that says "not valid until" a certain date - the date when the bond matures. In the world of equity, this is what we call [restricted stock](#). Only a market can tell you how many grubnicks a restricted grubnick will trade for, but a restricted grubnick is still a grubnick.

Obviously, this is a financial Rube Goldberg machine. It can only be understood historically. Fortunately, there is a simple way to get the virtual grubnicks under control.

One: find all the assets (such as bank deposits) whose price in grubnicks is protected by Elbonia's power to print new grubnicks. Two: print the grubnicks, and buy the assets for their formal price. Three: fix the number of grubnicks outstanding. Four: convert grubnicks to ELBO shares, as desired. Five: sell the

assets you nationalized, exchanging them for whatever monetary commodity your new accounting system uses. (Let's say it's gold.)

Doing this right will involve creating a *lot* of grubnicks. The best way to rationalize this is to understand that these grubnicks already exist. They just exist informally, and we need to formalize them. At present, for example, the US owes about \$10 trillion in debt, in a world that contains less than 1 trillion actual dollars. Unless you are accustomed to the presence of virtual dollars, these numbers simply make no sense.

In the uneducated folk economics by which policymakers make their rule-of-thumb decisions today, this is held to be "inflationary." The general assumption, made more on the basis of sympathetic magic than anything else, is that more grubnicks means higher prices. But this is not true when we replace virtual grubnicks with real grubnicks, because the change is *portfolio-neutral* - your loan of 1000 grubnicks to the bank is replaced by 1000 actual grubnicks. Thus, you have no more or less money, thus your spending patterns do not change, and thus if everyone is affected in the same way there is no effect on market prices.

The Receiver has thus gained an important power. In order to make the transition as smooth as possible, he can declare *any obligation* of Elbonia, formal or informal, to be a debt which is denominated in grubnicks and guaranteed by virtual grubnicks. Elbonia will then acquire that debt, since it is after all guaranteed, paying out in freshly-printed grubnicks. Rampant equity dilution is a very, very normal practice in any restructuring.

Suppose, for example, Elbonia has guaranteed lifetime medical care to all its residents. To the Receiver, this is an obligation like any other, even if it is not a formal obligation in the same sense as paying off a bond. Elbonia, at least in her unstructured state, is too ramshackle a barge to make any useful distinction between formal and informal debts.

Therefore, Elbonia can shed this politically complex and nasty obligation by calculating the cost of an equivalent insurance policy for each resident, assuming the resident has such a policy, and buying it back with fresh grubnicks. If the resident wants to use those grubnicks to buy medical insurance, by definition she can afford it. Or she can spend them on beer and heroin. It's up to her. The whole conversion is a [Pareto optimization](#).

This flood of new cash has no chance of descending into a hyperinflationary spiral, because it is part of a one-time restructuring in which the semantics and quantity of shares become fixed. Hyperinflation is what happens when a government falls into a state in which it is continually funding operating losses by paying off its creditors with freshly diluted stock. In the financial markets the same effect is produced by a [toxic convertible](#). This is a device one might use in a desperate attempt to avoid bankruptcy, a fate to which we have already reconciled ourselves.

To prevent fluctuations in grubnick purchasing power, the Receiver can also create restricted grubnicks with a "not valid until" date. Thus, when buying out a medical insurance policy or other annual obligation, the compensated parties may receive restricted grubnicks that can pay each year's policy as it falls due, rather than getting a giant lump sum that can be spent on a yacht and will drive the yacht market haywire.

Thus armed not only with absolute political and military sovereignty, but also with the weird economic superpower of the fiat-currency printing press, our Receiver faces her next challenge: dealing with the horde of Elbonian government employees, most of whose occupations are not in any realistic sense productive.

The basic principle of a sovereign restructuring is to separate all outlays of the government into two classes: essential payments, and inessential payments. Obviously, wages paid to an inessential employee (such as a sociology professor - remember, we are nationalizing the universities) are inessential payments. Another word for "inessential payment" is *dividend*. From an accounting perspective, inessential employees are performing makework to hide the fact that they are actually receiving dividends, ie, acting as bloodsucking parasites.

Of course, with the Wand of Fnargl, the Receiver could just fire them. Quite literally, in fact. But is this fair? Our sociology professor jumped through quite a few hoops, none of which he invented himself, in order to receive what is probably not a very large payment. His so-called career may be pointless, but that means he should be retired, not fired. And he should be retired on a pension that includes a significant fraction of his present pay, maybe even all of it. He has, in short, acquired a certain level of ownership in Elbonia, he has done so through means that were entirely fair and open to all, and it is not our place to decide whether or not he deserves these spoils. Since Elbonia is already paying him, it can obviously afford to continue doing so.

Moreover, as a sociology professor he is part of the ruling class, and the Wand of Fnargl does not last forever. Keep your friends close, as they say, and your enemies closer. He is already being paid to lie for money to support the old regime. If you continue to pay his salary, but let him say and do whatever he wants, will he turn around and bite you? Perhaps some will, but it is not human nature. A more likely response is permanent, doglike loyalty. This response can be accentuated, if need be, by requiring the professor to put his name on a list of prominent figures who support the new government. If he changes his mind, he can stop or restart his pension to match the fluctuations of his conscience.

This gets even better when we get to the few parts of the Cathedral that are relatively healthy. One example is biomedical research, which requires delicate and expensive toys, and so commands a considerable amount of funding over and above faculty salaries. To destroy the institutions while making the researchers very, very happy, simply make everyone's grant or stipend their own permanent property. Divide the funding among the whole team, right down to the grad students. Result: a class of financially

independent researchers who can work on whatever they want, wherever they want, sans paperwork. Perhaps a few will decide they don't care about curing cancer and do care about living in the South of France, but they will not be the cream of the crop. Is there anyone who really believes that the grant review process adds value or improves the quality of science?

The Receiver has thus brought order to Elbonia's books. Essential expenses - spending on goods and services that are actually necessary to maximize the Elbonian revenue - turn out to be a small proportion of budgetary outlays. The rest is profit. Elbonia, as we always knew, is massively profitable.

The Receiver's goal is not to redirect this profit, although she can redirect it if need be, but simply to understand it. Who is profiting? How much are they profiting? We find these profiteers - who in many cases are not wealthy fat cats, but philanthropists who provide vital services to the needy - and exchange their informal commitments for formal securities, ie, grubnicks. We eliminate any makework or other pointless camouflage that may have been used to disguise the profit relationship. And everyone is happy.

Elbonia does need revenue, of course. Since the new Elbonia will keep its books in gold, it should collect taxes in gold. The simplest way to tax, which is also one that affects all uses of Elbonian soil and cannot be evaded, is a self-assessed tax on all land and fixed structures. As a property owner, you assess your own property, which is offered for sale at the assessed price. If you don't want to sell, set your price above the market, and pay a little more tax.

Elbonia can also make a market for ELBO shares, in gold. Since grubnicks are to be converted to ELBO shares, this market will produce the critical grubnick-to-gold ratio. As people realize how weird it is to buy a cup of coffee with shares, the financial system will gradually return from equity to metallic currency.

The Receiver thus has the finances of Elbonia straight. She can then turn her powers toward repairing the sadly decayed framework of government. Her fiduciary responsibility is not just to preserve the value of the Elbonian franchise while the financial restructuring completes, but also to enhance it as much as possible. Given the low quality of government that Elbonia has suffered in the past, this is not hard.

The best target for the Receiver is to concentrate on restoring the [Belle Époque](#). This implies that in two years, (a) all systematic criminal activity will terminate; (b) anyone of any skin color will be able to walk anywhere in any city, at any time of day or night; (c) no graffiti, litter, or other evidence of institutional lawlessness will be visible; and (d) all 20th-century buildings of a socialist, brutalist, or other antidecorative character will be demolished.

We can see how far the US at present is from this goal by [this awful, hilarious story](#) in the LA Times. I simply cannot muster the mockery to do justice to this piece. Read it all. "Well, if I tell you who shot Ray Ray, I'll never work again in this community." Indeed. Meanwhile, elsewhere in the basin, "loose-knit bands of blacks and Latinos" [prowl the streets](#), "looking for people of the other color to shoot." Visit

[South Africa](#) before South Africa visits you.

This is just over. It doesn't work. It's done. Stick a fork in it.

First, the Receiver recognizes that this is a *military* problem. These "gangs" are *militias*. Not only that, they are militias with an ideology, and that ideology is violently hostile to the society that hosts them. You are not going to convert them into Quakers by giving them big hugs. Nor is there any rational reason to deal with them via judicial procedures designed to contain the sporadic deviancy, or even psychopathy, that appears in any healthy society.

The ideology of the gangs is an ideology of pure war and hatred. It is no more tolerable than neo-Nazism, and in fact the best way to deal with these subcultures is to think of them as Nazi. They are certainly adept at converting [hate](#) into violence.

On the other hand, the fact that these formations are essentially barbaric paramilitary units validates one of the main arguments of the loony left. America's brimming prisons are essentially POW camps. Their inhabitants do not recognize the laws they were convicted under, or accept the society that convicted them. In terms of cultural reality, they are aliens.

The Receiver's message is: the war is over. Your side lost. Reconcile yourself to this, demonstrate that you have done so, and you can return to society. We can use all the manual labor you can put out - for one, we have ugly buildings to tear down, graffiti to remove, and so on.

Modern technology makes it easy for Elbonia to destroy any Morlock subcultures the former management may have inflicted on it. A trivial database query can identify the set of humans in the country who are either (a) productively employed, (b) independently wealthy, or (c) a well-supervised dependent of (a) or (b). Everyone else, including all minors, gets [the tag](#). This inconspicuous device fits on your ankle and continuously reports your position to the authorities. If no crimes are committed near your location, you have nothing to worry about.

This is just the start. Elbonia is saddled with a large number of residents who are effectively dependents of the state - for example, those who receive housing subsidies. These people need to be reprocessed to determine whether they can become members of productive society, and during this time there is no reason to leave them where they are. Elbonia's revenue comes from its property values, and the presence of a Morlock population is not good for same.

Therefore, we can expect the Receiver to establish secure relocation centers, in which the 20th century's artificially decivilized subpopulations will receive social services in a controlled environment while they are reintroduced to civilized society. Mandatory apprenticeship in productive skills, language training to ensure all residents are fluent [acrolect](#) speakers, and in general a high degree of personal discipline will be hallmarks of these facilities.

There is no need to allow dysfunctional subcultures to persist in any context, not even in prison. The 20th-century prison is, like so many features of present society, a dead end. Modern technology can realize the ideal of many 19th-century penological reformers: universal solitary confinement.

In the 19th century, solitary confinement drove prisoners insane. In the 21st, adequate social interaction can be delivered electronically. Individual cells with virtual reality consoles are not a recipe for insanity. Virtualized prisoners are much easier to control, guide and evaluate. They are also easier and cheaper to guard and feed. In Third World conditions, entire slums can be surrounded, secured, and the residents moved into modular data hotels with sealed individual or family cells, in which they can live perfectly fulfilling [second lives](#). There is simply no reason for open squalor and barbarism to persist anywhere on the planet. [Outdoor relief](#) is an idea whose time has come and gone.

From the standpoint of a society from which all forms of modern barbarism have been eradicated, the old, unrestored Elbonia will look almost unimaginably brutal and unlivable. When you have lived all your life in a country in which there is no crime and the streets are safe, the idea of "no-go zones" or random muggings, rapes, etc, will terrify you much as if the same assaults were committed by uncontrolled wild animals.

For example, I simply can't imagine what it would be like to live in San Francisco if there were fifty or sixty leopards loose in the city. But I can see how people would get used to it. Leopards are nocturnal, so you stay in at night. They hide in trees, so you cut down the trees. They tend to hunt in certain areas, so you avoid those areas. And the situation could develop gradually - the first leopard is a huge news story, the second is a smaller story, and they build up over time. After a while, the experience of walking down the street while checking for leopards would strike you as completely normal and unremarkable. If one day the leopards were removed, however, you would definitely notice it.

But this is utopian enough for one week. Continue to [part 11](#).

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/06/olx-simple-sovereign-bankruptcy.html>

## Part 11: the truth about left and right

June 26, 2008

Dear open-minded progressive, perhaps you were horrified by [OLX](#).

I mean, I did propose the liquidation of democracy, the Constitution and the rule of law, and the transfer of absolute power to a mysterious figure known only as the Receiver, who in the process of converting Washington into a heavily-armed, ultra-profitable corporation will abolish the press, smash the universities, sell the public schools, and transfer "decivilized populations" to "secure relocation facilities" where they will be assigned to "mandatory apprenticeships." If this doesn't horrify you, I'm not sure what would.

And do I even mean it seriously? Or am I just ripping off Daniel Defoe? Dear open-minded progressive, perhaps you have come to realize that your narrator is not always a reliable one. He has played tricks on you in the past. He will probably do it again. The game is deep, and not for the unwatchful.

The first thing to remember is that by even reading these horrible, horrible things, you have demonstrated exactly how open your mind is. You are in the 99.99th percentile of open-minded progressives. You are certainly one of the most open-minded people in the world. Your only conceivable worry is that your mind is so open that your brain has fallen out. Obviously this is a real danger. But life is dangerous.

The second thing to remember is that *no one else endorses this plan*. Or even anything close. In the political world of 2008, restorationism is completely off the map. It is off the table. It is outside the room. It is outside the building. It is running stark naked and crazy through the woods. In a word, it is pure moldbuggery.

And because at present we *do* live in a democracy, this means it is *not dangerous*. At least not at present. It could become dangerous, of course - perhaps if UR was as popular as [Stuff White People Like](#). Which it ain't, and which it won't be. But what better reason to keep an eye on it?

The third thing to remember is that the whole plan of restoration through national bankruptcy is predicated on the assumption that the bankruptcy administrator - the nefarious Receiver - is responsible, effective, and not least *sane*. Clearly, if he or she turns out to be Hitler or Stalin, we have just recreated Nazism or Stalinism. Even if you agree with me that Washington is the malignant tumor of the ages, morally, intellectually and financially bankrupt, dead in the water and drifting toward [Niagara](#), you can't cure cancer with cyanide and LSD.

And the fourth thing to remember, dear open-minded progressive, is that if perhaps you can be convinced that some things you used to think were good are actually evil, you can be convinced that some things you used to think were evil are actually good. After all, you do have an open mind. No sensible mind is

very open on this side of the skull, though, and for good reason. If there is a crack, it is a narrow one. What hopes to fit it must fit a postcard.

So let's swing straight at the ball: the problem of political alignment. Should you be leftist, a rightist, or a centrist? Perhaps we can answer the question from first principles.

Suppose a great wind whips us into space, and sets us down on an Earthlike planet, Urplat, which is completely foreign to us. We quickly discover that Urplat has a democratic political system just like ours. Moreover, Urplat's political thinkers are always squabbling, just like ours. And even better, an Urplatian position in this longstanding conflict can be described usefully by a single linear dimension, just like our "left" and "right."

However, the political axis of Urplat is transformed in some unknown way from ours. Its poles are not left and right, but M and Q. You have no way of knowing how M and Q might map to Earth terms. MQ could be left-right, or right-left, or some other weird thing.

What you know is that M and Q are *contradictory principles*. Each is some fundamental understanding of human society which indisputably contradicts the other. Of course, it is possible for any person to maintain some combination of M beliefs and Q beliefs - most simply, by using the M-principle to understand one issue and the Q-principle for another. This creates the weird phenomenon of a continuous dimension between M and Q, when the question obviously has a fundamentally boolean quality.

Furthermore, M and Q can be easily misapplied. And either can be combined with any sort of venal or sadistic nastiness. Thus, evaluating the actions of individuals who claim to follow the M or Q principles is not a straightforward way to evaluate the choice between M and Q.

We know there is a choice, because we know that at most one of M and Q can be good and true. We must therefore conclude that the other is evil and wrong. Of course, both could be evil and wrong. If we find that one is evil and wrong, we should do another checkup to ensure that the other is good and true. But if we find that one is good and true, the matter is settled - the other is the dark side of the force.

Moreover, the choice matters - because on Urplat, humans have special Jedi powers. Only we can wield the weapon of the Urplatin Jedi, the *Iron Mouse*. And it takes both of us - you, dear open-minded progressive, and me the closed-minded reactionary. If we can agree, we can either end the conflict permanently in favor of M or Q, or any mixture of the two. Any dissent will be promptly silenced by the *Mouse*.

So what criteria can we use to decide between M and Q? The many followers of each great way, of course, are lobbying us with beluga and Porsches and blondes. Or at least the Urplatin equivalent of these fine goods. Nonetheless, we are stern, and will choose only the truth.

A simple test (a) might be to *take a vote*. If more Urplatins prefer M, their planet will be governed for the indefinite future on the M-principle. If they favor Q, likewise.

But, frankly, this is shite. If Q is evil and the Urplatins vote for Q, we have just condemned them and their children to a world of infinite suffering. Past Q-ist movements have perhaps been tempered by a modicum of M, mere personal decency, or mitigating venality. But if we enforce Q with the *Iron Mouse*, there will be no escape. If Q is wrong, wrong shall result. You may not have a problem with this, but I do, and it takes both of us to move the *Mouse*.

And is there any way in which we can guarantee that the headcount of Urplatin supporters corresponds to the absolute truth or falsity of M or Q? Answer: no. Many, perhaps even most, of the Urplatins are dumb as rocks. Therefore, this test is not useful.

A simple way to fix the test - (b) - is to restrict the vote to Urplatins who are at least as smart as whichever of the two of us is dumber. That way we cannot possibly agree to describe any voter as "dumb as a rock." The description is inherently insulting to one of us.

So we are only considering the view of smart Urplatins. Even better, if we see a difference between smart Urplatins and dumb Urplatins, we can penalize whichever principle, M or Q, is popular with the dumb ones. If we see that Q is generally believed by the smarter Urplatins and M is more popular with the dumb ones, we pretty much have the answer. Right?

Okay. Let's assume Q is the smart position and M is the dumb position. We know one fact about Urplat. Does this tell us that Q is good and true, and M is wrong and evil?

At the very least, this proposition depends on the intelligence of Urplatins. If a dumb Urplatin has an IQ of 80, in Earth terms, and a smart one has an IQ of 120, we can pretty easily see that on any question on which they might disagree, the latter is more likely to be right.

Or can we? How do we know this? And is our result the same if the IQs are, say, 120 and 160 respectively? What about 160 and 250? Surely it is neurologically possible for an Urplatin to have an arbitrarily high intelligence, at least as measured by any human scale.

And if the proposition is true for stupid = 160 and smart = 250, it means that an Urplatin with an IQ of 160 can be fooled by whichever of M or Q is evil and wrong. If so, one with an IQ of 120 can surely be fooled. Since one can never be so stupid that one can't discover the truth by throwing darts, it is therefore possible for the Urplatins of IQ 80 to be right and those of IQ 120 to be wrong, which violates the proposition. So we cannot learn that M or Q is right or wrong, just because the smart Urplatins follow Q and the stupid ones cling to M.

However, this fact does tell us something: Q is *more competitive* than M.

Think of Q and M as two populations of parasites, competing for a one population of hosts. Ignoring the fact that Urplatins can harbor a mixture of Q and M perspectives on different subjects, or simply not care, simplify the problem by imagining that each Urplatin has a boolean flag: Q or M.

Although neither Q nor M may have any central organizing body responsible for the propagation of Q-ism or M-ness, if there was such an intellectual central planner, it would choose the smart hosts over the less-smart ones. If you're a sexually transmitted virus, you want to be in a promiscuous gay host, preferably an airline steward. If you're an intellectually transmitted principle, you want to be in a smart and loquacious host, preferably a university professor.

We expect to see some corollaries of this Q-M asymmetry, and we do. If smart people are more likely to host Q, we'd expect Q to be more fashionable than M. If you want to get ahead in life, acting smart is always a good start - whether you're smart or not. If smart people tend to host Q, hosting Q is a great way to look smart.

Q becomes a kind of *social lubricant*. Anywhere, any time, the best way to meet and mate with other young, fashionable people is to broadcast one's Q-ness as loudly and proudly as possible.

Also, if Q is more competitive than M, we'd expect to see Q progressing against M over time. Again, this is exactly what we see. The M-Q conflict is at least a hundred years old, and when we exhume the frozen thoughts of century-old Q-ists from dusty old libraries, their specific beliefs would put them deep in the M range - often at extreme M levels - if they lived today.

But does any of this answer the question? It does not. At least one of Q or M is darkness. But we cannot tell which.

If Q is the dark side and M is mere sanity, we see immediately what Q is: a transmissible mental disease, which spreads by infecting education workers. If Q is mere sanity and M is the dark side, this same system is in the business of overcoming superstition and leading the people of Urplat, despite the ancient prejudices to which they stubbornly cling, toward the truth. And this is certainly how Q-ists see the matter.

And if they are both evil? But this is difficult to imagine. If both M and Q are dark, there must be some truth which contradicts them both. And it must be less successful than either M or Q.

To a Q-ist, the situation makes perfect sense. The progress toward Q is the slow and painful victory of good over evil. Evil has many advantages, because it can avail itself of evil strategies, whereas the good restrict themselves to achieving good ends by good means. However, the truth has a great advantage: it rings clear, like a bell. No lie can fake it.

There is just one small problem with this explanation. We would expect M to disappear much more quickly than it already has. If M is a lie and it is socially disadvantageous to express it, why, after 200

years, do we still have M? All the cards are stacked against it.

Whereas if Q is a lie and M is the truth, we have all the ingredients for an eternal soap opera. Q has the snaky suppleness of mendacity, its tasty apple flavor, its stylish and sinful delights. M has the rigid backbone of a truth that can be suppressed, but never quite crushed, that reappears spontaneously wherever men and women, often of the socially awkward subspecies, have the misfortune to think for themselves.

We've constructed what [Professor Burke](#) would call a "narrative." But, compared to the level of tough thinking that we'd need to actually demonstrate that Q is the dark side and M is the light, our narrative has the strength of tissue paper. It is enough for suspicion, and no more.

Therefore, we need to pull the veil aside and (c) look at what M and Q actually mean.

Note that we are still on Urplat - we are not claiming that M and Q correspond to right and left, or left and right, or anything of the sort. We are just devising abstract meanings for M and Q that could, on this imaginary planet we've made up, correspond to the facts we've stipulated: M and Q can coexist, M and Q are contradictory, and Q is consistently more fashionable than M.

Our definitions of M and Q revolve around the ancient Urplatin word *nomos*. If you are for M, you are for the *nomos*, which makes you a *pronomian*. If you are for Q, you are against the *nomos*, which makes you an *antinomian*. The contradiction is obvious.

Let's start by explaining the *nomos* and its supporters, the pronomians.

The *nomos* is the *natural structure of formal promises* around which Urplatins organize their lives. To a pronomian, any Urplatin should be free to make any promise. In return, he or she can expect to be held responsible for that promise: there is no freedom to break it. All promises are voluntary until they are made, and involuntary afterward. A pair of reciprocal promises, a common phenomenon on Urplat, is an *agreement*.

The details of individual promises and agreements are infinite, and constantly changing. But the high-level structure of the *nomos* is a consequence of reality, and it changes little. To demonstrate this point, let's derive the *nomos* from pure reality.

First, Urplatians are not robots. They breed in families, just as we do. An Urplatin family is based on two agreements: one between the parents of the little Urplatin tyke, and one between the child and its parents.

To a pronomian, the relationship between parents and children is simple. The agreement has only one side. Children promise their parents everything, including complete obedience for as long as the parents require. Parents need make no promise to a newborn infant, because an infant is helpless, and cannot

compel any concession. If they choose they can emancipate the child when it comes of age, but if they choose they can require it to serve them all their lives. They even hold the power of life and death over it, again until they relinquish this power. (The pronomian supports both prenatal and post-natal abortion.)

Note that this regime - which does not exactly match the family law of, say, California, but is more or less an accurate description of the situation in early Rome - is optimal for the parents. In other words, parents can have no reason to prefer a legal system which gives them less power over their children. If they want to relinquish this power or even assign it to others, nothing is stopping them.

Note also the asymmetry of the agreement between parents and child. By recognizing the helplessness of the infant, we recognize that it has no choice but to accept any definition of the relationship that its parents may propose. The agreement is a promise in one direction because the child has no power to compel any reciprocal promise.

The pronomian sees these kinds of patterns everywhere in the *nomos*. There is only one *nomos*, because there is only one reality. The parameters of parenting do not change. The power dynamics are known. The answer is final.

If men and women, not to mention children, were in all cases honest and trustworthy, they could cooperate without a structure of formal promises. Since they are not, they benefit from formal promises and mechanisms for enforcing those promises. But - to the pronomian - this structure is no more than a recognition of reality.

One of the simplest patterns of agreement is *property*. Property is a system in which one Urplatin claims the sole power to dominate some good - play with a toy, drive a car, fence off a plot of land - and all other Urplatins promise to respect that right. As with the relationship between parents and infants, the origin of property is the balance of power. In a world which contains no property agreements whatsoever, Urplatins can construct a property system based on the reality of current possession.

Another key pattern is the *proprietorship*. The marriage we saw above is a simple case of partnership. In general, however, a proprietorship exists whenever multiple Urplatins decide to work collaboratively on a shared enterprise.

There are two ingredients to a proprietorship: *collective identity* and *fractional ownership*. Collective identity allows the proprietorship to act as a unit, to make and collect promises of its own. Fractional ownership divides the enterprise into precisely-defined *shares*, which in an *anonymous proprietorship* can be traded as property. (It's probably best not to define your marriage as an anonymous proprietorship.)

The natural structure of a proprietorship is that *ownership*, *benefit*, and *control* are synonymous. Ie, if you divide the enterprise into a hundred shares, each share owns a hundredth of the business, receives a hundredth of the profit, and exercises a hundredth of the decision-making power. Of course, it is possible

to construct a system of agreements which does not follow this pattern, but in most cases there is no need to. Again, the *nomos* is not prescriptive; these structures emerge as natural patterns of agreement.

But the most important structure in the *nomos* is the *hierarchy of protection*. Protection is what makes all these promises work.

A protector is an enforcer of promises. For some promises in some contexts, protection is not necessary: the cost of breaking any promise may exceed the gain to the promisebreaker. For example, someone who has a reputation for breaking promises may have trouble forming new agreements. This is an unusual condition, however, and not to be relied on. In many contexts - eg, "insider trading" - a broken promise can be worth all an individual's reputation and more.

By definition, above the top level of the hierarchy of protection there is no protector. That top level, therefore, consists of *unprotected authorities* - typically proprietorships, but sometimes persons. These *unauthorities* have no authority which can settle their disputes. They must resort to war, which in Urplatin is called the *ultima ratio regum* - ie, the last resort of unauthorities.

Unauthorities do, however, make promises to each other. For example, an unauthority must possess an area of land to which it maintains exclusive control - an *undomain* - because its operations must be somewhere. (If it lacks an undomain, it is subject to the protection of some other unauthority, and thus cannot be an unauthority itself.) The undomain of the unauthority is its property because, as described above, all others have agreed to respect it. But it has no protector other than itself.

The key to success as an unauthority is to ensure that no other unauthority has a positive incentive to violate its promises to you. For example, disrespect of property rights - invasion - is the simplest form of unprotected promise violation. To prevent such assaults, an unauthority must maintain the military and political strength to make the assailant regret the decision to attack. Any less punishment is inadequate; any more is vindictive.

An unauthority makes a crucial mistake when it relinquishes the responsibility of protecting itself to another, stronger unauthority. If unauthorities cooperate against a common threat, they should cooperate for a limited time and a specific reason, and their league should be a league of equals. For an Earth example, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Romania make a good defense league. Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and England do not make a good defense league, because the best case of the relationship is that the first three have become protectorates of the last. Ie, they are already halfway to being its property.

Every Urplatin living within an unauthority's undomain is its *client*. To be the client of an undomain is to promise it absolute and unconditional obedience. No unauthority has any use for internal enemies. Moreover, an unauthority cannot be compelled to respect any promise it may make to its clients - there is no force that can compel it. Clients must rely on the desire of the unauthority to maintain its reputation

for fair dealing.

Fortunately, an unauthority is a business by definition - its undomain is capital, on which it naturally desires a maximum return. Its return on the property defines the value of the business, and is defined by the value of the subrights to the same property that it concedes to its clients. If its actions decrease this valuation, the unauthority's own stock goes down. And property in a lawless and mercurial undomain is certainly worth less than property protected by an unauthority which is careful of its reputation.

On the same principle, because an unauthority maintains exclusive control within its undomain, it can and should enforce the promises that its clients make to each other. As we saw in the case of the parents, maximum promise enforcement is optimal customer service. Since the better the customer service, the higher the value of the property, and the higher the value of the property, the higher the value of the undomain, a prudent unauthority will do its best to uphold the *nomos*.

So, for example, A may promise to B that he will serve B faithfully for the rest of his life, and B may have him whipped if he disobeys. In fact, since parents own their children, A may consign his child C to this same relationship, and so on through the generations. B, of course, presumably makes some promise in return for this remarkable concession.

That's right: we have just reinvented hereditary slavery. We have also reinvented absolutist or "divine-right" monarchy, the *jus gentium*, and in fact a whole menagerie of blasts from the past. We start to see why not everyone wants to be a pronomian.

(It is a separate discussion, really, but while we're talking about hereditary slavery I can't resist mentioning [this book](#). If your knowledge of the "peculiar institution" is derived entirely from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, perhaps it's worth reminding you that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a propaganda novel. It's not quite like getting your views on Jews from [Jud Süß](#), but... and if you prefer modern sources by respected academics, try this remarkably un-presentist [presentation](#), whose agreement with the Rev. Adams is quite impressive.)

Now, let's look at the *antinomian* side of the ledger.

As you may know, [antinomian](#) is actually an English word. (And *nomos* is Greek. Okay, I lied. But I warned you.) It is usually applied in the archaic sense of religious law, but the derivation is sound, and the word is defensible in the present day.

An antinomian is anyone who seeks, consciously or unconsciously, to disrupt or destroy the *nomos*. He is a breaker of oaths, a burner of deeds, a mocker of laws - at least, from the pronomian perspective. From his own perspective he is a champion of freedom and justice.

I admit it: I am a pronomian. I endorse the *nomos* without condition. Fortunately, I do not have to endorse hereditary slavery, because any restoration of the *nomos* begins with the present state of

possession, and at present there are no hereditary slaves. However, if you want to sell yourself and your children into slavery, I don't believe it is my business to object. Try and strike a hard bargain, at least. (A slightly weakened form of pronomianism, perhaps more palatable in this day and age, might include mandatory emancipation at twenty-one.)

So my idea of the antinomian perspective will be a little jaundiced. But I'll try to be fair.

Perhaps the most refined form of modern antinomianism is *libertarianism*. Libertarianism is a fine example of the antinomian form, because the elements of the *nomos* that it attacks are specified with the elegant design sense that one would expect from the founder of modern libertarianism - probably the 20th century's greatest political theorist, [Murray Rothbard](#).

Rothbardian libertarianism rejects two aspects of the *nomos*. First, it rejects the entire concept of the unauthority - in Earth-speak, the principle of [sovereignty](#). Rothbardians are called anarcho-capitalists for a reason: they deny the legitimacy of the state, unless operated according to strict Rothbardian principles. Note that they do not require, say, Disney to operate Disneyland according to libertarian principles. This is because, to a Rothbardian, Disney's title to Disneyland is legitimate, whereas (say) Iceland's title to Iceland is not.

Rothbard has an [intricate system](#), borrowed originally from [Locke](#), for determining whether or not a title is legitimate. To say that this system is unamenable to objective interpretation is to put it mildly. But the titles of existing unauthorities all appear to be illegitimate. This makes libertarianism a revolutionary ideology. Since its antinomianism is so restricted and its lust for blood is minimal, however, it is not an especially dangerous (or effective) one.

Antinomians who reject sovereignty have two main alternatives. Either they support private, amorphous, and even territorially overlapping "protection agencies" (a design whose military plausibility is, to put it kindly, small), or they believe that government is legitimate if and only if it obeys a set of "natural laws." Again here we see the proximity to the pronomian. But the Rothbardian concept of natural law misses the Hobbesian fact that in the true *nomos*, there is no party that can enforce a state's promises to its clients.

This matters, because legalism without sovereignty has a simple result: the personal rule of judges. The error is to imagine the existence of a superhuman legal authority which can bind a state against itself, enforcing a "government of laws, not men." As the bizarre encrustations of precedent that history builds up around every written constitution demonstrate, this is simply a political perpetual-motion device. All governments are governments of men. If final decisions are taken by a council of nine, these nine are the nine who rule. Whether you call them a court, a junta or a politburo is irrelevant.

Since I am a bit of a geek, though, the Rothbardian interpretation that interests me most is his approach to [contract law](#). Note how Rothbard rejects the idea of binding promises, and is forced to construct

impossibly elaborate structures of property rights. If I promise to paint your house, I have really sold you a title to a paint job, and if I do not then paint your house I am guilty of theft for having stolen said paint job. I think.

The Rothbardian design breaks down completely in a frequently-mentioned exception, the case of insider trading. Here is a randomly-Google'd [example](#) of the kind of Jesuitic Talmudry to which libertarians resort when confronted with this problem. To a pronomian, the answer is simple: if you are to be given material non-public information, you promise to go to jail if you disclose it. Note that this is exactly how it works now. (Note also that to anyone who has ever had a real job, the idea of legal insider trading is transparently ridiculous.)

The tactical error of the libertarian, Rothbardian or otherwise, is to believe that the state can be made smaller and simpler by making it weaker. Historically, the converse is the case: attempts to weaken an unauthority either destroy it, resulting in [chaos and death](#), or force it to compensate by enlarging, resulting in the familiar "[red-giant](#)state." The pronomian prefers a state that is small, simple, and very strong. It respects the rights of its clients not because it is forced to respect them, but because it has a financial incentive to respect them, and it obeys that financial incentive because it is managed responsibly and effectively.

All things considered, however, libertarianism is a mild, innocuous form of antinomianism. Let's skip immediately to the writer who may be the most popular philosopher on earth today, [Slavoj Žižek](#). Here we see antinomianism in an almost pure, indiscriminate form, as in [this lovely passage](#):

The Benjaminian "divine violence" should be thus conceived as divine in the precise sense of the old Latin motto vox populi, vox dei: NOT in the perverse sense of "we are doing it as mere instruments of the People's Will," but as the heroic assumption of the solitude of sovereign decision. It is a decision (to kill, to risk or lose one's own life) made in the absolute solitude, with no cover in the big Other. If it is extra-moral, it is not "immoral," it does not give the agent the license to just kill with some kind of angelic innocence. The motto of divine violence is fiat iustitia, pereat mundus: it is JUSTICE, the point of non-distinction between justice and vengeance, in which "people" (the anonymous part of no-part) imposes its terror and makes other parts pay the price - the Judgment Day for the long history of oppression, exploitation, suffering - [...]

*The anonymous part of no-part. The big Other.* Listen to this scoundrel, this charlatan, this truly evil man. Or buy his book, with its [lovely cover](#). You won't be the first. If I, dear open-minded progressive, ever become as popular on America's college campuses as Slavoj Žižek, you may feel free to expend as much concern over my "secure relocation facilities" as Professor Žižek's rusty old guillotine, which has lost not a drop of its eternal thirst.

Did I mention that I'm not an antinomian? From Rothbard to Robespierre is a long leap, no doubt, but we can observe some commonalities.

Antinomians believe that the present state of affairs is unsatisfactory. So, of course, do I. The *nomos* is horribly corroded and encrusted with all sorts of gunk. However, the pronomian's goal is to discern the real structure of order under this heap of garbage, scrape it down to the bare skeleton, replace any missing bones, and let the healthy tissue of reality grow around it.

To the pronomian, this structure is arbitrary. Weirdly-shaped borders? Leave them as they are. High taxes? All that tax revenue is paid to someone, who probably thinks of it as his property. Who am I to say it isn't? There are some property structures, notably patent rights, which I (like most libertarians) find very unproductive. If so, the government needs to print money and buy them back. Fortunately, it has a large, high-speed intaglio press.

The pronomian seeks to restore the *nomos*, whose outlines are clear under the mountain of byzantine procedure, wholesale makework and vote-buying, criminal miseducation, and other horrors of the liberal-democratic state. The antinomian sees many of the same horrors. But he does not share the pronomian's goal: minimizing the reallocation of property and authority. Where the pronomian simply wants to replace the management, reorganize the staff, and discard the inscrutable volumes of precedent that have absconded with the name of *law*, the antinomian wants to destroy power structures that he conceives as illegitimate.

And, of course, he wants to rebuild them according to his ideals. Unless he is a complete nihilist, which of course some are. But it is the destructive tendency that makes antinomianism so successful. The utopia is never constructed, or if it is it is not a utopia. Success is a precondition to utopia, and success involves achieving the power to destroy.

The most common species of antinomian is, of course, the simple anarchist. The most bloodthirsty and intrusive states of the 20th century were based on a philosophy - Marxism - which saw itself as fundamentally opposed to government. People really did believe that the socialist paradise would be something other than a state.

Near where I live, on one of the most fashionable shopping streets in the world, is an [anarchist bookstore](#). On its side wall is a [mural](#). The mural contains two slogans:

History remembers 2 kinds of people, those who kill and those who fight back.

Anarchism strives toward a social organization which will establish well-being for all.

I am flabbergasted by how revealing these slogans are. History, at least when written by honest historians, remembers one kind of people: those who kill. It also notes that those who kill always conceive of themselves as "fighting back." As for "a social organization," it is simply our old friend, the State.

Thus, anarchism defines itself: it is an attempt to capture the state, and its juicy revenues, through

extortion, robbery and murder. When it succeeds, it will distribute the loot among its accomplices, and "establish well-being for all." At least in theory.

As we've seen, the one thing an antinomian cannot abide is a formal and immutable distribution of the revenues of state. He must constantly redistribute, he must wash his hands on the stream of cash, giving to Peter and taking from Paul, or his supporters have no reason to support him. In other words, he is basically a criminal.

Why is antinomianism, this criminal ideology, so popular? Fashionable, even? Why is it such a good fit for Q? Because people love power, and any movement with the power to destroy anything, or even just "change" it, has just that: power.

Antinomianism allows young aristocrats to engage in the activity that has been the favorite sport of young aristocrats since Alcibiades was a little boy: scheming for power. According to [this article](#), for example, there are "over 7500 nonprofits" in the Bay Area, "3800 of which deal with sustainability issues." These appear to employ approximately half of our fair city's *jeunesse doree*, occupying the best years of their lives and paying them squat. Meanwhile, container ships full of empty boxes thunder out the Golden Gate, along with approximately two trillion dollars a year of little green pieces of paper. However, if you're 23 and all you care about is getting laid, interning at a nonprofit is definitely the way to go.

Amidst all this appalling nonsense, productive people keep their heads down and manage to engage in a few remaining productive pursuits. The *nomos* endures. Nor, not even if the Good One is elected, will the guillotine and the tumbrils reappear any time soon.

But antinomianism leaves its scars nonetheless. Almost literally.

The simplicity and flexibility of the *nomos* creates, or should create, an endless stream of "diversity" in the best sense of the word. It's almost impossible to imagine the variety of schools, for example, that would spring up if all parents could educate their children as they saw fit. Structures of voluntary agreement tend to rely heavily on mere personal decision, and the products and services they create tend to embody personal style. For example, one of the many reasons that Belle Epoque buildings tend to be so much more attractive than postwar buildings is, I think, that signoff on the design was much more likely to be in the hands of an individual than a committee.

Antinomianism, with its love for reaching into these structures of private agreement and breaking them to serve some nominally noble purpose, has the general effect of replacing individual decisions with committee decisions, personal responsibility with process, and personal taste with official aesthetics. The final stage is the worst form of bureaucracy - litigation, an invisible tyrant whose arms wrap tighter and tighter around us every year. This is sclerosis, scar tissue, Dilbert, Brezhnev, boredom and incompetence for everyone everywhere.

Most observers interpret bureaucratic sclerosis as a sign of a government which is too powerful. In fact it is a sign of a government which is too weak. If seventeen officials need to provide signoff for you to repaint the fence in your front yard, this is not because George W. Bush, *El Maximo Jefe*, was so concerned about the toxicity of red paint that he wants to make seventeen-times-sure that no wandering fruit flies are spattered with the nefarious chemical. It is because a lot of people have succeeded in making work for themselves, and that work has been spread wide and well. They are thriving off tiny pinhole leaks through which power leaks out of the State. A strong unauthority would plug the leaks, and retire the officials.

Outside the Communist bloc proper, of course, the ultimate in power leakage and resulting bureaucracy was India's infamous [Permit Raj](#), which still to some extent exists. Needless to say, if the subcontinent was run on a profit basis, the Permit Raj would not be good business. In fact, quite amusingly and with no apparent sense of irony, our favorite newspaper recently printed [an article](#) in which the following lines appear:

Vietnam's biggest selling point for many companies is its political stability. Like China, it has a nominally Communist one-party system that crushes dissent, keeps the military under tight control and changes government policies and leaders slowly.

"Communism means more stability," Mr. Shu, the chief financial officer of Texhong, said, voicing a common view among Asian executives who make investment decisions. At least a few American executives agree, although they never say so on the record.

Democracies like those in Thailand and the Philippines have proved more vulnerable to military coups and instability. A military coup in Thailand in September 2006 was briefly followed by an attempt, never completed, to impose nationalistic legislation penalizing foreign companies.

"That sent the wrong signal that we would not welcome foreign investment — this has ruined the confidence of investors locally and internationally," the finance minister Surapong Suebwonglee said in an interview in Bangkok.

The ironies! Of course, perhaps it is not so ironic after all, as perhaps the main reason that the old [China Hands](#), the men (such as [Owen Lattimore](#)) who by "manipulating procedural outcomes" [gave China to Mao](#), thought the Communists were the shizzle is that they were obviously so *strong*. America could really do great things in Asia with the ruthlessly indoctrinated divisions of the PLA on its side, as opposed to Chiang Kai-Shek, who looked like his main interests were opium and little boys.

After fifty million deaths and the annihilation of traditional Chinese culture, what still remains is that strength. There is not much antinomianism in China, which has reduced its totalitarian pretensions to one simple and easily-obeyed rule: do not challenge the Party for power. The result, though profoundly flawed, is the most successful capitalist country in the world. All things considered, it is certainly one of

the best to do business in - as the article describes.

And there is another effect of antinomianism: this.

### ["Bay Area Freeway Takeover 580 Sideshow"](#)

"That's how we do it out here, man!" In my primitive search of the Pravda, I find no evidence that this happened. Therefore, I must conclude that it did not, and the video is faked.

Because imagine the breach of the [limes](#) between barbarism and civilization that this would represent! If you could show this video to an American of 1908, he would simply conclude that civilization has collapsed. It has not. It lives. 580 is safe, mostly. I think. This sort of thing simply can't happen.

But it can, and it can go on for quite a while without (probably) affecting my life (too much). Nonetheless, it is not getting better. It is getting worse. And nobody is proposing anything like anything that would fix it - except, of course, for me. And I'm crazy.

So Q, of course, is left, and M is right. That is, M - pronomism - is the *essential principle* of the political right wing. We very rarely see this principle in anything like its undiluted form. But still: why dilute it? Why look around for partial fixes? Why not cure the problem in one step?

Pure Toryism of this sort has a hidden advantage: it is a [Schelling point](#). True, it is very difficult to persuade people to abandon all of the different strains of antinomianism that have nested in their brain, each of which assures them that a simple restoration of the *nomos*, with sovereign bankruptcy and a plenary Receiver, is unthinkably "fascist."

However, the eternal problem in organizing any kind of reactionary movement is that if you can get two "conservatives" together in a room, you can generally persuade them to form three political parties. Dissidents by definition are people who think for themselves. They do not have the advantage of the Q-virus, which pulls them all together around the Good One. And like normal people, they tend to disagree.

This is why the search for the essential principle, the *nomos*, the philosopher's stone of the right wing, matters. If you can persuade those who distrust the system as it is to discard everything, liberal or conservative - not just "diversity," and the Good One, and police who hug criminals, but even the Constitution and the Flag and the World Wars and Democracy and the Pledge and the Bill of Rights and all the rest of that stale mythology - if you can talk your audience down to the bare metal, convince them that their political system is scrap, that it is not even remotely recoverable, and then present them with a single principle of government that is at or near this level of simplicity, you'll have a group of people who are all on *exactly the same page*.

This, in a word, is organization. And organization is what gets things done. Continue to [part 12](#).

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/06/olxi-truth-about-left-and-right.html>

## Part 12: what is to be done?

July 2, 2008

Dear open-minded progressive, every true conversation is a whole life long. (Isn't that the sort of thing a progressive would say? I can almost imagine it on a Starbucks cup.) Also, every journey starts with a single step, and all good things come to an end. And no meeting may adjourn without action items.

So, in the famous words of [Lenin](#), what is to be done? As briefly as possible without jeopardizing UR's reputation for pompous prolixity, let's review the problem.

The leading cause of violent death and misery galore in the modern era is *bad government*. Most of us grew up thinking we live in a time and place in which Science and Democracy, which put a man on the moon and brought him back with Tang, have either cured this ill or reduced it to a manageable and improving condition. That is, most of us grew up believing - and most Americans, whatever their party registration, still believe - in *progress*.

Both these statements are facts. But there are two ways to interpret the second. Either (a), blue pill, the belief in *progress* is an accurate assessment of reality, or (b), red pill, it isn't. Our pills correspond to visions of the future, and neither is my invention. The blue pill is marked [millennium](#). The red pill is marked [anakyklosis](#).

To choose (b), we have to believe that hundreds of millions of people living in a more or less free society, many of whom are literate and even reasonably knowledgeable, completely misunderstand reality - and more specifically, history. A hard pill to swallow? Not at all, because the blue pill tastes just as big going down. To believe in *progress*, you have to believe that similar numbers of our ancestors were just as misguided - enthralled by racism, classism, and other nefarious "ideologies," from which humanity is in the progress of cleansing itself.

Both pills, in other words, claim to be red. But when we note that progressive ideas flow freely through the most influential circles in our society, whereas reactionary ideas are scorned, marginalized and often even criminalized, we can tell the difference.

This week I tried a small experiment: I went over to [Professor Burke's](#), having previously emailed a chivalrous warning that I was talking trash about him on my blog, and on no real provocation at all viciously attacked the man. After all, presumably if you're a full professor specializing in the history of Southern Africa, it should be no problem for you to brush away any catcalls from the peanut gallery on this matter - perhaps even brutally humiliating the catcaller if his persistence exceeds your patience, and you're feeling sadistic this morning. Rank hath its duties, and its pleasures too.

Obviously I'm a biased observer, but this is not my impression of the interaction. Feel free to draw your own conclusions. Threads are (opening, and a little awkwardly on my part) [here](#), (mainly) [here](#), and

(closing) [here](#).

At the very least, don't miss the Professor's own post on the last ( [Big Wonkery](#)): the inspiration is unclear, but this is more or less his restatement of the Cathedral hypothesis - from within the nave, as it were. Everything he says is 100% true, and I do like the phrase "Big Wonkery." Didn't I tell you the man had a conscience?

The reason Professor Burke and his henchmen have such difficulty in handling the reactionary onslaught is not that I am smarter than him. It is *certainly* not that I know more about Rhodesia. (He is a professional historian - I am an armchair historiographer.) The reason is that, since his narrative is hegemonic and mine is marginalized, I have heard all his arguments and he has heard few of mine. (Also, the facts of the case could hardly be more glaring.)

The Professor is a sort of professional moderate, a one-eyed man in the kingdom of the blind. Put him next to your stock postcolonial theorist, and the man looks positively level-headed. His "thunderbolt of rage" is pure reactionary righteousness. (Through [La Wik](#), I discovered this [wonderful evocation](#) of the modern reactionary experience. "Reactionary Airfield!" "Thawra" means "revolution," of course.) But something - inertia, ambition, tradition, or mere medical incapacity - keeps the Professor from opening his other eye, and maybe always will. There were many such figures in the late Soviet Union. Indeed Gorbachev himself was one.

It's also fascinating to observe how what we might call, kindly, a "policy-oriented historian," thinks and operates. For comparison, here is the blog of a [history-oriented historian](#). Knowles has taken the motto of [Ranke](#), *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, as his blog title, and his personal affection for the world he studies is obvious. Indeed some study the past because they love it, others because they hate it. Not to be too inflammatory, but Professor Burke studies Rhodesia much as the scholars of *Rassenkunde* once studied Jews: if Rhodesia or Rhodesians ever did anything stupid, evil, or both, the Professor is sure to be an expert on the matter. And again, he is far, far superior to your average postcolonial theorist. (I wonder if he knows that [Rhodesian MRAP designs](#) are [saving American lives](#) as we speak. Or if he cares. Or if he even approves.)

Anyway. Enough of this dinner theater. I've tried a good many arguments for the red pill, or "declinist narrative" as Professor Burke would put it. The audience being inherently irregular, I try to throw in one a week, and I don't think I've trotted out the following for a while.

Imagine that there had been no scientific or technical progress at all during the 20th century. That the government of 2008 had to function with the technical base of 1908. Surely, if the quality of government has increased or even just remained constant, its performance with the same tools should be just as good. And with better technology, it should do even better.

But without computers, cell phones or even motor vehicles, 19th-century America could [rebuild](#)

[destroyed cities instantly](#)- at least, instantly by today's standards. Imagine what this vanished society, which if we could see it with our own eyes would strike us as no less foreign than any country in the world today, could accomplish if it got its hands on 21st-century gadgets - without any of the intervening social and political *progress*.

When we think of *progress* we tend to think of two curves summed. X, the change in our understanding and control of nature, slopes upward except in the most dire circumstances - the fall of Rome, for example. But X is a confounding variable. Y, the change in our quality of government, is the matter at hand. Extracting Y from X+Y is not a trivial exercise.

But broad thought-experiments - like imagining what would become of 1908 America, if said continent magically popped up in the mid-Atlantic in 2008, and had to modernize and compete in the global economy - tell a different story. I am very confident that Old America would be the world's leading industrial power within the decade, and I suspect it would attract a lot of immigration from New America. The seeds of decay were there, certainly, but they had hardly begun to sprout. At least by today's standards.

Surely a healthy, stable society should be able to thrive in a steady state without any technical improvements at all. But if we imagine the 20th century without technical progress, we see an almost pure century of disaster. Even when we restrict our imagination to the second half of the twentieth century, to imagine the America of 2008 reduced to the technology of 1950 is a bleak, bleak thought. If you are still taking the blue pills, to what force do you ascribe this anomalous decay?

Whereas the red pill gives us an easy explanation: a decaying system of government has been camouflaged and ameliorated by the advance of technology. Of course, X may overcome Y and lead us to the [Singularity](#), in which misgovernment is no more troublesome than acne. Or Y may overcome X, and produce the [Antisingularity](#) - a new fall of Rome. It's a little difficult to invent self-inventing AI when you're eating cold beans behind the perimeter of a refugee camp in Redwood Shores, and Palo Alto is RPG squeals, mortar whumps and puffs of black smoke on the horizon, as the Norteños and the Zetas finally have it out over the charred remains of your old office park. Unlikely, sure, but do you understand the X-Y interaction well enough to preclude this outcome? Because I don't.

Swallowing the red pill leads us, like Neo, into a completely different reality. In reality (b), bad government has not been defeated at all. History is not over. Oh, no. We are still living it. Perhaps we are in the positions of the French of 1780 or the Russians of 1914, who had no idea that the worlds they lived in could degenerate so rapidly into misery and terror.

Is the abyss this close? I don't think so, but surely the [materials](#) are [present](#). The spark is a long way from the gasoline - Ayers and his ilk strike most of Americans as more clownish than anything, and our [modern revolutionaries](#) have never been so out of touch with the urban underclass (for whom John Derbyshire proposes the wonderful Shakespearian word [bezonian](#)). Nonetheless, the first political

entrepreneur who finds a way to deploy gangstas as stormtroopers, a trick the SDS often threatened but never quite mastered, will have pure dynamite on his hands.

More probable in my opinion is a slow decline into a Brezhnevian future, in which nothing good or new or exciting or beautiful is legal. X peters to a crawl. Y continues. And only after many, many decades - probably not in our lifetimes - does the real dystopian experience start. Or the system could fail catastrophically, and produce not the rarefied algorithmic authoritarianism of UR, but some kind of awful [Stormfront](#) neofascism. (Why is it that the more Nazi you are, the uglier your website is? Never mind, I think I know.) Or it could all just work out fine.

But can we count on this? We cannot. So, as thoughtful and concerned people, we have three reasons to think about solutions. One is that we are thoughtful and concerned people. Two is that thinking about government in a post-democratic context is an excellent way to clear our minds of the antinomian cant with which our educators so thoroughly larded us. And three is that once the cant is cleared, it's actually kind of fun and refreshing to think about government. The problem is not new, but it has been lying fallow for a while.

First: the problem. Our goal is to convert a 20th-century government, such as [USG](#) or "Washcorp," into a sovereign organization which is stable, responsible and effective. For simplicity, I'll assume you're an American. If you are not an American, you almost certainly live under an American-style, post-1945 government. Substitute as necessary.

Our logic is that secured real estate is the oldest and most important form of capital. Ie: it is a productive asset. There is only one responsible and effective way to manage a productive asset: make it turn a profit. To maximize the profit is to maximize the price of the asset. To maximize the price of a sovereign jurisdiction is to maximize the price of the properties within it. To maximize real-estate prices is to maximize the desirability of the neighborhood. To maximize the desirability of the neighborhood is to maximize the quality of life therein. To maximize the quality of life is the goal of good government. Ergo: responsible and effective government is best achieved by sovereign capitalism, ie, neocameralism.

Watch the Austrian economist [Hans-Hermann Hoppe](#) - since Rothbard's premature demise, probably the superstar of the school today - [struggle with this problem](#). Professor Hoppe is an antinomian of the libertarian species. He is a sound formalist at every layer up to the top, where he rejects the concept of sovereign property as a royalist plot. (Actually, in medieval Europe, sovereign fiefs could easily be [bought and sold](#) - and note that no "natural rights" protected the Quitzows from the Hohenzollerns.) Professor Hoppe writes:

Under these circumstances, a completely new option has become viable: the provision of law and order by freely competing private (profit-and-loss) insurance agencies.

Even though hampered by the state, insurance agencies protect private property owners upon

payment of a premium against a multitude of natural and social disasters, from floods and hurricanes to theft and fraud. Thus, it would seem that the production of security and protection is the very purpose of insurance. Moreover, people would not turn to just anyone for a service as essential as that of protection.

There's one difference: an insurance agency exists under the protection of a government which enforces its contracts. Whereas English actually has a word for an unprotected protection agency. It's called a *gang*. (The Russian word *krysha*, meaning "roof," is also quite evocative.)

In real life, for obvious military reasons, gangs tend to organize themselves around *territories*, or contiguous blocks of real estate. Historically, situations in which gang territories overlap are unusual. As formal rules develop for the internal organization of the gang, and its relations with other gangs, the gang becomes a country. Formalization maximizes the gang's profits and greatly improves its clients' quality of life.

We are starting from the other direction: a gigantic, mature if not senescent [vegetable-marrow](#) of a government. Awful as it is, degenerate as its laws have become, it is still a government, and a government is still a good thing. It is considerably easier to liquidate and restructure USG than to turn [MS-13](#) and the [Black Guerrilla Family](#) into the Hapsburgs and Hohenzollerns.

When we left off this problem, we had [liquidated USG](#) and transferred full operating control of its assets to a mysterious bankruptcy administrator known only as the [Receiver](#). We had not described: (a) how the process is initiated, (b) how the Receiver is selected, or (c) what policies, beyond terminating "foreign policy," quelling the bezonians, and installing a sensible tax system, we can expect the Receiver to follow.

Frankly, (c) is not worth a lot of speculation. The democratic habit, in which ordinary people - or even UR readers, who are very unlikely to be ordinary people - conceive ourselves capable of understanding how a country is best administered, is one to be broken at all costs. I drive a car on a regular basis, but I have no idea what I would do if someone put me in charge of Ford. I am typing this message on a Mac, but my first act as CEO of Apple would be to resign. (Well, I might do something about the \$\*\*#!% [batteries](#) first.) I love film, but don't try to make me direct one. And so on.

Moreover, the fact that we have assigned the Receiver full administrative authority means, by definition, that he or she is not constrained by the whims and fancies of whatever movement produced the office. A restoration has one goal: responsible and effective government. The details are out of its planners' hands.

However, we can think about some things. For example: there are very few decisions that need to be taken on a continental level. USG provides continental defense, hardly hard in North America, but whose absence would eventually be [felt](#). There are certainly some continent-scale environmental issues. I can't think of much else. In a country with responsible and effective government, even immigration can be a local issue: if you don't have permission to live and/or work somewhere, the technology required to

prevent you is hardly Orwellian.

So I suspect the Receiver's restructuring plans might involve dividing North America into, say, its largest 100 or 200 or 500 metropolitan areas (USG's historical internal boundaries being of little importance), each of which gets its own little mini-Receiver, devoted as usual to maximizing asset value. To paraphrase Tom Hayden: one, two, three, many [Monacos](#).

Eventually, there is no reason why these principalities could not be independently traded and even locally sovereign, perhaps owning the continental assets of USG, consortium style, rather than the other way around. Initially, however, USG's financial liabilities are as vast as its assets - exactly as vast, since it needs to become solvent. Unless we want to make the dollar worthless, which we don't, the entire country must remain federal property.

Imagining restructuring at a local level helps in a couple of ways. First, redundancy counts: if Seattle, for some reason, winds up with Kim Jong Il as its Receiver, and he promises to be good but quickly resorts to his old habits, the residents can always flee to Portland. If Kim gets the whole continent, the continent is screwed. Second, it is simply easier to imagine how a city could be restored, especially if you happen to live in that city.

The San Francisco Bay Area, for example, is a jewel even in its present dilapidated state, its no-go areas, modernist crimes against architecture, froth of beggars and rim of tacky sprawl. I can scarcely imagine what a Steve Jobs, a Frederick the Great, a Mountstuart Elphinstone, or an administrator of similar caliber would make of it.

But how (b) do we select such an administrator? The crucial question is the back end of this administrative structure. A Receiver is not a "benevolent dictator." If angels were available to meet our staffing needs, that would be one thing. They are not. There is no responsibility without accountability. The trick is in preventing accountability from degenerating into parliamentary government, ie, politics - which is how we got where we are at present.

To prevent the emergence of politics, a stable, established neocameralist state relies on the fact that its shares are held by a widely distributed body of investors, each of whose management control is precisely proportional to the share of the profits the investor receives, and none of whom has any way to profit privately by causing the enterprise to be mismanaged. The result is a perfect alignment of interests among all shareholders, all of whom have exactly the same one-dimensional goal: maximizing the value of their shares. Experience in private corporate governance shows that such a body tends to be reasonably competent in selecting managers, and almost never succumbs to anything like politics.

When converting a democratic state into a neocameralist one, however, a great deal of care is needed. For example, since any bankruptcy procedure converts debt to equity, quite a few shares must end up in the hands of those who now hold dollars, bank or Treasury obligations, rights to entitlement payments, etc,

etc. Will these individuals be (a) rationally motivated to maximize the value of their assets, and (b) effective in selecting competent management that will act according to (a)? Or won't they? There is no way to know.

I think I am on reasonably firm ground in asserting that once democratic politics can be made to go away, this design offers no avenues by which it can revive itself. However, keeping the thing dead is one thing. Killing it is quite another.

Today's administrative states are irresponsible because their actions tend to be the consequence of vast chains of procedure which separate individual decisions from results. The result is hopelessly dysfunctional and ineffective, often becomes seriously detached from reality, and demands an immense quantity of pointless busywork. However, it has the Burkean (Ed, not Tim) virtues of stability, consistency, and predictability. It works, sort of.

When you take all this process, policy and precedent, rip it up, and revert to responsible personal authority, you gain enormously in effectiveness and efficiency. But the design places a tremendous engineering load on the assumption of responsibility and the absence of politics. This simply can't be screwed up. If it is, the consequences can be disastrous. Hello, Hitler. Also, did I mention Hitler? Finally, there is the possibility of creating a new Hitler.

Obviously, it's time for us to have a serious discussion of Hitler. Anyone who proposes anything even remotely resembling an absolute personal dictatorship needs a Hitler position. Because, after all, I mean, Hitler.

Albert Jay Nock, who needs no introduction here at UR, and many of whose words will stand the test of time long after we are dead, wrote the following in his [diary](#) for July 23, 1933:

The wretched state of things in Germany continues. It is a manifestation of a nation-wide sentiment that any honest-minded person must sympathize with, but its expression, under the direction of a lunatic adventurer, takes shape in the most revolting enormities.

This is simply the best summary of National Socialism I have ever seen. And it was written only six months after the swine came to power.

Fascist-style approaches to terminating democracy in the 21st century face two unsolvable problems. One is that the democracies have, in their usual style, overdone the job of arming themselves against anything like fascism - they are absurdly terrified of it. Fascism is a salmon trying to jump over Boulder Dam. Two is that even if your salmon could jump over Boulder Dam, the result would be... fascism. Which would certainly be an improvement in some regards. But not in others.

The Boulder Dam analogy is well-demonstrated by La Wik's page for [direct action](#). Note that every example on the page is in the revolutionary or progressive category. The term does not seem to apply to

reactionary or fascist "direct action," although tactics have no alignment. Of course, the gangster methods that Hitler and Mussolini used in coming to power were direct action in a nutshell - as were the actions of the [Southern Redeemers](#).

The answer is that "direct action" depends on the tolerance and/or connivance of the police, military, and/or judicial system. In Weimar Germany, nationalists had all three - mostly relics of the Wilhelmine government - on their side. Denazification reversed this. Today in Europe, [antifas](#) can beat up their opponents with a wink and a nod from the authorities, whereas neo-Nazis get the book thrown at them. The answer: duh. Don't be a neo-Nazi.

Anyone interested in overthrowing democracy desperately needs to read the great memoir of [Ernst von Salomon](#), *Der Fragebogen*, published in English as [The Answers](#) but better translated as *The Questionnaire*. (The title is a reference to the [denazification questionnaires](#) which all Germans seeking any responsible postwar position had to complete.)

Salomon, who despite his name was not Jewish (though his wife was) was never a Nazi. He was, however, a hardcore nationalist, and not just any hardcore nationalist: he was a member of the notorious post-[Freikorps](#) death squad, [Organisation Consul](#), and personally involved in the assassination of [Rathenau](#), for which he served time. (If it's any defense, he was 19, and his role was limited to procuring the getaway car.) He was also a brilliant writer who made a living turning out movie scripts - before, during, and after the Third Reich. A good comparison is [Ernst Jünger](#), also wonderfully readable if a little more abstruse.

*Der Fragebogen* is a gloriously-fresh introduction to the world of Weimar, which most of us have encountered only from the liberal side. If you have trouble understanding how Nock could sympathize with the destruction of Weimar while abhorring Hitlerism, von Salomon is your man. The opening alone is a work of genius:

#### *MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY: FRAGEBOGEN*

*WARNING: Read the entire Fragebogen carefully before you start to fill it out. The English language will prevail if discrepancies exist between it and the German translation. Answers must be typewritten or printed clearly in block letters. Every question must be answered precisely and no space is to be left blank. If a question is to be answered by either 'yes' or 'no,' print the word 'yes' or 'no' in the appropriate space. If the question is inapplicable, so indicate by some appropriate word or phrase such as 'none' or 'not applicable.' Add supplementary sheets if there is not enough space in the questionnaire. Omissions or false or incomplete statements are offences against Military Government and will result in prosecution and punishment.*

I have now read the entire Fragebogen or questionnaire carefully. Although not specifically told to do so, I have even read it through more than once, word for word, question for question. This is not

by any means the first questionnaire with which I have grappled. I have already filled in many identical Fragebogen, and a great number of similar ones, at a time and in circumstances concerning which I shall have a certain amount to say under the heading *Remarks*. Apart from that group of Fragebogen there were others: during the period January 30th, 1933, to May 6th, 1945, which is usually called the 'Third Reich,' or with cheap wit 'the Thousand-Year Reich,' or briefly 'the Nazi Regime,' or correctly the period of the National-Socialist government in Germany - during those years, too, I was frequently confronted with Fragebogen. I can confidently assert that I invariably read them through with care.

In order to satisfy any doubts on the matter let me say at once that the perusal of all these questionnaires has always produced the same effect on me: a tumult of sensations is let loose within my breast in which the first and the strongest is that of acute discomfort. When I try to identify this sensation of discomfort more exactly, it seems to me to be very close to that experienced by a schoolboy caught at some mischief - a very young person, on the threshold of experience, suddenly face to face with an enormous and ominous power which claims for itself all the force of law, custom, order and morality. He cannot yet judge the world's pretension that whatever is is right; at present his conscience is good when he is in harmony with that world, bad when he is not. He cannot yet guess that a happy moment will one day come when he will weigh the world and its institutions in the scales of that still dormant conscience of his, will weigh it and will find it wanting and in need of rebuilding from the foundations up.

Now in view of the matters which I have had to discuss in my answer to Question 19, I am clearly nowise entitled to express my opinions on matters of conscience. Nor is it I who wish to do so. Yet how am I to account for the tone and arrangement of this questionnaire if its general intention is not a new incitement to me to examine this conscience of mine?

The institution which, in all the world, seems to me most worthy of admiration, the Catholic Church, has its system of confession and absolution. The Church recognizes that men may be sinners but does not brand them as criminals; furthermore, there is only one unforgivable sin, that against the Holy Ghost. The Catholic Church seeks to convert and save the heathen, who is striving to be happy according to his lights; but for the heretic, who has once heard the call and has yet refused to follow it, there can be no forgiveness. This attitude is straightforward and consistent and entails certain sublime consequences. It leads directly to the secrecy of the confessional. It also means that each man, in his search for grace, is very largely dependent on his own, innermost determination. A fine attitude, and one that I might myself embrace did not I fear that the very quintessence of the Church's teaching - yes, the Ten Commandments themselves - were in painful contradiction to a whole series of laws that I have recently been compelled to observe.

For it is not the Catholic Church that has approached me and requested that I examine my conscience, but another and far less admirable institution, Allied Military Government in Germany.

Sublimity here is at a discount. Unlike the priest with the poor sinner remote from the world in the secrecy of the quiet confessional, A.M.G. sends its questionnaire into my home and, like an examining judge with a criminal, barks its one hundred and thirty-one questions at me: it demands, coldly and flatly, nothing less than the truth; it even threatens twice - once at the beginning and once at the end - to punish me; and the nature and scope of the punishment envisaged I can only too vividly imagine. (See *Remarks*, at the end of this questionnaire.) [Salomon was badly beaten, and his wife was raped, by American soldiers in a postwar detention camp. - MM]

It was representatives of A.M.G., men in well-creased uniforms with many brightly coloured decorations, who made it unambiguously clear to me that every man worthy to be called a man should study his conscience before deciding whether or not to act in any specific way. They sat in front of me, one after the other, those agreeable and well-groomed young people, and spoke with glibness and self-assurance about so great a matter as a man's conscience. I admired them for their apodictic certainty; I envied them their closed and narrow view of the world.

Salomon's book was a bestseller in postwar Germany. It is now anathema, of course, in that thoroughly occupied country - in which only the faintest trace of any pre-American culture can still be detected.

Here (to get back to Hitler) are some of Salomon's observations on the Nazis:

At that time - it was high summer of 1922 and the Oberammergau Passion Play was being acted - Munich was filled with foreigners. Even the natives had not the time to attend big political rallies. Thus I did not even have a chance to hear Hitler - and now I shall go to my grave without ever having once attended a meeting where I could hear this most remarkable figure of the first half of the twentieth century speak in person.

"What does he actually say?" I asked the [Kapitän's](#) adjutant.

"He says more or less this," the adjutant began, and it was significant that he could not help mimicking the throaty voice with the vengeful undertones, "he says, quite calmly: 'My enemies have sneered at me, saying that you can't attack a tank with a walking stick...' Then his voice gets louder and he says: 'But I tell you...' And then he shouts with the utmost intensity: '... that a man who hasn't the guts to attack a tank with a walking stick will achieve nothing!' And then there's tremendous, senseless applause."

The Kapitän said: "Tanks I know nothing about. But I do know that a man who tries to ram an iron-clad with a fishing smack isn't a hero. He's an idiot."

I know not whether the Kapitän, lacking in powers of oratory as he was, found Hitler's methods of influencing the masses as repugnant as I did, but I assumed this to be the case. I also obscurely felt that for the Kapitän, deeply involved in his political concept, to be carried forward on the tide of a mass movement must seem unclean. Policy could only be laid down from 'above,' not from 'below.'

The state must always think for the people, never through the people. Again I obscurely felt that there could be no compromise here, that all compromise would mean falsification.

But it was precisely his effect on the masses that led to Hitler's success in Munich. He employed new methods of propaganda, hitherto unthought of. The banners of his party were everywhere to be seen, as was the gesture of recognition, the raised right arm, used by his supporters; the deliberate effort involved in this gesture was in itself indicative of faith. And everywhere was to be heard the greeting, the slogan *Heil Hitler!* Never before had a man dared to include his essentially private name in an essentially public phrase. It implied among his followers a degree of self-alienation that was perhaps significant; no longer could the individual establish direct contact with his neighbour - this third party was needed as intermediary.

And, ten pages later:

The word 'democracy' is one that I have only very rarely, and with great reluctance, employed. I do not know what it is and I have never yet met anyone who could explain its meaning to me in terms that I am capable of understanding. But I fear that Hitler's assertion - that his ideological concept was the democratic concept - will prove a hard one to refute. The enlightenment of the world from a single, central position, the winning of mass support through convincing arguments, the legitimate road to power by way of the ballot-box, the legitimisation by the people itself of power achieved - I fear it is hard to deny that these are democratic stigmata, revelatory perhaps of democracy in a decadent and feverish form, but democratic none the less. I further fear that the contrary assertion - that the totalitarian system as set up by Hitler was not democratic - will prove a hard one to justify. The totalitarian state is the exact opposite of the authoritarian state, which latter, of course, bears no democratic stigmata but hierarchical ones instead. Some people seem to believe that forms of government are estimable in accordance with their progressive development; since totalitarianism is certainly more modern than the authoritarian state system, they must logically give Hitler the advantage in the political field.

And I fear, dear open-minded progressive, that this is the first time in your life you've seen the word *authoritarian* in a positive context. The weird crawlies that crawl in when we leave our minds ajar! Perhaps yours is too open, after all. Better stop reading now.

In case Salomon isn't quite clear, let me paraphrase his theory of Hitler and the State. Salomon, and his hero [Kapitän Ehrhardt](#), were essentially militarists and monarchists, believers in the old Prussian system of government. In 1849 when [Friedrich Wilhelm IV](#) refused to "accept a crown from the gutter" (in other words, to become constitutional monarch of Germany under an English-style liberal system created by the [Revolutions of 1848](#)), he was expressing much the same philosophy.

While there is more mysticism to it, and anyone raised in a democratic society must cringe instinctively at the militaristic tone, Salomon's philosophy is more or less the same as neocameralism.

(Understandably, since after all it was Frederick the Great who gave us [cameralism](#).) Salomon's view of public opinion is mine: that it simply has nothing to do with the difficult craft of state administration, any more than the passengers' views on aerodynamics are relevant to the pilot of a 747. In particular, most Americans today know next to nothing about the reality of Washington, and frankly I don't see why they should have to learn.

In the totalitarian system as practiced by Hitler and the Bolsheviks, public opinion is not irrelevant at all. Oh, no. It is the cement that holds the regime together. Most people do not know, for example, of the frequent plebiscites by which the Nazis validated their power. But they do have a sense that Nazism was broadly popular, at least until the war, and they are right. Moreover, even a totalitarian regime that does not elicit genuine popularity can, like the Bolsheviks, elicit the pretense of popularity, and this has much the same power.

When describing any political design, a good principle to follow is that the weak are never the masters of the strong. If the design presents itself as one in which the weak control the strong, try erasing the arrowhead on the strong end and redrawing it on the weak end. Odds are you will end up with a more realistic picture. Popular sovereignty was a basic precept of both the Nazi and Bolshevik designs, and in both the official story was that the Party expressed the views of the masses. In reality, of course, the Party controlled those views. Thus the link which Salomon draws between democracy and the Orwellian mind-control state, two tropes which we children of progress were raised to imagine as the ultimate opposites.

Salomon is obviously not a libertarian, or at least not as much of a libertarian as me, and I suspect that what disturbs him is less the corruption of public opinion by the German state, than the corruption of the German state by public opinion. Regardless of the direction, the phenomenon was a feedback loop that, in the case of Nazism, led straight to perdition.

Here is another description of democracy. Try to guess where it was written, and when:

### The New Democracy

What is this freedom by which so many minds are agitated, which inspires so many insensate actions, so many wild speeches, which leads the people so often to misfortune? In the democratic sense of the word, freedom is the right of political power, or, to express it otherwise, the right to participate in the government of the State. This universal aspiration for a share in government has no constant limitations, and seeks no definite issue, but incessantly extends, so that we might apply to it the words of the ancient poet about dropsy: [crescit indulgens sibi](#). For ever extending its base, the new Democracy aspires to universal suffrage - a fatal error, and one of the most remarkable in the history of mankind. By this means, the political power so passionately demanded by Democracy would be shattered into a number of infinitesimal bits, of which each citizen acquires a single one. What will he do with it, then? how will he employ it? In the result it has undoubtedly been shown

that in the attainment of this aim Democracy violates its sacred formula of "Freedom indissolubly joined with Equality." It is shown that this apparently equal distribution of "freedom" among all involves the total destruction of equality. Each vote, representing an inconsiderable fragment of power, by itself signifies nothing; an aggregation of votes alone has a relative value. The result may be likened to the general meetings of shareholders in public companies. By themselves individuals are ineffective, but he who controls a number of these fragmentary forces is master of all power, and directs all decisions and dispositions. We may well ask in what consists the superiority of Democracy. Everywhere the strongest man becomes master of the State; sometimes a fortunate and resolute general, sometimes a monarch or administrator with knowledge, dexterity, a clear plan of action, and a determined will. In a Democracy, the real rulers are the dexterous manipulators of votes, with their placemen, the mechanics who so skilfully operate the hidden springs which move the puppets in the arena of democratic elections. Men of this kind are ever ready with loud speeches lauding equality; in reality, they rule the people as any despot or military dictator might rule it. The extension of the right to participate in elections is regarded as progress and as the conquest of freedom by democratic theorists, who hold that the more numerous the participants in political rights, the greater is the probability that all will employ this right in the interests of the public welfare, and for the increase of the freedom of the people. Experience proves a very different thing. The history of mankind bears witness that the most necessary and fruitful reforms - the most durable measures - emanated from the supreme will of statesmen, or from a minority enlightened by lofty ideas and deep knowledge, and that, on the contrary, the extension of the representative principle is accompanied by an abasement of political ideas and the vulgarisation of opinions in the mass of the electors. It shows also that this extension - in great States - was inspired by secret aims to the centralisation of power, or led directly to dictatorship. In France, universal suffrage was suppressed with the end of the Terror, and was re-established twice merely to affirm the autocracy of the two Napoleons. In Germany, the establishment of universal suffrage served merely to strengthen the high authority of a famous statesman who had acquired popularity by the success of his policy. What its ultimate consequences will be, Heaven only knows!

The manipulation of votes in the game of Democracy is of the commonest occurrence in most European states, and its falsehood, it would seem, has been exposed to all; yet few dare openly to rebel against it. The unhappy people must bear the burden, while the Press, herald of a supposititious public opinion, stifles the cry of the people with its shibboleth, "[Great is Diana of the Ephesians.](#)" But to an impartial mind, all this is nothing better than a struggle of parties, and a shuffling with numbers and names. The voters, by themselves inconsiderable unities, acquire a value in the hands of dexterous agents. This value is realised by many means - mainly, by bribery in innumerable forms, from gifts of money and trifling articles, to the distribution of places in the services, the financial departments, and the administration. Little by little a class of electors has been formed which lives by the sale of votes to one or another of the political organisations. So far has this gone in France, for instance, that serious, intelligent, and industrious citizens in immense

numbers abstain from voting, through the difficulty of contending with the cliques of political agents. With bribery go violence and threats, and reigns of terror are organised at elections, by the help of which the respective cliques advance their candidates; hence the stormy scenes at electoral demonstrations, in which arms have been used, and the field of battle strewn with the bodies of the killed and wounded.

Organisation and bribery - these are the two mighty instruments which are employed with such success for the manipulation of the mass of electors. Such methods are in no way new. Thucydides depicts in vivid colours their employment in the ancient republics of Greece. The history of the Roman Republic presents monstrous examples of corruption as the chief instrument of factions at elections. But in our times a new means has been found of working the masses for political aims, and joining them in adventitious alliances by provoking a fictitious community of views. This is the art of rapid and dexterous generalisation of ideas, the composition of phrase and formulas, disseminated with the confidence of burning conviction as the last word of science, as dogmas of politicology, as infallible appreciations of events, of men, and of institutions. At one time it was believed that the faculty of analysing facts, and deducing general principles was the privilege of a few enlightened minds and deep thinkers; now it is considered an universal attainment, and, under the name of convictions, the generalities of political science have become a sort of current money, coined by newspapers and rhetoricians.

The faculty of seizing and assimilating on faith these abstract ideas has spread among the mass, and become infectious, more especially to men insufficiently or superficially educated, who constitute the great majority everywhere. This tendency of the people is exploited with success by politicians who seek power; the art of creating generalities serves for them as a most convenient instrument. All deduction proceeds by the path of abstraction; from a number of facts the immaterial are eliminated, the essential elements collated, classified, and general formulas deduced. It is plain that the justice and value of these formulas depend upon how many of the premises are essential, and how many of those eliminated are irrelevant. The speed and ease with which abstract conclusions are arrived at are explained by the unceremonious methods observed in this process of selection of relevant facts and in their treatment. Hence the great success of orators, and the extraordinary effect of the abstractions which they cast to the people. The crowd is easily attracted by commonplaces and generalities invested in sonorous phrases; it cares nothing for proof which is inaccessible to it; thus is formed unanimity of thought, an unanimity fictitious and visionary, but in its consequences actual enough. This is called the "voice of the people," with the pendant, the "voice of God." The ease with which men are drawn by commonplaces leads everywhere to extreme demoralisation of public thought, and to the weakening of the political sense of the people. Of this, France to-day presents a striking example, and England also has not escaped the infection.

The author is the great Russian statesman and reactionary, [Konstantin Pobedonostsev](#). The book is [Reflections of a Russian Statesman](#). (A fascinating mix of cogent observations of the West, and

impenetrable Orthodox mysticism - I recommend it highly.) The date is 1869. Is there anything in Pobedonostsev's description of democracy that does not apply to the contest of Obama and McCain? Not that I can see. So much for the inevitable triumph of truth.

There is not a single significant American writer - even if you count Confederates as American, which is a big if - as right-wing as Pobedonostsev. He is to the right of everyone. He may even be to the right of Carlyle, even the old Carlyle who (two years earlier) produced the terrifying vision of [Shooting Niagara](#). Well, we shot Niagara, all right, and Russia got her Parliament. For a few months. And as for Germany, the consequences are no longer Heaven's secret.

We have moved no closer to answering Lenin's question. But we have a better idea of what is *notto* be done.

A restoration can't be produced by fascist violence and intimidation, because fascism today has no sympathizers in high places. It can't be produced by democratic demagoguery, both because the concept itself would be corrupted by filtration through the mass mind, and because said mind is simply not smart enough to evaluate the proposition logically - and logic is its only strength. (It's certainly not emotionally appealing.) Moreover, when democratic techniques are used to seize absolute power, the result is Hitler.

Yet at the same time, we can't expect the truth to triumph on its own, because said truth has been floating around since the 1860s - at least - and it has gotten nowhere at all. And worst of all, the design is reliable only in the steady state. Even if the political energy to make it happen, without either thug intimidation or democratic hypnotism, can somehow be produced, there is no magical reason to expect the initial shareholders, who know nothing more about managing a country than you or I, to be free from politics, to choose a Receiver who knows his ass from his elbow, or even to let one who does know his ass from his elbow do his job.

So perhaps nothing can be done. We should just bend over and enjoy it. Do you, dear open-minded progressive (or other UR reader), have any suggestions? Continue to [part 13](#).

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## Part 13: tactics and structures of any prospective restoration

July 10, 2008

Dear open-minded progressive, I've been holding out on this one way too long. [What is to be done?](#) Let's try and actually answer the question this time.

To be precise: by what procedures might a 20th-century liberal democracy be converted, safely, permanently and with reasonable continuity of administration, into a sovereign corporation that can be trusted to deliver secure, reliable and effective government? If you, dear open-minded progressive, chose to agree with me that this is actually a good idea, how might we go about trying to make it happen?

As I've mentioned a couple of times, my father's parents were [CPUSA](#) activists, so I do have a personal heritage of quasi-religious conspiratorial revolutionary thinking. But revolutionary tactics and structures are not, in general, useful to reactionaries. A restoration is the opposite of a revolution. Both imply regime change, but both [apoptosis](#) and [necrosis](#) involve cell death. There is no continuum between the two.

The signature performance of the modern revolution is the irregular military parade. Ie: cars or pickup trucks full of well-armed youths in their colorful native attire, driving up and down your street while (a) honking, (b) waving hand-lettered banners, (c) chanting [catchy slogans](#), and (d) discharging their firearms in a vaguely vertical direction. Occasionally one of the vehicles will pull up in front of a house and discharge its occupants, who enter the building and emerge with an infidel, racist, Jew, spy, polluter, Nazi or other criminal. The offender is either restrained for transportation to an educational facility, or enlightened on the spot as an act of radical social justice. Yes, we can!

Whereas in the ideal restoration, the transfer of power from old to new regime is as predictable and seamless as any electoral transition. With all rites, procedures and rituals correct down to the fringe on the Grand Lama's robe, the Armani suits on his Uzi-toting bodyguards, and the scrimshaw on the yak-butter skull-candle he lights and blows out three times while chanting "Obama! Obama! Llama Alpaca Obama!", the Heavenly Grand Council releases itself from the harsh bonds of existence, identifies its successor, asks all employees to remove their personal belongings from their offices, and instructs senior eunuchs to report for temporary detention.

Obviously, we live in America and we have no Grand Lama. However, our government has a clear procedure for 100% legal closure: it can pass a constitutional amendment which terminates the Constitution. While it would be foolish to insist on this level of legal purity, it would be crass to not aspire to it.

But let's acquire a little neutral distance by saying that we live in *Plainland*, we are presently ruled by *Plaingov*, and we wish to replace it with *Plaincorp*. The transition should be a total reset: the policies,

personnel and procedures of Plaincorp have nothing in common, except by coincidence, with the operations of Plaingov. Of course, Plaincorp inherits Plaingov's assets, but with a completely new decision framework. Arbitrary restructuring can be expected.

For obvious reasons, I prefer the word *reset*. But English does have a word for a discontinuous transition in sovereignty: *coup*. Not every coup is a reset, but every reset is a coup. The French meaning, a blow or strike, is a perfect shorthand for a discontinuous transition of sovereignty. If this transition involves a complete replacement of the sovereign decision structure, it is a reset. For example, if Plaingov's military initiates a reset, as obviously it will always have the power to, we would be looking at a *military reset*.

I am not a high-ranking military officer and I doubt you are either, and if the military reset is the only possible transition structure neither of us has much to contribute. While in my opinion just about every country on earth today would benefit from a transition to military government, the whole point of a military coup is that unless you are actually a member of the General Staff, your opinion doesn't matter. So why should we care? It is hard to be interested in the matter.

(I should note, however, that according to [Gallup](#) America's most trusted institution is - you guessed it. Followed directly by "small business" and "the police." The military is almost three times as popular as the Press. It is six times as popular as Congress. You do the math, kids! When the tanks finally roll, there will be no shortage of cheering. (And oddly enough, the other half of the Cathedral did not make the poll. Perhaps it fell off the bottom, and was discarded.))

The only alternative to a military coup is a political coup, or to be catchy a *democoup*. In a democoup, the government is overthrown by organizing a critical mass of political opposition to which it surrenders, ideally just as the result of overwhelming peer pressure. Certainly the most salient example is [the fall of the Soviet Union](#), including its puppet states and the wonderfully if inaccurately named [Velvet Revolution](#). (Again, a reaction is not a revolution.) Other examples include the [Southern Redemption](#), the [Meiji Restoration](#), and of course the [English Restoration](#).

In each of these events, a broad political coalition deployed more or less nonviolent, if seldom perfectly legal, tactics to replace a failed administration with a new regime which was dedicated to the restoration of responsible and effective government. Note that all of these are real historical events, which actually happened in the real world. I did not just make them up and edit them into Wikipedia. Yes, dear open-minded progressive, change can happen.

If there is one fact to remember about a restoration via democoup, it's that this program has *nothing* to do with the traditional 11th-grade civics-class notion of democratic participation. Obviously, we are not trying to replace one or two officials whose role is primarily symbolic. We are trying to replace not the current occupants of the temporary and largely-ceremonial "political" offices of Plaingov, but Plaingov itself - lock, stock and barrel. Indeed, we are using democratic tactics to abolish democracy itself. (There is nothing at all ironic in this. Is it ironic when an absolute monarch decrees a democratic constitution?)

By definition, a reset is a *nonincremental* transition. To the extent that there is some gradual algorithm which slowly weakens Plaingov and pulls it inexorably toward the brink of implosion, gradualist tactics may be of use. But the tactics are useful only as they promote the goal, and the goal is not gradual.

We are all familiar with gradual revolutions, on the [Fabian](#) or [Gramscian](#) plan. And tactics are tactics, for good or evil: in the war between the hosts of Heaven and the armies of Satan, both the demons and the angels drive tanks and fly jet fighters. So why is it that history affords many examples of sudden revolution, many examples of gradual revolution, some examples of sudden reaction, and almost no examples of gradual reaction?

Even if we had no explanation for this observation, it is always imprudent to mess with Clio. But we do have an explanation: revolution, being fundamentally antinomian (opposed to law and order), is entropic. Revolution is the destruction of order, degradation into complexity. Slow destruction is decay, cancer and corrosion. Rapid destruction is annihilation, fire and gangrene. Both are possible. Sometimes they form a delightful cocktail.

But reaction, being pronomian (favoring law and order), is the replacement of complex disorder with simple geometric forms. If we assume that disorder snowballs and creates further disorder, a common entropic phenomenon (think of the cascade of events that turns a normal cell into a cancerous cell), any attempt at a gradual reaction is fighting uphill. You treat cancer cells by killing them, not by turning them back into healthy, normal tissue.

Of course, this is just a metaphor. We are not killing people. We are liquidating institutions. Let's try and keep this in mind, kids.

But not too much in mind, because the metaphor of termination is critical. Metaphorically, here is how we're going to liquidate Plaingov: we're going to hit it [extremely hard in the head](#) with a sharp, heavy object which traverses a short throw at very high speed. Then we'll crush its body under an enormous roller, dry the pancake in a high-temperature oven, and grind it into a fine powder which is mixed with molten glass and cast as ingots for storage in a deep geological cavity, such as a salt mine. The shaft is filled with concrete and enclosed by a dog-patrolled double fence with the razor-wire facing *inward*. This still may not work, but at least it's a shot.

Less metaphorically, the starting point for a democoup is a *program*. Call it X. Success involves (a) convincing a large number of people to support the proposition that *X should be done*, and (b) organizing them to act collectively so as to *make X happen*.

To define the democoup we have to explain what it's not: civics-class democracy. Let's try a farcical experiment in civics-class democracy, just to see how pointless it is.

We start, obviously, by forming the Mencist Party. A new product in the marketplace of ideas. Of course,

we have new ideas, so we need a new brand. In the classic democratic spirit, our new party must organize itself around either (a) a shared vision of government policy ("racist corporate fascism," let's say), (b) a flamboyant personality (me, obviously), or (c) both.

The Mencist Party faces obstacles so huge as to be comical. First: what is racist corporate fascism? Since Mencism is out beyond the fringes of the fringes, it will only attract supporters who are genuinely passionate about our vision of racist corporate fascism. Of course this label is designed to attract only the most independent-minded of independent thinkers - to put it gently. Therefore, racist corporate fascism must become a "big tent" which, for the sake of enlarging itself and appearing important, embraces all supporters whose views can be vaguely described as racist corporate-fascist.

In fact I have no idea what "racist corporate fascism" might be. I just like the name. But this is reckless, and it causes problems. For example, is RCF anti-Semitic, or not? Of course, I, Mencius, am not anti-Semitic, but do I strain every muscle to purge Mencists who express what may be [very mild](#) anti-Semitic views? If so, the Mencist Party will become an [Avakianesque](#) exercise in cult leadership. If not, it will become a blurry, lager-soaked exercise in vulgar plebeian puerility, a la [Stormfront](#). Of course, all Mencists must support the political candidacy of Mencius (who will no doubt decline into referring to himself in the third person). But will anyone else? Ha.

More generally, it's easy to see the organizational difficulty of constructing a movement around a vision of government, whether a detailed policy vision (Sailer's [plan for school reform](#) comes to mind), or a general theory of government such as libertarianism. If our supporters are required to think in the democratic tense, to imagine themselves or at least their ideas in power, we have taken on an extraordinary boat-anchor of unproductive internal infighting. What is libertarianism? Dear god. There's a fine line between herding cats and being herded by them.

And if supporters are required to elect a public personality whom they conceive as a personal friend, much as the readers of *People* imagine that they know Brad Pitt, it (a) only takes one tiff to estrange this fragile bond, and (b) does not ensure that the Leader will have any actual power when he does get into office. Like today's Presidents, all of whom have been actors (that is, their job is to read from scripts written by others) for the last 75 years, he will spend most of his time trying to retain the fickle sycophants who put him where he is.

Our modern democratic elections are an extremely poor substitute for actual regime change. As we've seen, democracy is to government as gray, slimy cancer is to pink and healthy living tissue. It is a degenerate neoplastic form. The only reason America has lasted as long as she has, and even still has more than a few years left, is that this malignancy is at present encysted in a thick husk of sclerotic scar tissue - our permanent civil service. Democracy implies politics, and "political" is a dirty word to the civil-service state. As well it should be. Its job is to resist democracy, and it does it very well.

Therefore, any attempt to defeat the sclerotic Cathedral state by a restoration of representative

democracy in the classic sense of the word, in which public policy is actually formulated by elected officials (such as the Leader, Mencius), is a bayonet charge at the Maginot Line. The Mencist Party could go all the way and elect President Mencius, and it would still be shredded into gobbets of meat by presighted bureaucratic machine guns. In short: a total waste of time. Much better to bend over and pretend to enjoy it.

When we think of a democoup instead of a democratic party, all of these problems disappear. (They are replaced by other problems, but we'll deal with those in their turn.)

Supporters of a democoup propose a program of action, not a policy vision or a personality. The demonstrators who chanted "[\*Wir sind das Volk\*](#)" were not seeking election to the East German Parliament. They were seeking the termination of state socialism. Everyone in the crowd had *exactly* the same goal. The movement was *coherent*- a laser, not a flashlight.

"Racist corporate fascism" is a flashlight. "Elect President Mencius" is a flashlight. Even "secure, responsible and effective government" is something of a flashlight, although the beam starts to be reasonably tight - compare, for example, to [\*sonno joi\*](#). "Restore the Stuarts" is a laser. It may not be the best possible laser (we'll look at others), but it is definitely a laser.

One common democratic assumption is that a movement cannot succeed in wielding power without accumulating a proper majority of support. In fact, none of the movements involved in the fall of Communism mobilized anywhere near a majority. The demonstrations did not have half the country in the streets. They were pure exercises of brutal democratic power, and they succeeded, but they had nothing to do with elections or majorities.

And of course our Western version of socialism, largely because it has not entirely pulled the fangs of democratic politics, is much more responsive to public opinion than any Communist state. Last year the immigration-restriction lobby [NumbersUSA](#) almost singlehandedly deprived the Inner Party of the pleasure of importing what would have certainly been millions of loyal voters. How many people contacted Congress at their behest? I'd be amazed if it was a hundred thousand.

When we look beyond elections and consider direct influence on government, we see the tremendous power of cohesion, commitment and organization. It is pretty clear, for example, that a minority of Americans supported the American Revolution. But the Patriots were far more motivated and energetic than the Tories. We may deplore the result, but it certainly can't hurt to look into the tactics.

A curious example of reactionary cohesion has emerged recently, in - of all places - my hometown of San Francisco. SF's awful local Pravda, the [Chronicle](#), recently introduced a comments section. Unlike its more careful large competitors, the Chron (a) supports comments on every article, and (b) allows commenters to vote each other *both up and down*. Note that this allows the casual reader to *compare the respective political strength of two opposing currents of opinion* - because up and down votes do not

cancel each other.

And the result, in the progressive capital of the world? Threads like [this one](#), in which comments like

*This makes me embarrassed to live in San Francisco. This scenario is absolutely absurd. Why not just invite all escaped convicts, paroled sex offenders, child molesters, and drug dealers to SF and give them free housing and free food. Simply ridiculous.*

*LOL, "Hello!" innocent or not, Deport ALL Illegal Immigrants. As long as it's illegal it's NOT innocent. Fair is Fair. Our Government is insane on this issue.*

*Far left-liberalism is not a political philosophy, it is a form of mental illness.*

*OK (expletive deleted), that does it, that's it. I've never had even a traffic ticket in this mid-lifetime of mine, but that's it, give me a six-shooter, some ammo, some places to rob and pilfer, who's gonna join me in one long party of criminal behavior? Look, face it, we're SUCKERS, SUCKERS. There's no incentive in God's Earth to obey the law anymore, why? I've been doing it wrong all this time, there's no sanction for crime anymore. I could use \$5,000 for a vacation, I'm just gonna borrow it by force. Why obey laws anymore?*

can be "elected" by scores of, respectively, 426 to 4, 371 to 17, 346 to 55, and 484 to 15.

(The best one of these threads ever, though, was one I saw about the "homeless." There was one page in which about a third of the comments were "deleted by SFGate," and the remaining two thirds were peppered with ones like - and I remember this specifically, I am not making it up - "I used to really care about the homeless, but these days I could care less. As far as I'm concerned, we might as well roll 'em up in carpets and throw them in the Bay." To wild virtual applause, of course. Congratulations, San Francisco! The city of Herb Caen, the Hungry 'I' and the Barbary Coast has delivered a new treat - the [Bürgerbräukeller](#) @ SFGate.)

Even more interestingly, after the Honduran crack-dealer articles and these reactions appeared (the latest thread, which promises to be glorious, is [here](#)), our [notoriously spineless mayor](#), or rather his producers, chose to [pseudo-reverse](#) his earlier pseudo-non-decision. Where did he get his pox vopuli from? Where do you think? The Chronicle has spawned a monster.

This humble corporate BBS, intended as anything but a weapon for reactionary information warfare, is on the way to becoming a real thorn in the side of its Pravda masters. Indeed, the tone of all minor newspapers in America is increasingly reminiscent of *Soviet Life*. The cheery self-adulation, the sock-sucking worship of venal petty bureaucrats, and everywhere the icy plastic chill of [Occam's Butterknife](#):

On many occasions I had the opportunity to discuss the service industries with Western colleagues. They invariably noted differences with the services that are available in the USSR and what they are

accustomed to at home. They told me that, compared to Western standards, this sector is poorly developed in the USSR, but they didn't hesitate to add how fabulously inexpensive most of our services are. For instance, the cost of laundering a man's shirt is about 10 kopecks (20 cents). However, this second point is not widely known.

[...]

People are now buying more. A separate apartment for every family, a rarity in the mid-fifties, has now become the rule. Today eight out of 10 urban families live in their own apartments. And many more refrigerators, TV sets, vacuum cleaners and shoes are being produced in the country. The demand for laundries, dry cleaners, repair shops and car-care centers has risen accordingly.

[...]

To speed up progress in all areas of the service industries and to more efficiently employ the advantages of a planned economy, the USSR State Planning Committee (Gosplan) has developed a comprehensive program for the expansion of consumer-goods production and the sphere of everyday services for the period 1986 to 2000.

[...]

From 1986 to 1990 the number of telephones will increase by from 1.6 to 1.7 times as compared to the current five-year period, and five times by the year 2000. By then it is projected that all residents of small towns will have their own telephones installed in their homes.

Etc, etc, etc. No wonder the [most successful new newspaper in America](#) can make a steady living by parodying our version of this material. The form is deathless. It speaks from beyond the grave of socialism. (We're not filling the shafts on those salt mines for nothin'.) Imagine if Pravda, in 1986, had set up some little comment board - using paper and cork, probably. The threads would have filled up with exactly the same flavor of reckless petty dissidence.

This little board has become what might be called a *focus* of political energy. A couple of crucial points about the SFGate Sturmabteilung - who might also be described as the Ku Klux Chron, or more historically as the [Third Vigilance Committee](#) (I can just picture a hip 3VC logo).

One, the denizens of these boards are a *tiny minority* of San Francisco voters. A thousand votes is not a hill of beans in a city of 750,000. Many of them probably live in the suburbs, not SF proper. The idea that they are representative of SF public opinion proper is ludicrous.

Two, these lopsided percentages are not even representative of the opinions of Chronicle readers. There are certainly plenty of articles on which progressive commenters and comment upvoters congregate, though the ratios are never this glaring. I suspect that there is a small [hooligan](#) community which skims

SFGate for a certain type of article, and flocks as naturally as any specialized moth to its rare orchid in the dankest, fleshiest navels of the urban underbelly. It is simply obvious that these are not good and healthy people. Why should their opinions count?

They count because the power of a democratic signal is proportional to five variables: the size of the antenna, the material of the antenna, the coherence of the message, the broadcast wattage, and the clarity of reception. In other words: the number of people who agree, the social status of those people, the extent to which they actually agree on any one thing, how much they actually care, and the extent to which the decision-maker (the signal's recipient) can trust the poll.

If you have 10% of the American population who answers 'yes' to a cold-call telemarketer pitching some stupid survey which asks a dumb question whose answer no one knows anything about, like "should the US bomb Iran?", you have a pathetically weak signal. People of average social status are being asked an obvious question that they can be expected to have a casual opinion on, and no more. They have about two neurons devoted to Iran policy. One of these cells may know where Iran is, and the other may know that they wear turbans there. No one will be tempted to bomb Iran, or even consider it, on the strength of this signal.

If you have 10% of the American population, each one a homeowner whose identity has been validated and whose preferences are regularly refreshed in the database, who are on record in favor of abolishing Washington and restoring the Stuarts, and have agreed to vote as a bloc toward this objective, you have a very different phenomenon. Is this enough to abolish Washington etc? Probably not, but it might be enough to get a Stuart prince in the Cabinet. While it is not clear that this would be of any value, the principle should be clear.

I suspect the SFGate signal is getting through because it is extremely clear, the people expressing their opinions are extremely vehement, and it is clear that no one is vehement enough in opposition to them to descend into the muck of the dank-orchid articles and vote the Nazi comments down. So the hooked cross rises again, in the cradle of the United Nations. How ironic.

(Of course, in reality I'm sure the commenters are all good people, and I regret being tempted to refer to them as the Ku Klux Chron. In fact they are constantly saying things like "I'm not a Republican, but..." Conquest's law is always at work.)

In any case: back to the program. We have already [described X](#), but our program is incomplete. We have the formula for a responsible and effective government: a financial structure designed to maximize tax receipts by maximizing property values. We have a program for converting Plaingov into Plaincorp: deliver the former, bag and baggage, to a bankruptcy administrator or Receiver, who restructures the operation and converts its many financial obligations to well-structured securities. We have even suggested some restructuring options - although these matters cannot, of course, be predecided, as the Receiver's sovereignty is undivided.

We do not know whom this Receiver guy or gal is (other than Steve Jobs). (Let's say it's a gal. If Steve wants the job, I'm afraid he'll have to have himself cut.) We do not know who selects the Receiver, and/or reviews her performance. In other words, we have the second half of program X, but not the first.

Frankly, I presented it this way in order to make it sound as shocking and unappealing as possible. Dear open-minded progressive, you have already read through the dramatic climax. Your mind is as open as an oyster on the half-shell. You have seriously considered the idea that your country might be a better place if democracy is terminated, the Constitution is cancelled, and the government is handed over to an absolute dictator whose first act is to impose martial law, and whose long-term plan is to convert your country into a for-profit corporation. Now we can try to translate these shocking suggestions into a more palatable form.

First, it is a mistake to focus on the Receiver. She is not a dictator in the classic sense. A dictator, or even an absolute monarch, has both power and authority: his person is the source of all decisions, his decisions are final, his position is not subject to any external review.

The Receiver - or her long-term replacement, the Director (you might say I subscribe to the [auteur](#) theory of management; the Receiver's job is to convert Plaingov into Plaincorp, the Director is the chief executive of Plaincorp going forward) - is in a different position. Her decisions are final, so she has absolute authority. But she is an employee, so she has no power. She is just there to do a job, and if she is doing it badly she will be removed.

In the long term, power in Plaincorp belongs to the proprietors - the shareholders, the owners of Plaincorp's equity instruments. But as we discussed last week, the right people to hold initial equity in Plaincorp, probably for the most part holders of Plaingov's old paper currency and equivalent obligations, may not be the best people to manage Plaincorp. Especially during the critical transition period.

Rather, any plan in which Plaingov relinquishes its sovereign power must involve a transfer of that power to an agency which is *intrinsically trustworthy*. Let's call this the *Trust*. The Receiver is an employee of the Trust, which selects her, reviews her performance regularly, and replaces her if there is any doubt as to her excellence. Sovereignty is an attribute of the Trust, not of the Receiver.

Once Plaincorp is on its feet and running, it will provide a *test* of the proposition that good government equals sound stewardship of sovereign capital. However, the Trust must start off by *assuming* this proposition - that is, its mission is to provide good government, on the assumption that good government maximizes the value of Plainland to Plaincorp. If this assumption appears mistaken, the Trust should not complete the transition to neocameralism. Rather, it should find something else to do, and do it instead. All responsibility is in its hands.

Of course, a degenerate form of the Trust-Receiver design is the old royalist model - the Trust is the royal family. There may even be just one Trustee, the Receiver herself. This is the result we'd obtain by

restoring the [Stuarts](#) through the [House of Liechtenstein](#). It succeeds, if it succeeds, by putting all the eggs in one very sound basket. The Princes of Liechtenstein are experienced rulers and blatantly responsible, the royalist design is tried and tested (if hardly perfect), and the option can be described without too much genealogical contortion as a restoration of legal authority in any country which traces its sovereignty to the British Empire.

Still, the saleability of the proposition has to be considered. Most people living today have been heavily catechized in the virtues of democracy, the magical wisdom of crowds, and the evils of personal government. There is no getting around it: we have to change their minds on the first point. Rearing a fresh crop of Jacobites, however, may exceed even the Internet's vast untapped potential as an information-warfare medium.

So there is a more palatable design for the Trust: a good, old-fashioned parliament, updated of course for the 21st century. This is not democracy, however. Its members each have one vote, but they are not chosen by any sort of election.

Voters raised in the democratic tradition will only be willing to trust sovereignty in the hands of a collective governing body, which operates internally on the basis of one man, one vote. Internally, the Trust is an extremely simple and elegant democracy of trustees. Presumably, following the classic corporate-governance model, the trustees elect a Board, who select the Receiver and review her performance. Just as the Board can fire the Receiver at any time, the trustees can fire the Board. All true power is held by the trustees.

Ideally there are at least thousands, preferably tens or even hundreds of thousands, of trustees. In a pinch, sovereignty can be handed to the Trust simply by running Plaingov's present-day electoral system, but restricting suffrage to trustees - an ugly, but functional, transition plan. The only question is: who are these people? Or more precisely, who should they be?

Think about it, dear open-minded progressive. Presumably you believe in democracy. Presumably your belief is not motivated by the opinion that the average voter has any particular insight into or understanding of the difficult problem of government. Therefore, you believe that there is some sort of amplification effect which somehow transforms the averageness of hominids into the famed "[wisdom of crowds](#)."(Actually, as Tocqueville noted, at least when it comes to government by crowd we are generally looking at an [information cascade](#) at best, and a particularly wicked feedback loop at worst. But never mind.)

However, whether or not you believe in the wisdom of crowds, you surely believe that any wisdom they may express is derived from the wisdom of their component individuals. There is certainly no [hundredth-monkey effect](#) in which simply collecting a large number of bipeds and collating their multiple-choice tests can somehow draw truth out of the vasty deep.

Therefore, you will always be able to improve the quality of representatives generated by any democratic system, by improving the quality of the voters. This is the point of the Trust: to dramatically improve the quality of government by replacing universal suffrage with highly qualified suffrage. Our Trustees should be just that - extremely trustworthy.

Okay, this is good. Let's say our goal is to select the 100,000 most trustworthy and responsible adults in Plainland. They will serve as the trustees who oversee the complicated and dangerous transition from Plaingov to Plaincorp. By definition, each of these individuals is in the 99.95th percentile of trustworthiness and responsibility. (I am certainly not in this group.)

Is it not obvious that these people would select competent management? I think it's obvious. But the plan is unworkable, so there is no reason to debate it.

By what process will we select these individuals? Who shall recruit the recruiters? It is difficult and expensive to find just one individual with these executive qualifications. Moreover, in a sovereign context, the filtering process itself will serve as a political football - many progressives might decide, for example, that only progressives can be trusted. It is impossible to end a fight by starting a new fight.

This insane recruiting process cannot occur either under Plaingov or under Plaincorp. It cannot occur under Plaingov, because it will be subject to Plaingov politics and will carry those politics, which are uniformly poisonous, forward into Plaincorp. At this point the reset is not a reset. But it cannot occur under Plaincorp, because the trustees are needed to select the Receiver. And there can be no intervening period of anarchy.

But there is a hack which can work around this obstacle. You might think it's a cute hack, or you might think it's an ugly hack. It probably depends on your taste. I think it's pretty cute.

The hack is a *precise heuristic test* to select trustees. The result of the test is one bit for every citizen of Plainland: he or she either is or is not a trustee. The test is *precise* because its result is not a matter of debate - it can be verified trivially. And it is *heuristic* because it should produce a good result on average, with only occasional horrifying exceptions.

My favorite PHT defines the trustees as the set of all active, certified, nonstudent [pilots](#) who accept the responsibility of trusteeship, as of the termination date of Plaingov. The set does not expand - you cannot become a trustee by taking flying lessons, and any rejection or resignation of the responsibility is irreversible. In other words, to paraphrase Lenin: all power to the pilots. (There are about 500,000 of them.)

Let's look at the advantages of this PHT. I am not myself a pilot - I am neither wealthy enough, nor responsible enough. But everyone I've ever met who was a pilot, whether private, military or commercial, has struck me as not only responsible, but also independent-minded, often even adventurous. This is a

particularly rare combination. To be precise, it is an *aristocratic* combination, and the word *aristocracy* is after all just Greek for *good government*. Pilots are a fraternity of intelligent, practical, and careful people who are already trusted on a regular basis with the lives of others. What's not to like?

If we care to broaden this set, we can extend it by adding *all practicing medical doctors*, or *all active and retired police and military officers*, or better yet both. Believe it or not, doctors were once one of America's most reactionary professions, in the forefront of the struggle against FDR. They also made housecalls. Now they are a bunch of Communist bureaucrats. But the boys in blue can keep them in line. Our fighting men know what to do with a Communist, if they have a free hand. More to the point, each of these professions is a technically demanding task in which the professional is trusted with the lives of others.

So we have a nice, clear, laser-like program. Washington has failed. The Constitution has failed. Democracy has failed. It is time for restoration, for national salvation, for a full reboot. We need a new government, a clean slate, a fresh hand which is smart, strong and fair. All power to the pilots!

Continue to [part 14](#)...

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/07/olxiii-tactics-and-structures-of-any.html>

## Part 14: rules for reactionaries

July 17, 2008

Dear open-minded progressive, I hope you've enjoyed this weird excursion.

We all like to think we have open minds, but only a few of us are tough enough to snort any strange powder that's shoved under our noses. You have joined that elite crew. Fourteen weeks ago you may have been a mere space cadet. Today you are at least a space lieutenant, perhaps even a captain or a major. And what fresh galaxies remain to explore!

UR will return on August 14, 2008. But first: the solution.

Well, first the problem. This is a blog, after all. We can't really expect everyone to have read all the back issues. Repetition is a necessity, and a virtue as well. A true space lieutenant, surprised by the Slime Beast of Vega, has his acid blaster on full-auto and is pumping a massive drug bolus into its sticky green hide before he even knows what's happening. His reaction is not thought, but drill - the apotheosis of practice.

Our problem is *democracy*. Democracy is a dangerous, malignant form of government which tends to degenerate, sometimes slowly and sometimes with shocking, gut-wrenching speed, into tyranny and chaos. You've been taught to worship democracy. This is because you are ruled by democracy. If you were ruled by the Slime Beast of Vega, you would worship the Slime Beast of Vega. (A more earthly comparison is Communism or "people's democracy," whose claim to be a more advanced form of its Western cousin was perfectly accurate - if we mean "advanced" in the sense of, say, "advanced leukemia.")

There are two problems with democracy: the first-order and the second-order.

The first-order problem: since a governed territory is capital, ie, a valuable asset, it generates revenue. Participation in government is also the definition of power, which all men and quite a few women crave. At its best, democracy is an permanent, gunless civil war for this gigantic pot of money and power. (At its worst, the guns come out.) Any democratic faction has an incentive to mismanage the whole to enlarge its share.

Without quite understanding this problem, [Noah Webster](#), in his [1794 pamphlet on the French Revolution](#), described its symptoms perfectly. Webster was writing during the quasi-monarchist Federalist restoration, when Americans had convinced themselves that it was possible to create a republic without political parties. The Federalists held "faction" to be the root of all democratic evils - much as their progressive successors are constantly yearning for a "post-partisan" democracy. Both are right. But complaining that democracy is too political is like complaining that the Slime Beast of Vega is too slimy.

Webster [wrote](#):

As the tendency of such associations is probably not fully understood by most of the persons composing them in this country, and many of them are doubtless well-meaning citizens; it may be useful to trace the progress of party spirit to faction first, and then of course to tyranny.

[...]

My second remark is, that contention between parties is usually violent in proportion to the trifling nature of the point in question; or to the uncertainty of its tendency to promote public happiness. When an object of great magnitude is in question, and its utility obvious, a *great* majority is usually found in its favor, and *vice versa*; and a large majority usually quiets all opposition. But when a point is of less magnitude or less visible utility, the parties may be and often are *nearly equal*. Then it becomes a trial of strength — each party acquires confidence from the very circumstance of *equality* — both become assured they are *right* — confidence inspires boldness and expectation of success — pride comes in aid of argument — the passions are inflamed — the *merits* of the cause become a subordinate consideration — victory is the object and not public good; at length the question is decided by a small majority — success inspires one party with pride, and they assume the airs of conquerors; disappointment sours the minds of the other — and thus the contest ends in creating violent passions, which are always ready to enlist into every other cause. Such is the progress of party spirit; and a single question will often give rise to a party, that will continue for generations; and the same men or their adherents will continue to divide on other questions, that have not the remotest connection with the first point of contention.

This observation gives rise to my third remark ; that nothing is more dangerous to the cause of *truth* and *liberty* than a party spirit. When men are once united, in whatever form, or upon whatever occasion, the union creates a partiality or friendship for each member of the party or society. A coalition for any purpose creates an attachment, and inspires a confidence in the individuals of the party, which does not die with the cause which united them; but continues, and extends to every other object of social intercourse.

Thus we see men first united in some system of religious faith, generally agree in their *political* opinions. Natives of the same country, even in a foreign country, unite and form a separate private society. The Masons feel attached to each other, though in distant parts of the world.

The same may be said of Episcopalians, Quakers, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Federalists, and Antifederalists, mechanic societies, chambers of commerce, Jacobin and Democratic societies. It is altogether immaterial what circumstance first unites a number of men into a society; whether they first rally round the church, a square and compass, a cross, or a cap; the general effect is always the same; while the union continues, the members of the association feel a particular confidence in each

other, which leads them to believe each other's opinions, to catch each other's passions, and to act in concert on every question in which they are interested.

Hence arises what is called *bigotry* or *illiberality*. Persons who are united on any occasion, are more apt to believe the prevailing opinions of their society, than the prevailing opinions of another society. They examine their own creeds more fully, (and perhaps with a mind predisposed to believe them), than they do the creeds of other societies. Hence the full persuasion in every society that theirs is *right*; and if I am right, others of course are *wrong*. Perhaps therefore I am warranted in saying, there is a *species of bigotry* in every society on earth — and indeed in every man's own particular faith. While each man and each society is freely indulged in his own opinion, and that opinion is mere *speculation*, there is peace, harmony, and good understanding. But the moment a man or a society attempts to oppose the prevailing opinions of another man or society, even his arguments rouse passion; it being difficult for two men of opposite creeds to dispute for any time, without becoming angry. And when one party attempts in practice to interfere with the opinions of another party, violence most generally succeeds.

Note that Webster (a) assumes that the problem of factions is solvable; (b) assumes that voters start with a generally accurate understanding of the problem of government, which will generate the right answer on all important questions; (c) assumes that voters will not form coalitions for the mere sordid purpose of looting the state, ie, "achieving social justice;" and (d), of course, demonstrates the correct or dictionary definition of the word *bigotry*.

All these assumptions, which in 1794 were at least plausible, are now anything but. (And our modern bigots are as diverse as can be.) Yet the juggernaut of democracy rolls on. New excuses are needed, new excuses are found.

This leads us to the second-order problem. While democracy may start with a population of voters who understand the art of government, as America indeed did (the extent to which 18th-century Americans understood the basic principles of practical government, while hardly perfect, was mindboggling by today's standards), it seldom stays that way. Its fans believe that participation in the democratic process actually improves the mental qualities of the citizen. I suppose this is true - for certain values of the words "improves."

The real problem with democracies is that in the long run, a democratic government *elects its own people*. I refer, of course, to [Brecht's verse](#):

After the uprising of the 17th June  
The Secretary of the Writers Union  
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinalee  
Stating that the people  
Had forfeited the confidence of the government

And could win it back only  
By redoubled efforts. Would it not be easier  
In that case for the government  
To dissolve the people  
And elect another?

One way to elect a new people is to import them, of course. For example, to put it bluntly, the Democratic Party has [captured California](#), once a [Republican stronghold](#), by importing arbitrary numbers of Mexicans. Indeed the Third World is stocked with literally billions of potential Democrats, just waiting to come to America so that Washington can buy their votes. Inner Party functionaries [cackle gleefully](#) over this achievement. (BTW, isn't that photo of Frank Rich amazing? Doesn't it just radiate pure power and contempt? Henry VIII would probably have asked the painter to make him look less like Xerxes, King of Kings.)

But this act of brutal Machiavellian thug politics, larded as usual with the most gushing of [sentimental platitudes](#), is picayune next to the ordinary practice of democratic governments: to elect a new people by re-educating the children of the old. In the long run, power in a democracy belongs to its information organs: the press, the schools, and most of all the universities, who mint the thoughts that the others plant. For simplicity, we have dubbed this complex the *Cathedral*.

The Cathedral is a feedback loop. It has no center, no master planners. Everyone, even the [Sulzbergers](#), is replaceable. In a democracy, mass opinion creates power. Power diverts funds to the manufacturers of opinion, who manufacture more, etc. Not a terribly complicated cycle.

This feedback loop generates a playing field on which the most competitive ideas are not those which best correspond to reality, but those which produce the strongest feedback. The Cathedral is constantly electing a new people who (a) support the Cathedral more and more, and (b) support a political system which makes the Cathedral stronger and stronger.

For example, libertarian policies are not competitive in the Cathedral, because libertarianism minimizes employment for public-policy experts. Thus we would expect libertarians to come in two flavors: the [intellectually marginalized](#), and the [intellectually compromised](#).

Many of the LvMI types feel quite free to be skeptical of democracy. But they are skipping quite a few steps between problem and solution. They are still thinking in the democratic tense. Their plan for achieving libertarianism, if it can be described as a plan, is to convince as many people as possible that libertarian policies are good ones. These will then elect libertarian politicians, etc, etc.

When you say, *I am a libertarian*, what you mean is: *I, as a customer of government, prefer to live in a state which does not apply non-libertarian policies*. The best results in this line will be achieved by capturing a state yourself, and becoming its Supreme Ruler. Then no bureaucrats will bother you! Given

that most of us are not capable of this feat, and given that the absence of government is a military impossibility, the libertarian should search for a structure of government in which the state has *no incentive* to apply non-libertarian policies. Obviously, democracy is not such a structure.

Thus a libertarian democracy is simply an engineering contradiction, like a flying whale or a water-powered car. Water is a lot cheaper than gas, and I think a flying whale would make a wonderful pet - I could tether it to my deck, perhaps. Does it matter? Defeating democracy is difficult; making democracy libertarian is impossible. The difference is subtle, but...

Worse, the most competitive ideas in the democratic feedback loop tend to be policies which are in fact *counterproductive* - that is, they actually cause the problem they pretend to be curing. They are quack medicines. They keep the patient coming back.

For example, Britain today is suffering from an "epidemic" of "knife crime." To wit: every day in Great Britain, [60 people](#) are stabbed or mugged with a knife. (Admire, for a moment, the passive voice. Presumably the knives are floating disembodied in the air, directing themselves with Jedi powers.) The solution:

On Tuesday, Jacqui Smith, the Home Secretary, will publish her Youth Crime Action Plan. It includes a proposal to make young offenders visit casualty wards to examine knife wounds in an attempt to shock them into mending their ways.

I swear I am not making this up. Meanwhile, experts agree, prison terms [should be abolished](#) for minor crimes, such as burglary:

The Independent Sentencing Advisory Panel also said that there should be a presumption that thieves, burglars and anyone convicted of dishonesty should not receive a jail term.

I'm sure that'll help. [Scientists around the world](#) conclude:

It takes a multi-level approach to prevention. If you want to approach violence protection with juveniles, you need to engage in prevention early on – with social skills and anger coping lessons in schools from a young age.

The real experts, of course, are the [yoofs themselves](#):

However, the government should be praised for not taking an automatically authoritarian approach. Their policy of getting young people to talk to stabbing victims rests on the belief that kids respond to education and are capable of empathy, something that the Conservative policy of locking anyone up caught carrying a knife doesn't seem to appreciate.

To say the least. It wouldn't be the first time the narrow-minded have defied [scientific research](#):

But researchers at Manchester University's school of law found evidence which directly contradicts core assumptions of government policy.

Having spoken to and won the trust of more than 100 gang members, associates and informers, they concluded that in general gangs are not tightly organised; they do not specialise in dealing drugs; and their violence is not provoked primarily by turf wars. They also found no basis for the popular belief that most street gangs are black.

Robert Ralphs, the project's lead fieldworker, said: "Police and other statutory agencies respond to gangs as clearly identifiable groups of criminally-involved young people, where membership is undisputed.

"In reality, gangs are loose, messy, changing friendship networks - less organised and less criminally active than widely believed - with unclear, shifting and unstable leadership."

By failing to understand this basic structure, the researchers say, police mistakenly target and sometimes harass individuals who, though gang members, are not breaking any law; the police also repeatedly follow, stop and search the gang members' family, friends and classmates. This alienated both the gang members and their associates who might otherwise have helped police.

[...]

Judith Aldridge, who led the research, said: "They are mainly victims. So, there is a desperate need to appropriately assess the needs of these young people and their families - and not blame them."

Etc. I'm sure none of this is new to you. Britain makes such a wonderful example, however, because its descent into Quaker-thug hell is so fresh, and proceeded from such a height. Witness, for example, [this lovely story](#) from the Times archive, which is barely 50 years old - "in the lives of those now living," unless of course they have since been stabbed:

#### JUDGE ON RACE GANG WARFARE

#### 7-YEAR SENTENCES

Two men were each sentenced at Central Criminal Court yesterday to seven years' imprisonment for their part in an attack on John Frederick Carter, fruit trader of Sydney Square, Glengall Road, Peckham, who received injuries to his face and head which required 60 stitches.

They were Raymond David Rosa, aged 31, bookmaker's clerk, of Northborough Road, Norbury, S.W., and Richard Frett, aged 34, dealer, of Wickstead House, Falmouth Road, S.E. The jury had found them both guilty of wounding Carter with intent to cause him grievous bodily harm.

Passing sentence, Mr. Justice Donovan said: "I have not the least doubt that there are other and very

wicked persons behind you, but the tools of those persons must realize that if discovery follows punishment will be condign."

"MORE LIKE CHICAGO"

Summing up yesterday, his Lordship said that the facts of this case sounded more like Chicago and the worst days of prohibition than London in 1956.

Putting two and two together, the jury might think this was another case of race gang warfare. If that were so, then it raised the question of whether the reluctance of Mr. and Mrs. Carter to swear that the two men they had previously picked out were concerned in the attack was due to fear. It was that possibility which put this case into quite a different category. It put it into a category where gross violence had been perpetrated upon a man but after identifying his assailants he and his wife had expressed doubts in the witness-box. The jury were not concerned with the merits or de-merits of Carter. The issue was much wider than Carter's skin: it was simply one of the maintenance of law and order without which none could go about with safety.

Etc, etc. Notice that both of these miscreants are in possession of at least nominal *occupations*. Mr. Justice Donovan, honey, with all due respect, you don't know nothin' 'bout no "race gang warfare."

And finally, completing our tour of the British criminal justice system, [we learn that](#):

Two South Africans who overstayed their British visas were jailed for life on Friday for the murders of two men strangled during a series of violent muggings.

Gabriel Bhengu, 27, and Jabu Mbowane, 26, will be deported after serving life sentences.

No, that's not a misprint:

A life sentence normally lasts around 15 years.

Orwell could not be more satisfied. "A life sentence normally lasts around 15 years." With not a hint of irony in the building. "A life sentence normally lasts around 15 years."

Something is normal here, and it is either 1956 or 2008. It can't be both. If Mr. Justice Donovan, or the Times reporter who considered a mere 60 stitches somehow newsworthy, were to reappear in modern London, their perspective on the art of government in a democratic society unchanged, they would be far to the right not only of Professor Aldridge, but also of the Tories, the BNP, and perhaps even [Spearhead](#). They would not be normal people. But in 1956, their reactions were completely unremarkable.

What's happened is that Britain, which before WWII was still in many respects an aristocracy, became Americanized and democratized after the war. As a democracy, it elected its own people, who now tolerate what their grandparents would have found unimaginable. Of course, many British voters,

probably even most, still do believe that burglars should go to prison, etc, etc, but these views are on the way out, and the politics of love is on the way in. Politicians, who are uniformly devoid of character or personality, have the good sense to side with the future electorate rather than with the past electorate.

And why are the studies of Professor Aldridge and her ilk so successful, despite their obvious effects? One: they result in a tremendous level of crime, which generates a tremendous level of funding for "criminologists." Two: they are counterintuitive, ie, obviously wrong. No one would pay a "social scientist" to admit the obvious. Three: as per Noah Webster, they appeal to the ruling class simply because they are so abhorrent to the ruled class.

And four: they are not disprovable, because if pure, undiluted Quaker love ever becomes the only way for British civilization to deal with its ferals, they won't leave much of Professor Aldridge. She might, like [Judith Todd](#), regard her suffering as a Christlike badge of distinction. She would certainly, like Ms. Todd, express no guilt over her actions. But it won't happen, because Britain will retain the unprincipled exceptions and the few rough men it needs to keep it from the abyss for the indefinite future. And for that same future, Professor Aldridge and her like will be able to explain the debacle in terms of the "cycle of violence." As Chesterton [put it](#):

We have actually contrived to invent a new kind of hypocrite. The old hypocrite, Tartuffe or Pecksniff, was a man whose aims were really worldly and practical, while he pretended that they were religious. The new hypocrite is one whose aims are really religious, while he pretends that they are worldly and practical.

From the perspective of the customer of government, however, it is irrelevant *why* these events happen. What matters is that they *do happen*, and that they do not *have to happen*. If [statistics](#) did not confirm that stabbings in London were not, in the lives of those now living, a routine event, that Times article should be sufficient. (In fact, I'll take one good primary source over all the statistics in the world.)

And this, in my reactionary judgment, makes NuLabour *responsible* for these events. As surely as if Gordon Brown and Professor Aldridge themselves had gone on a stabbing spree.

Consider the following fact: in April 2007, an American Special Forces captain, Robert Williams, forced his way into the home of a young Iraqi journalist, whom he raped, tortured, and attempted to murder. Williams ordered the woman to stab out her own eyes. When she tried and failed, he sliced up her face with a butcher knife. After asking her if she "liked Americans," he forced her to swallow handfuls of pills, which destroyed her liver, and when leaving the building after an 18-hour ordeal he tied her to a sofa and set a fire under it. She escaped only by using the fire to burn away the ropes around her hands.

And why haven't you heard of this event? Obviously you don't read the papers. Williams, it turns out, was linked to a fundamentalist Christian cell inside the US military, one of whose leaders, [General William Boykin](#), was a mentor to none other than John McCain...

Okay. At this point, I am obviously just making stuff up. If this event had happened, you wouldn't need to read the papers. Or watch television. The only way you would not know of the event is if you were a hermit in the deep bush in Alaska, and it was the middle of winter. It would be the defining event of the American occupation of Iraq, and as soon as the snow thawed and the caribou came back, a dog-team would arrive at your cabin and bark out the news.

Unless the Pentagon covered it up. And given that [this search](#) produces almost 2 million hits, doesn't that seem a likely possibility?

It did happen, however. Not in Baghdad, but in Manhattan. The [real Robert Williams](#) is not a white supremacist, but a black one. The anonymous victim is a journalism student at Columbia. And how many stories in the local newspaper of record, many of whose employees must be Facebook friends of the victim, did these events generate? I found [six](#). All of them buried deep in the "New York Region" section, whose crime reporters I'm sure are on the fast track to superstar status at the NYT. Not.

Note that this is exactly how the Pentagon, in our imaginary Baghdad rape, would have wanted the situation handled. A coverup is always a possibility, but risky. It can leak. Whereas if the journalists themselves agree that the event is *not important*, that it is fundamentally *random*, that it certainly does not deserve the crime-of-the-century treatment that the Times of London, in 1956, would have given the real Robert Williams.

It is very unfortunate, of course, that a Special Forces officer abused a young Iraqi woman. But it is the exception, not the rule. It has nothing to do with the Special Forces as a whole, or with General Boykin, or certainly with John McCain. A few stories in the back of the paper, and the whole sad event is documented for the record. And our troops continue their honorable work in Iraq, saving babies from gangrene and bringing happiness to orphaned goats.

Would I accept this whitewash? Probably not. But I would be more likely to accept it than the New York Times. Clearly, the real Robert Williams and his ilk have no enemies at the Times. But they have an enemy in [Larry Auster](#), who [wrote](#):

So here's a question that ought to be asked of Obama at a presidential debate:

Sen. Obama, you [said](#) in your speech on race last March 18 that as long as whites have not ended racial inequality in America, whites have to expect the sort of hatred and rage that comes from Jeremiah Wright, who identifies the source of evil in the world as "white man's greed."

In this country today, black on white violence is a fact of life, and in addition to the steady stream of black on white rapes and murders there have been racially motivated black on white crimes of shocking brutality and horror, including not only rape and sodomy, but torture, disfigurement, burning. Cases in point are the [Wichita Massacre](#) in December 2000 in which five young white

people were captured and tortured, and four of them murdered, the torture-murder of Channon Christian and Christopher Newsom in Knoxville in January 2007, and the torture and disfigurement of a young women in New York City in April 2007.

Senator, is it your position that until whites have ended racial inequality in America, whites have to expect to be targeted by white-hating black thugs? In fact, aren't such criminals only acting out in physical terms the same seething anti-white anger, hatred, and vengefulness which has been enacted verbally by the pastor, and through whoops, yells, and cries from the congregation, every week in your church for the last 30 years, and which you have justified as an understandable and inevitable response to racial inequality?

If Sen. Obama has replied, I'm not aware of it. Perhaps he's not a VFR reader.

The crucial point is that your democratic mind handles these two identical crimes, one real and one imaginary, in very different ways. In the imaginary crime, your reflex is to extend a chain of collective responsibility to all the ideologies, institutions, and individuals who remind you even remotely of the criminal, or can be connected with him in some general way. (Capt. Williams was certainly not *ordered* to rape an Iraqi journalist.) In the real crime, responsibility extends only to the perpetrator, and perhaps not even to him - after all, he had a difficult childhood.

Dear open-minded progressive, this is how elegantly democracy has infected your brain. To the anonymous London reporter of 1956, the fact that this horrific crime could happen in Manhattan in 2008, and no one, not even the fellow Columbia-trained journalists a hundred blocks downtown, would find it especially important, would suggest some kind of *anesthesia*, some disconnection of the natural chimpanzee response of fear and rage. But this response has not been disabled in general - because we see it displayed in all its glory when an American soldier puts a pair of underpants on someone's head, somewhere in Mesopotamia.

Thus we are looking at *selective anesthesia*- by historical standards, our reaction to one offense is unusually sedated, and our reaction to the other is unusually inflamed. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that in both cases, the old reaction was wrong and the new reaction was right. But it is difficult for me - perhaps only because I am insufficiently versed in progressive doxology - to construct an ethical explanation of the change. On the other hand, I find it very easy to construct a *political* explanation of the change.

Here's another way to look at the same issue. Suppose, dear open-minded progressive, that the San Francisco Police Department embarked on a [reign of lawless terror](#), killing a hundred people or so a year, at least half of whom were innocent, and beating, raping, etc, many more. Would the good progressives of San Francisco stand for it? I think not. Because we don't believe that the police should be above the law. We believe that when they commit crimes, they should be tried and sent to jail just like everyone else.

So we believe that ethically, a policeman's crimes are no different from a street thug's. Or do we? Not as far as I can tell. I think San Franciscans are much *more* likely to express fear and anger at the idea of a policeman committing lawless violence. Don't you find this slightly odd? Which would you rather be hit over the head by: a policeman, or a mugger? I would rather not be hit over the head at all, thank you.

If the SFPD was as high-handed and above the law as the paramilitary gangs it (in theory) opposes, you, dear open-minded progressive, would agree that the only solution is a higher power: the National Guard. They have bigger guns, after all. But if you prefer martial law to the SFPD's reign of terror, why don't you prefer martial law to MS-13's reign of terror?

And this is exactly the problem. The reality is that *almost every country in the world today* - and certainly every major American city - could use a solid dose of [martial law](#).

Because all are beset by criminal paramilitary organizations which (a) are too powerful to be suppressed by the security forces under the legal system as it presently stands, (b) if judged by the same standards as the security forces constitute a gigantic, ongoing human-rights violation, and (c) if associated with the civilian and nongovernmental organizations which protect them from the security forces, *implicate the former* as major human-rights violators.

So when a [liberal surgeon in South Africa](#), whose trustworthiness strikes me as complete, [writes](#):

i recently watched the movie capote. i enjoyed it. but, being south african, i was interested in the reaction the movie portrayed of the american community to the murders that the movie is indirectly about. their reaction was shock and dismay. their reaction was right.

but in south africa there is a similar incident every day. i don't read the newspaper because it depresses me too much. you might wonder why i, a surgeon, am posting on this. one reason may be because i often deal with the survivors (two previous posts found [here](#) and [here](#)). at the moment i have three patients who are victims of violent crime. one is the victim of a farm attack. an old man who had his head caved in with a spade. why? just for fun, it seems. but maybe the reason i'm writing this post is because i'm south african. this is my country and i'm [gatvol](#).

just three recent stories. some guys broke into a house. they gagged the man. it seemed that whatever they shoved into his mouth was shoved in too deep, because as they lay on the bed violating his wife, he fought for breath and finally died of asphyxiation.

then there is a woman alone at home. some thugs broke in and asked where the safe was. they were looking for guns. she told them she had no safe and no guns. they then took a poker, heated it to red hot and proceeded to torture her with it so that she would tell them what they wanted to hear. because she could not, the torture went on for a number of hours.

then there is the story of a group of thugs that broke in to a house. they shot the man and cut the

fingers of the woman off with a pair of garden shears. while the man lay on the floor dying, the criminals took some time off to lounge on the bed eating some snacks they had found in the fridge and watch a bit of television.

[...]

there is crime everywhere but the most brutal and the violent crimes without clear motives are almost exclusively black on white. this is one more thing the government denies and even labels you as racist if you say it. it may not be put too strongly to say it is very nearly government sanctioned.

We start to smell a small, ugly smell of the future. After all, if all the people in the world could vote, or if they all moved to America, the electorate would look a lot like the New South Africa - the "Rainbow Nation," the great hope for [human oneness](#). Oops.

Unfortunately, our surgeon's database is a little out of date. America is no longer shocked by "In Cold Blood" events. There are simply too many of them. But there are nowhere near as many as in South Africa. (And even if I was not convinced by the surgeon's uncapitalized demeanor, [other sources confirm the result](#).)

In fact the simplest way to evaluate a government for human-rights violations is to think of *all* violence as the responsibility of the state, whether it is committed by men in uniforms or not. Otherwise, employing [paramilitary criminals](#) to do your dirty deeds, for a measure of plausible deniability, is far too easy. And [quite popular thesedays](#). There is no sharp line between an army and a militia, between a militia and a gang, and between a gang and a bunch of criminals. As the [laws of King Ine of Wessex](#) famously put it:

We use the term "thieves" if the number of men does not exceed seven, and "brigands" for a number between seven and thirty-five. Anything beyond this is an "army."

(A short course in actual Saxon history, such as that linked above, cannot come too late for [many libertarians](#), who throughout the history of English legal theory have been overfond of construing the medieval world as a paradise of ordered liberty. Indeed we inherit many elegant constructs from medieval law. And one reason they are so elegant is that they had to operate in such a brutal environment of pervasive violence.)

There is no reason at all that a libertarian, such as myself, cannot favor martial law. I am free when my rights are defined and secured against all comers, regardless of official pretensions. Freedom implies law; law implies order; order implies peace; peace implies victory. As a libertarian, the greatest danger threat to my property is not Uncle Sam, but thieves and brigands. If Uncle Sam wakes up from his present sclerotic slumber and shows the brigands a [strong hand](#), my liberty has been increased.

You see what happens when you open your mind and snort the mystery powder. You wind up on

YouTube, listening to an effeminate, deceased dictator scream "*¡Tendré la mano más dura que se imaginan!*" I don't think that one needs much translation.

And how about [this one](#):

Frankly, I begin to think that the U.S. is about ready for an Il Duce right now...

Except that when you follow the link, it's not at all what you think. At least, it has nothing to do with the "Pinochet Youth." The post is actually on a site for [insider political gossip](#) in New York State, which was linked from the NYT. And the [author](#) strikes me as, *rara avis*, a completely honest and dedicated career public servant, certainly an Obama voter, and certainly not a follower of Mussolini or any similar figure.

And yet the quote is not out of context at all. [Read the essay](#). If I'm worth your time, Littlefield is too:

Letting go of one's illusions is a difficult process that takes a long, long time, but I am just about there. From a young age I have been a believer in public services and benefits as a way of providing some measure of assurance for other people, people I rely on every time I purchase a good or service, of a decent life regardless of one's personal income or standing. After all, I initially chose public service as a career. And I have been a defender of the public institutions when compared with those who were only concerned with their own situation and preference put in less, or get out more, as if the community was a greedy adversary to be beaten in life rather than something one is a part of. Now, however, I see that it is probably hopeless.

Admittedly, Albany is one of the worst Augean stables of bureaucracy in America. If Hercules had to clean it out, he wouldn't find the Hudson sufficient. He'd have to find a way to get the St. Lawrence involved. But is Albany that different from Sacramento, or from Washington itself? Of course not.

Of course, neither Albany nor Washington needs a Duce. It needs a CEO. Like any gigantic, ancient and broken institution, it has no problem that can't be fixed by installing new management with [plenary](#) authority. (It might help to move the capital, as well. Put it in Kansas City, or better yet San Francisco, so that progressives can see the future up close.)

But the reality is: this thing is *done*. It is *over*. It is *not fixable* by *any form* of conventional politics. Either you want to keep it, or you want to throw it out. Any other political opinions you may have are irrelevant next to this choice.

On that note, let's review our rules for reactionaries.

Rule #1 is the one we just stated. Reaction is a *boolean decision*. Either you want to discard our present political system, including democracy, the Constitution, the entire legal code and body of precedent, the UN, etc, etc, or you think it's safer to muddle along with what we have now. Either is a perfectly legitimate opinion which a perfectly reasonable person may hold.

Of course, it is impossible to replace something with nothing. I've presented some designs for a restoration of secure, responsible and effective government. What I like about these designs is that they're simple, clear and easy to understand, and they rely on straightforward engineering principles without any mystical element. In particular, they do not require anyone to be a saint.

But here is another simple design: military government. Hand plenary power to the Joint Chiefs. Let them go from there. This won't do permanently, but for a few years it'd be fine. That should be plenty of time to figure out what comes next.

Here is yet another: restrict voting to homeowners. Note that this was [widely practised](#) in Anglo-American history, and for very good reason. As John Jay [put it](#): those who own the country ought to govern it. Mere freehold suffrage is a poor substitute for military government, and it too is not stable in the long run. But it would be opposed by all the same people, and it would constitute a very hard shakeup in exactly the right direction.

Here is a third: dissolve Washington and return sovereignty to the states. Here is a fourth: vest plenary executive authority in the Chief Justice, John Roberts. Here is a fifth: vest plenary executive authority in the publisher of the New York Times, "Pinch" Sulzberger. Here is a sixth: vest plenary executive authority in the Good One, Barack Obama. I am not altogether fond of the jobs that the latter two are doing with the limited authority they have now, but they are at least prepared for power, and real authority tends to create real responsibility in a hurry.

At present, any of these things is such a long way from happening that *the choice does not matter at all*. What matters, dear open-minded reactionary, is that you have had enough of our present government, you are done, finished, gatvol, and you want to replace it with something else that is secure, responsible, and effective.

In other words, rule #1: the reactionary's opposition to the present regime is *purely negative*. Positive proposals for what to replace it with are out of scope, now and for the foreseeable future. Once again, think in terms of the fall of Communism: the only thing that all those who lived under Communism could agree on was that they were *done with Communism*.

The advantage of rule #1 is that, applied correctly, it ensures a complete absence of internal conflict. There is nothing to argue over. Either you oppose the government, or you support it.

One exception to rule #1 is that the same coherent pure negativity, and resulting absence of bickering, can be achieved by opposing *components* of the government.

For example, I believe that both America and the rest of the planet would achieve enormous benefits by a total shutdown of international relations, including security guarantees, foreign aid, and mass immigration, and a return to the 19th-century policy of neutrality - an approach easily summarized by the

phrase *no foreign policy*. I believe that government should take no notice whatsoever of race - *no racial policy*. I believe it should separate itself completely from the question of what its citizens should or should not think - *separation of education and state*.

These are all purely negative proposals. They all imply lopping off an arm of the octopus, and replacing it with nothing at all. If any of them, or anything similar, is practical and a full reset is not, then all the better. However, any practical outcome in this direction is at present so distant that it is hard to assess plausibility.

Rule #2 is that a restoration cannot succeed by either of the following methods: the Democrats defeating the Republicans, or the Republicans defeating the Democrats. More precisely, it cannot involve imposing progressivism on traditionalists/"fundamentalists," or traditionalism on progressives.

Traditionalism and progressivism are the two major divisions of Christianity in our time. Not all traditionalists are Catholics, and many progressives are, but "fundamentalism" today occupies the basic political niche of Catholicism in the European tradition, and progressivism is clearly the [Protestant mainstream](#) (historically Unitarian, Congregationalist, Methodist, etc; doctrinally, almost pure Quaker).

If secure, responsible, effective government has to wait until this religious war is over, it will wait *forever*. Or there will be a new [Bartholomew's Day](#). Neither of these options is acceptable to me. Are they acceptable to you? Then you may not be a restorationist.

Of course, each of these Christian sects is intimately connected, exactly as Noah Webster describes, with a political party and a set of politically constructed opinions about what government is and how it should be run. Since progressivism is politically dominant, one would expect it to have the most political content and the least religious content, and indeed this is so. And as we've seen, in a democracy there is no reason to expect anyone's political opinions to have any relationship to the actual art of responsible, effective government.

Nonetheless, it is entirely possible to be an apolitical progressive. Progressivism is a culture, not a party. Charity, for example, is a vast part of this culture, and no reasonable person can have anything against charity, as long as it remains a purely personal endeavor and does not develop aspects of political violence, as it did in the late 20th century. Environmentalism is a part of this culture, and who doesn't live in the environment? Etc, etc, etc.

The fangs can be pulled without much harm to the snake. In fact, the snake has never really needed fangs, and will find itself much more comfortable without them.

Rule #3: in case this is not a corollary of rule #1, a reset implies a *total breach* with the Anglo-American political tradition.

The fact that an institution is old, and has carried the respect of large populations for decades or

centuries, is always a reason to honor and respect it. That you oppose Washington, the real organization that exists in the real world, does not mean that you oppose America, the abstract symbol. (Nor does it mean you oppose America, the continent in the Northern Hemisphere, whose destruction would be quite the engineering feat.) It does not mean that you want to burn or abolish the flag, etc, etc, etc. Similarly, the fact that I'm not a Catholic doesn't mean that if I met the Pope, I'd say, "Fuck you, Pope!" As a matter of fact I would probably want to kiss his ring, or whatever is the appropriate gesture.

On the other hand, we have no reason to think that the political designs we have inherited from this tradition are useful in any way, shape or form. All we know is that they were more militarily successful than their competitors, which may well have been flawed in arbitrary other ways. If the Axis had defeated the Allies, a feat which was quite plausible in hindsight, we would face a completely different set of reengineering challenges, and it would be the Prussian tradition rather than the Whig that had to be discarded.

Historical validation is a good thing. But history provides an extraordinary range of examples. And there is no strong reason to think the governments recent and domestic are any better than the governments ancient and foreign. The American Republic is over two hundred years old. Great. The [Serene Republic of Venice](#) lasted eleven hundred. If you're designing from the ground up, why start from the first rather than the second?

A total breach does not imply that everything American (or everything Portuguese, if you are trying to reboot Portugal; but not much in the government of modern Portugal is in any sense Portuguese) must be discarded. It means everything American needs to be justified, just as it would be if it was Venetian. If you believe in democracy: why? If you favor a bicameral legislature, a supreme court, a department of agriculture: why?

Rule #4: the only possible weapon is the truth.

I hope it's unnecessary to say, but it's worth saying anyway, that the only force which can terminate USG by military means is the military itself. There is no reason to talk about this possibility. If it happens, it will happen. It certainly won't happen any time soon.

This means that democracy can only be terminated by political means, ie, democracy itself. Which means convincing a large number of people. Of course, people can be convinced with lies as well as with the truth, but the former is naturally the specialty of the present authorities. Better not to confuse anyone.

What is the truth, anyway? The truth is reality. The truth is what exists. The truth is what rings like a bell when you whack it with the back of a knife. It is very difficult to recognize the truth, but it is much easier to recognize it when it's right next to an equal and opposite lie. A certain device called the Internet is very good at providing this service.

Here is an example. The wonderful kids at Google, who are all diehard progressives and whom I'm sure

would be horrified by the uses I'm making of their services, have done something that I can only compare to Lenin's old saying about the capitalists: that they would sell the rope that was used to hang them. Likewise, progressives seem determined to publish the books that will discredit them. As in the case of the capitalists, this is because they are good, not because they are evil. But unlike Lenin, we are good as well, and we welcome these accidental forced errors.

I refer, of course, not to any new books. It is very difficult to get reactionary writing published anywhere, even (in fact, especially, because they are so sensitive on the subject) by the conservative presses. However, as UR readers know, the majority of work published before 1922 is on-line at Google. It is often hard to read, missing for bizarre reasons that make no sense (why scan a book from 1881 and then not put the scans online?), badly scanned, etc, etc. But it is there, and as we've seen it is quite usable.

And there are two things about the pre-1922 corpus. One, it is far, *far* to the right of the consensus reality that we now know and love. Just the fact that people in 1922 believed X, while today we believe Y, has to shake your faith in democracy. Was the world of 1922 massively deluded? Or is it ours? It could be both, but it can't be neither. Indeed, even the progressives of the Belle Epoque often turn out to be far to the right of our conservatives. WTF?

Two, you can use this corpus to conduct a very interesting exercise: you can *triangulate*. This is an essential skill in defensive historiography. If you like UR, you like defensive historiography.

Historiographic triangulation is the art of taking two or more opposing positions from the past, and using hindsight to decide who was right and who was wrong. The simplest way to play the game is to imagine that the opponents in the debate were reanimated in 2008, informed of present conditions, and reunited for a friendly panel discussion. I'm afraid often the only conceivable result is that one side simply surrenders to the other.

For example, one fun exercise, which you can perform safely for no cost in the privacy of your own home, is to read the following early 20th-century books on the "Negro Question": [The Negro: The Southerner's Problem](#), by [Thomas Nelson Page](#) (racist, 1904); [Following the Color Line](#), by [Ray Stannard Baker](#) (progressive, 1908); and [Race Adjustment: Essays on the Negro in America](#), by [Kelly Miller](#) (Negro, 1909). Each of these books is (a) by a forgotten author, (b) far more interesting and well-written than the pseudoscientific schlock that comes off the presses these days, and (c) a picture of a vanished world. Imagine assembling Page, Baker and Miller in a hotel room in 2008, with a videocamera and little glasses of water in front of them. What would they agree on? Disagree on? Dear open-minded progressive, if you fail to profit from this exercise, you simply have no interest in the past.

However, an even more fun one is the now thoroughly forgotten Gladstone-Tennyson debate. I forget how I stumbled on this contretemps, which really does deserve to be among the most famous intellectual confrontations in history. Sadly, dear open-minded progressive, it appears to have been forgotten for a reason. And the reason is not a good one.

You may know that [Tennyson](#), in his romantic youth (1835), wrote a poem called [Locksley Hall](#). Due to its nature as 19th-century dramatic verse, *Locksley Hall* is unreadable today. But its basic content can be described as romantic juvenile liberalism. Here is some of the pith, if pith there is:

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new:  
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,  
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,  
Pilots of the purple twilight dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew  
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,  
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-storm;

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd  
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,  
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

I'm not sure whether this is supposed to remind us more of the UN, the British Empire, or *Star Trek*. Perhaps all three. But you get the idea. The "Parliament of man" couplet, in particular, is rather often quoted.

Well. So, Tennyson was a romantic young liberal when he wrote this. In 1835. In 1885, when he wrote (adding ten years for some dramatic reason) [Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After](#), he was neither romantic, nor young, nor - um - liberal. While the sequel is also unreadable today, for more or less the same reasons, here are some couplets from it:

I myself have often babbled doubtless of a foolish past;  
Babble, babble; our old England may go down in babble at last.

Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just;  
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they crumble into dust.

Gone the cry of 'Forward, Forward,' lost within a growing gloom;  
Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence of a tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space,  
Staled by frequency, shrunk by usage into commonest commonplace!

'Forward' rang the voices then, and of the many mine was one.  
Let us hush this cry of 'Forward' till ten thousand years have gone.

France had shown a light to all men, preached a Gospel, all men's good;  
Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shrieked and slaked the light with blood.

Aye, if dynamite and revolver leave you courage to be wise:  
When was age so crammed with menace? Madness? Written, spoken lies?

Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing sober fact to scorn,  
Cries to Weakest as to Strongest, 'Ye are equals, equal-born.'

Equal-born? O yes, if yonder hill be level with the flat.  
Charm us, Orator, till the Lion look no larger than the Cat.

Till the Cat through that mirage of overheated language loom  
Larger than the Lion, - Demos end in working its own doom.

Those three hundred millions under one Imperial sceptre now,  
Shall we hold them? Shall we loose them? Take the suffrage of the plow.

Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth if only you and you,  
Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak were wholly true.

Trustful, trustful, looking upward to the practised hustings-liar;  
So the Higher wields the Lower, while the Lower is the Higher.

Step by step we gained a freedom known to Europe, known to all;  
Step by step we rose to greatness, - through tonguesters we may fall.

You that woo the Voices - tell them 'old experience is a fool,'  
Teach your flattered kings that only those who cannot read can rule.

Tumble Nature heel o'er head, and, yelling with the yelling street,  
Set the feet above the brain and swear the brain is in the feet.

Bring the old dark ages back without the faith, without the hope,  
Break the State, the Church, the Throne, and roll their ruins down the slope.

Do your best to charm the worst, to lower the rising race of men;  
Have we risen from out the beast, then back into the beast again?

Etc. Obviously, either someone has been reading [Pobedonostsev](#), or great minds just happen to think alike. I don't think you have to be a Victorian liberal to see that this is highly seditious material. Inflammatory, even. Not bad for an old fart.

Well, [Gladstone](#), who was both a Victorian liberal and an old fart himself, reads this, and of course he shits a brick. The poem might as well have been a personal attack on Gladstone himself - especially that bit about "Celtic Demos," which is not a terribly well-concealed reference to [Home Rule](#).

And what does he do? He's not just a statesman, but a real aristocrat. Does he challenge Tennyson to a duel? A bit late in the day for that. No, he takes time out, from his busy duties as Prime Minister, to write a [response](#). Not in verse, since taking on Tennyson in trochaic couplets is like challenging Chuck Norris in Fight Club. But Gladstone was a master of prose - listen to this wicked little intro:

The nation will observe with warm satisfaction that, although the new Locksley Hall is, as told by the Calendar, a work of Lord Tennyson's old age, yet is his poetic "eye not dim, nor his natural force abated."

Take note, kids. This is how you start out if you're really going to crucify someone. Gladstone continues by flattering the person for a few paragraphs. Then he flatters the poem for a page or so. Then he changes his angle slightly:

Perhaps the tone may even, at times, be thought to have grown a little hoarse with his years. Not that we are to regard it as the voice of the author.

Oh, no. Not at all. Then ( [page 319](#)) Gladstone spends another page agreeing with Tennyson. Yes, the French Revolution was terrible. And the riots of [Captain Swing](#). Etc, etc. But it all worked out in the end, didn't it? What bliss was it to be young, after the First Reform Bill? Etc, etc.

And then finally ([page 320](#)) Gladstone launches into full-on shark-attack mode:

During the intervening half century, or near it, the temper of hope and thankfulness, which both Mr. Tennyson and the young Prophet of Locksley Hall so largely contributed to form, has been tested by experience. Authorities and people have been hard at work in dealing with the laws, the policy, and the manners of the country. Their performances may be said to form the Play, intervening between the old Prologue, and the new Epilogue which has just issued from the press. This Epilogue, powerful as it is, will not quite harmonize with the evergreens of Christmas. The young Prophet, now grown old, is not, indeed (though perhaps, on his own showing, he ought to be), in despair. For he still stoutly teaches manly duty and personal effort, and longs for progress more, he trows, than its professing and blatant votaries. But in his present survey of the age as his field, he seems to find that a sadder color has invested all the scene. The evil has eclipsed the good, and the scale, which before rested solidly on the ground, now kicks the beam. For the framing of our estimate, however,

prose, and very prosaic prose, may be called in not less than poetry. The question demands an answer, whether it is needful to open so dark a prospect for the Future; whether it is just to pronounce what seems to be a very decided censure on the immediate Past.

What follows is a rather amazing document - a compact and thorough defence of Victorian liberalism and democracy, and its prospects for the future:

In the words of the [Prince Consort](#), "Our institutions are on their trial," as institutions of self-government; and if condemnation is to be pronounced, on the nation it must mainly fall, and must sweep away with it a large part of such hopes as have been either fanatically or reflectively entertained that, by this provision of self-government, the Future might effect some moderate improvement upon the Past, and mitigate in some perceptible degree the social sorrows and burdens of mankind. I will now, with a view to a fair trial of this question, try to render, rudely and slightly though it be, some account of the deeds and the movement of this last half century.

I should not attempt to abuse Gladstone by excerpting him. But one morsel - especially considering the above - stands out as particularly choice:

One reference to figures may however be permitted. It is that which exhibits the recent movement of crime in this country. For the sake of brevity I use round numbers in stating it. Happily the facts are too broad to be seriously mistaken. In 1870, the United Kingdom with a population of about 31,700,000 had about 13,000 criminals, or one in 1,760. In 1884, with a population of 36,000,000, it had 14,000 criminals, or one in 2,500. And as there are some among us who conceive Ireland to be a sort of pandemonium, it may be well to mention (and I have the hope that Wales might, on the whole, show as clean a record) that with a population of (say) 5,100,000 Ireland (in 1884) had 1,573 criminals, or less than one in 3,200.

Words fail me, dear open-minded progressive, they really do.

But try the experiment: read the rest of Gladstone's essay, and ask yourself what he and Tennyson would make of the last century of British history, and her condition today. Suffice it to say that I think someone owes someone else an apology. Of course, they're both dead, so none will be forthcoming.

In general what I find when I perform this exercise, is that - as far to the right of us as 1922 was - the winner of the triangulation tends to be its rightmost vertex. Not on every issue, certainly, but most. (I'm sure that if I was to try the same trick with, say, Torquemada and Spinoza, the results would be different, but I am out of my historical depth much past the late 18C.)

What's wonderful is that if you doubt these results, you can play the game yourself. Bored in your high-school class? Read about the [Civil War](#) and [Reconstruction](#) and [slavery](#). Unless you're a professional historian, you certainly won't be assigned the primary sources I just linked to. But no one can stop you, either. (At least not until Google adds a "Flag This Book" button.)

I am certainly not claiming that everything you find in Google Books, or even everything I just linked to, is true. It is not. It is a product of its time. What's true, however, is that each book is the book it says it is. Google has not edited it. And if it says it was published in 1881, nothing that happened after 1881 can have affected it.

Here is another exercise in defensive historiography: skim this [facile 2008 treatment](#) of [Francis Lieber](#), then read the [actual document](#) that Lieber wrote. The primary source is not only better-written, but shorter and more informative as well. (One page is mis-scanned, but one can make out the wonderful words "the utmost rigor of the military law"...)

You'll see immediately that the main service Professor Bosco, the modern historian, provides, is to deflect you from the brutal reality that Lieber feeds you straight. Lieber says: do Y, because if you do X, Z will happen. The Union Army did Y, and Z did not happen. The US in Iraq, and modern counterinsurgency forces more generally, did X, and Z happened.

The modern law of warfare, which Lieber more or less founded, has been twisted into an instrument which negates everything he believed. The results have been the results he predicted. I know it's a cliché - but history is too important to be left to the historians.

Rule #5: *quality is better than quantity*. At least when it comes to supporters.

Any political conspiracy, reactionary or revolutionary, is in the end a social network. And we observe an interesting property of social networks: their quality tends to decline over time. It does not increase. Facebook, for example, succeeded where Friendster and Orkut failed, by restricting its initial subscriber base to college students, which for all their faults really are the right side of the bell curve.

In order to make an impact on the political process, you need quantity. You need moronic, chanting hordes. There is no way around this. Communism was not overthrown by Andrei Sakharov, Joseph Brodsky and Vaclav Havel. It was overthrown by moronic, chanting hordes. I suppose I shouldn't be rude about it, but it's a fact that there is no such thing as a crowd of philosophers.

Yet Communism *was* overthrown by Sakharov, Brodsky and Havel. The philosophers *did* matter. What was needed was the combination of philosopher and crowd - a rare and volatile mixture, highly potent and highly unnatural.

My view is that up until the very last stage of the reset, quality is everything and quantity is, if anything, undesirable. On the Internet, ideas spread like crazy. And they are much more likely to spread from the smart to the dumb than the other way around.

One person and one blog is nowhere near sufficient, of course. What we need is a sort of counter-Cathedral: an institution which is actually more trustworthy than the university system. The universities

are the brain of USG, and the best way to kill anything is to shoot it in the head.

To be right when the Cathedral is wrong is to demonstrate that we live under a system of government which is bound together by the same glue that held up Communism: lies. You do not need a triple-digit IQ to know that a regime held up by lies is doomed. You also do not need a triple-digit IQ to help bring down a doomed regime. Everyone will volunteer for that job. It's as much fun as anything in the world.

Solely for the purpose of discussion, let's call this counter-Cathedral *Resartus* - from Carlyle's great novel, [Sartor Resartus](#) (*The Tailor Reclothed*).

The thesis of *Resartus* is that the marketplace of ideas, free and blossoming as it may seem, is or at least may be infected with lies. These lies all have one thing in common: they are related to the policies of modern democratic governments. Misinformation justifies misgovernment; misgovernment subsidizes misinformation. This is our feedback loop.

On the other hand, it's clear that modern democratic governments are doing many things right. Perhaps in all circumstances they are doing the best they can. Perhaps there is no misinformation at all. The hypothesis that such feedback loops can form is not a demonstration that they exist.

Therefore, the mission of *Resartus* is to establish, using that crowdsourced wiki-power we are all familiar with, the truth on every dubious subject. Perhaps the truth will turn out to be the official story, in which case we can be happy.

The two sites today which are most like *Resartus* are [Climate Audit](#) and [Gene Expression](#). Both of these are, in my humble opinion, scientific milestones. CA's subject is climatology; GNXP's subject is human biodiversity. There are also some general-purpose truth verifiers, such as [Snopes](#), but Snopes is hopelessly lightweight next to a CA or a GNXP.

CA and GNXP are unique because their mission is to be authorities in and of themselves. They do not consider any source reliable on the grounds of mere institutional identity. Nor do they assume any institutional credibility themselves. They simply try to be right, and as far as I can tell (lacking expertise in either of their fields, especially the statistical background to really work through their work) they are.

CA - created and edited by one man, [Steve McIntyre](#), who as far as I'm concerned is one of the most important scientists of our generation - is especially significant, because unlike GNXP (which is publicizing mainstream research that many would rather see unpublicized), McIntyre, starting with no credentials or academic career at all is actually attacking and attempting to destroy a major flying buttress of the Cathedral. And one with major political importance, not to mention economic. Imagine a cross between Piltdown Man, the Dreyfus Affair, and Enron, and you might get the picture.

If the fields behind AGW, paleoclimatology and climate modeling, are indeed pseudosciences and go down in history as such, I find it almost impossible to imagine what will happen to their promoters.

Their promoters being, basically, everyone who matters. McIntyre is best known for his exposure of the [hockey stick](#), but what's amazing is that CA seems to find a similar abuse of mathematics, data, or both - typically less prominent - about every other week or two.

The scientific achievement of GNXP is less stunning, but its implications are, if anything, larger. I've discussed human neurological uniformity and its absence on this series already. But let's just say that a substantial component of our political, economic, and academic system has completely committed its credibility to a proposition that might be called the *International White Conspiracy*. Statistical population variations in human neurology do not strike me as terribly exciting per se - a responsible, effective government should be able to deal with anything down to your high-end *Homo erectus*. Lies, however, are always big news. If there is a much, much simpler explanation of reality which does not require an International White Conspiracy, that is a problem for quite a few people - the vast majority of whom are, in fact, [white](#).

At the same time, CA and GNXP and relatives ([LvMI](#), though it's not just a website, has many of the same fine qualities) were not designed as general-purpose information-warfare devices. There is some crossover, but I suspect most CA posters are unaware of or uninterested in GNXP, and often the reverse. Many people are natural specialists, of course, and this is natural.

The idea of *Resartus* - which, as usual, anyone can build in their own backyard (contact me if you are interested in [resartus.org](#)) is to build a general-purpose site for answering a variety of large, controversial questions. A smart person should be able to visit *Resartus* and decide, with a minimum of effort, who is right about AGW or human biodiversity or peak oil or the Kennedy assassination or evolution or string theory or 9/11 or the Civil War or....

To build a credible truth machine, it's important to generate true negatives as well as true positives. For example, I favor the conventional wisdom on evolution and 9/11. On peak oil and the Kennedys, I simply don't know enough to decide. (Actually, I live in terror of the idea that someone will convince me that Oswald didn't act alone. So I try to avoid the matter.) Therefore, I would hope that any attempt to audit Darwin, as McIntyre audited Mann, would result in a true negative.

The easiest way to describe the problem of *Resartus* is to describe it as a crowdsourced trial. Indeed, any process that can determine the truth or falsity of AGW, etc, should be a process powerful enough to determine criminal guilt or innocence. Certainly many of these issues are well into that category of importance - in fact, I would not be surprised if one day we see legal proceedings in the global-warming department. There have already been some suspicious signs of "lawyering up."

A trial is not a blog, nor is it a discussion board. One of the main flaws of Climate Audit is that it does not provide a way for AGW skeptics and believers to place each others' arguments and evidence side by side, making it as easy as possible for neutral third parties to evaluate who is right. I am confident that CA is on the money, but much of this confidence is gut feeling.

In the evolution world, the [talk.origins index to creationist claims](#) has probably come the closest to setting out a structured argument for evolution, in which every possible creationist argument is listed and refuted. However, a real trial is adversarial. The prosecutor does not get to make the defense lawyer's arguments.

On *Resartus*, the way this would work is that the *creationist community* itself would be asked to list its claims, and edit them collectively, producing the best possible statement of the creationist case. Not showing up should not provide an advantage, so evolutionists should be able to add and refute their own creationist claims. Creationists should in turn be able to respond to their responses, and so ad infinitum, until both sides feel they have said their piece.

As an evolutionist, I feel that this process, which could continue indefinitely as the argument tree is refined, evidence exhibits were added, etc, etc, would demonstrate very clearly that evolutionists are right and creationists are blowing smoke. As a matter of fact, as someone who's served on a jury, I feel that such an argument tree would be far more useful than verbal lectures from the competing attorneys.

And if these structures were available *on one site* for a wide variety of controversial issues, it would be very, very easy for any smart young person with a few hours to spare to see what the pattern of truth and error, and its inevitable political associations, started to look like. It certainly will not be easy to construct a nexus of more reliable judgments than the university system itself, but at some point someone will do it. And I think the results will be devastating.

When I look at the thinking of people who disagree with me, and especially when I look at the thinking of the educated public at large (New York Times comments, on the few articles which they are enabled for, are an invaluable vox populi for the Obamabot crowd) I am often struck by the fact that their perspective differs from mine as a result of small, seemingly irrelevant details in the interpretation of reality.

If you believe that John Kerry was telling the truth about his voyages into Cambodia, for example, you will hear the word "Swiftboating" in a very different way. On a larger subject, if [James Watson](#) is right, our historical interpretation of the 1860s will simply have to change. Details matter. Facts matter.

Our democratic institutions today, though far more distributed and open than the systems of Goebbels or Vyshinsky, are basically designed to run on an information system that funnels truth down from the top of the mountain. This is a brittle design. If it breaks - if it starts distributing sewage along with the rosewater - it loses its credibility. If it loses its credibility, the government loses its legitimacy. When a government loses its legitimacy, you don't want to be standing under it.

The Cathedral is called the Cathedral for another reason: it's not the [Bazaar](#). Coding, frankly, is pretty easy. Reinterpreting reality is hard. Nonetheless, I think this thing will come down one of these days. And I would rather be outside it than under it.

Again, UR will return on August 14. At this point it will be exclusively devoted to answering the accumulated questions, objections and catcalls, for at least a week and maybe more like four. (Hopefully at this point I will also have cleared out my inbox - although I have made this promise before.) Please feel free to post any reactions to the whole series on the thread below.

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Original Article: <http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2008/07/olxiv-rules-for-reactionaries.html>

# Reactionary Philosophy in an Enormous, Planet-sized Nutshell

March 3, 2013

<http://slatestarcodex.com/2013/03/03/reactionary-philosophy-in-an-enormous-planet-sized-nutshell/>

by Scott Alexander

*previously an exception to "don't read the comment section"*



## Intro

I have heard the following from a bunch of people, one of whom was me six months ago: “I keep on reading all these posts by really smart people who identify as Reactionaries, and I don’t have any idea what’s going on. They seem to be saying things that are either morally repugnant or utterly ridiculous. And when I ask them to explain, they say it’s complicated and there’s no one summary of their ideas. Why don’t they just write one?”

Part of me secretly thinks part of the answer is that a lot of these beliefs are not argument but poetry. Try to give a quick summary of Shelley’s *Adonais*: “Well there’s this guy, and he’s dead, and now this other guy is really sad.” One worries something has been lost. And just as well try to give a quick summary of the sweeping elegaic paeans to a bygone age of high culture and noble virtues that is Reaction.

But there *is* some content, and some of it is disconcerting. I started reading a little about Reaction after incessantly being sent links to various [Mencius Moldbug](#) posts, and then started hanging out in an IRC channel with a few Reactionaries (including the infamous Konkvistador) whom I could question about it. Obviously this makes me the world expert who is completely qualified to embark on the hitherto unattempted project of explaining it to everyone else.

Okay, maybe not. But the fact is, I’ve been itching to present an argument against Reactionary thought for a long time, but have been faced with the dual problem of not really having a solid target and worrying that everyone not a Reactionary would think I was wasting my time even talking to them. Trying to sum up their ideas seems like a good way to first of all get a reference point for what their ideas are, and second of all to make it clearer why I think they deserve a rebuttal.

We’ll start with the meta-level question of how confident we should be that our society is better than its predecessors in important ways. Then we’ll look on the object level about how we compare to past societies along dimensions we might care about. We’ll make a lengthy digression into social justice issues, showing how some traditional societies were actually more enlightened than our own in this area. Having judged past societies positively, we’ll then look at what aspects of their cultures, governments, and religions made them so successful, and whether we could adopt those to modern life.

Much of this will be highly politically incorrect and offensive, because that’s what Reactionaries *do*. I have tried to be charitable towards these ideas, which means this post will be pushing politically incorrect and offensive positions. If you do not want to read it, especially the middle parts which are about race, I would totally understand that. But if you do read it and accuse me of holding these ideas myself and get really angry, then [you fail at reading comprehension forever](#).

I originally planned to follow this up tomorrow with the post containing my arguments against these positions, but this argument took longer than I thought to write and I expect the counterargument will as well. Expect a post critiquing reactionary ideas sometime in the next...week? month?

In any case, this is not that post. This is the post where I argue that modern society is rotten to the core, and that the only reasonable solution is to dig up King James II, clone him, and give the clone absolute control over everything.

## No One Expects The Spanish Inquisition, Especially Not In 21st Century America

People in ancient societies thought their societies were obviously great. The imperial Chinese thought nothing could beat imperial China, the medieval Spaniards thought medieval Spain was a singularly impressive example of perfection, and Communist Soviets were pretty big on Soviet Communism. Meanwhile, we think 21st-century Western civilization, with its democracy, secularism, and ethnic tolerance is pretty neat. Since the first three examples now seem laughably wrong, we should be suspicious of the hypothesis that *we* finally live in the one era whose claim to have gotten political philosophy right is *totally justified*.

But it seems like we have an advantage they don't. Speak out against the Chinese Empire and you lose your head. Speak out against the King of Spain and you face the Inquisition. Speak out against Comrade Stalin and you get sent to Siberia. The great thing about western liberal democracy is that it has a free marketplace of ideas. *Everybody* criticizes some aspect of our society. Noam Chomsky made a career of criticizing our society and became rich and famous and got a cushy professorship. So our advantage is that we admit our society's imperfections, reward those who point them out, and so keep inching closer and closer to this ideal of perfect government.

Okay, back up. Suppose you went back to Stalinist Russia and you said "You know, people just don't respect Comrade Stalin enough. There isn't enough Stalinism in this country! I say we need *two* Stalins! No, *fifty* Stalins!"

Congratulations. You have found a way to criticize the government in Stalinist Russia and *totally get away with it*. Who knows, you might even get that cushy professorship.

If you "criticize" society by telling it to keep doing exactly what it's doing only much much more so, society recognizes you as an ally and rewards you for being a "bold iconoclast" or "having brave and revolutionary new ideas" or whatever. It's only when you tell them something they *actually don't want to hear* that you get in trouble.

Western society has been moving gradually further to the left for the past several hundred years at least. It went from divine right of kings to constitutional monarchy to libertarian democracy to federal democracy to New Deal democracy through the civil rights movement to social democracy to ????. If you catch up to society as it's pushing leftward and say "Hey guys, I think we should go leftward even faster! Two times faster! No, *fifty* times faster!", society will call you a bold revolutionary iconoclast and give you a professorship.

If you start suggesting maybe it should switch directions and move the direction opposite the one the engine is pointed, *then* you might have a bad time.

Try it. Mention that you think we should undo something that's been done over the past century or two.

Maybe reverse women's right to vote. Go back to sterilizing the disabled and feeble-minded. If you *really* need convincing, suggest re-implementing segregation, or how about slavery? See how far freedom of speech gets you.

In America, it will get you fired from your job and ostracized by nearly everyone. Depending on how loudly you do it, people may picket your house, or throw things at you, or commit violence against you which is then excused by the judiciary because obviously they were provoked. Despite the iconic image of the dissident sent to Siberia, this is how the Soviets dealt with most of *their* iconoclasts too.

If you absolutely insist on imprisonment, you can always go to Europe, where there are more than enough "hate speech" laws on the book to satisfy your wishes. But a system of repression that doesn't involve obvious state violence is little different in effect than one that does. It's simply more efficient and harder to overthrow.

Reaction isn't a conspiracy theory; it's not suggesting there's a secret campaign for organized repression. To steal an example from the other side of the aisle, it's positing something more like patriarchy. Patriarchy doesn't have an actual Patriarch coordinating men in their efforts to keep down women. It's just that when lots of people share some really strong cultural norms, they manage to self-organize into a kind of immune system for rejecting new ideas. And Western society just happens to have a really strong progressivist immune system ready to gobble you up if you say anything insufficiently progressive.

And so the main difference between modern liberal democracy and older repressive societies is that older societies repressed things you liked, but modern liberal democracies only repress things you don't like. Having only things you don't like repressed looks from the inside a lot like there being no repression at all.

The good Catholic in medieval Spain doesn't feel repressed, even when the Inquisition drags away her neighbor. She feels like decent people have total freedom to worship whichever saint they want, total freedom to go to whatever cathedral they choose, total freedom to debate who the next bishop should be – oh, and thank goodness someone's around to deal with those crazy people who are trying to damn the rest of us to Hell. We medieval Spaniards are way too smart to fall for the [balance fallacy](#)!

## Wait, You Mean The Invisible Multi-Tentacled Monster That Has Taken Over All Our Information Sources Might Be Trying To *Mislead* Us?

Since you are a citizen of a repressive society, you should be extremely skeptical of all the information you get from schools, the media, and popular books on any topic related to the areas where active repression is occurring. That means at *least* politics, history, economics, race, and gender. You should be *especially* skeptical of any book that's praised as "a breath of fresh air" or "a good counter to the prevailing bias", as books that garner praise in the media are probably of the "We need fifty Stalins!" variety.

This is not nearly as paranoid as it sounds. Since race is the most taboo subject in our culture, it will also be the simplest example. Almost all of our hard data on race comes from sociology programs in universities – ie the most liberal departments in the most liberal institutions in the country. Most of these sociology departments have an explicit mission statement of existing to fight racism. Many sociologists studying race will tell you quite openly that they went into the field – which is not especially high-paying or prestigious – in order to help crusade against the evil of racism.

Imagine a Pfizer laboratory whose mission statement was to prove Pfizer drugs had no side effects, and whose staff all went into pharmacology specifically to help crusade against the evil of believing Pfizer's drugs have side effects. Imagine that this laboratory hands you their study showing that the latest Pfizer drug has zero side effects, c'mon, trust us! Is there *any way* you're taking that drug?

We know that a lot of medical research, especially medical research by drug companies, turns up the wrong answer simply through the file-drawer effect. That is, studies that turn up an exciting result everyone wants to hear get published, and studies that turn up a disappointing result don't – either because the scientist never submits it to the journals, or because the journal doesn't want to publish it. If this happens *all the time* in medical research despite growing safeguards to prevent it, how often do you think it happens in sociological research?

Do you think the average sociologist selects the study design most likely to turn up evidence of racist beliefs being correct, or the study design most likely to turn up the opposite? If despite her best efforts a study does turn up evidence of racist beliefs being correct, do you think she's going to submit it to a major journal with her name on it for everyone to see? And if by some bizarre chance she does submit it, do you think the *International Journal Of We Hate Racism So We Publish Studies Proving How Dumb Racists Are* is going to cheerfully include it in their next edition?

And so when people triumphantly say "Modern science has completely disproven racism, there's not a shred of evidence in support of it", we should consider that exactly the same level of proof as the guy from 1900 who said "Modern science has completely proven racism, there's not a shred of evidence against it". The field is still just made of people pushing their own dogmatic opinions and calling them

science; only the dogma has changed.

And although Reactionaries love to talk about race, in the end race is nothing more than a particularly strong and obvious taboo. There are taboos in history, too, and in economics, and in political science, and although they're less obvious and interesting they still mean you need this same skepticism when parsing results from these fields. "But every legitimate scientist disagrees with this particular Reactionary belief!" should be said with the same intonation as "But every legitimate archbishop disagrees with this particular heresy."

This is not intended as a proof that racism is correct, or even as the slightest shred of evidence for that hypothesis (although a lot of Reactionaries are, in fact, racist as heck). No doubt the Spanish Inquisition found a couple of real Satanists, and probably some genuine murderers and rapists got sent to Siberia. Sometimes, once in a blue moon, a government [will even censor an idea that happens to be false](#). But it's still useful to know when something is being censored, so you don't actually think the absence of evidence for one side of the story is evidence of anything other than people on that side being smart enough to keep their mouths shut.

## The Past Is A First World Country

Even so, isn't the evidence that modern society beats past societies kiiiind of overwhelming? We're richer, safer, healthier, better educated, freer, happier, more equal, more peaceful, and more humane. Reactionary responses to these claims might get grouped into three categories.

The first category is "Yes, obviously". Most countries do seem to have gotten about 100x wealthier since the year 1700. Disease rates have plummeted, and life expectancy has gone way up – albeit mostly due to changes in infant mortality. But this stands entirely explained by technology. So we're a hundred times wealthier than in 1700. In what? Gold and diamonds? Maybe that has something to do with the fact that today we're digging our gold mines with one of these:



...and in 1700 they had to dig their gold mines with one of these:



Likewise, populations are healthier today because they can get computers to calculate precisely targeted radiation bursts that zap cancer while sparing healthy tissue, whereas in 1700 the pinnacle of medical technology was leeches.

This technology dividend appears even in unexpected places. The world is more peaceful today, but how much of that is the existence of global trade networks that make war unprofitable, video reporting of every casualty that makes war unpopular, and nuclear and other weapons that make war unwinnable?

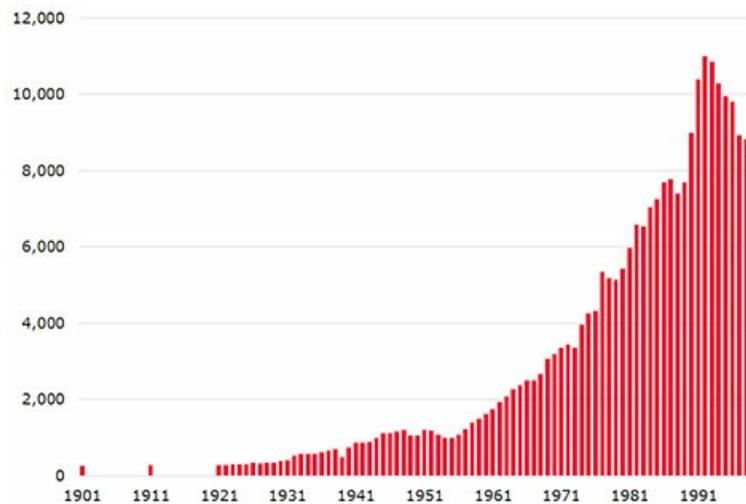
The second category is "oh really?". Let's take safety. This is one of Mencius Moldbug's pet issues, and he

likes to quote the following from an 1876 century text on criminology:

Meanwhile, it may with little fear of contradiction be asserted that there never was, in any nation of which we have a history, a time in which life and property were so secure as they are at present in England. The sense of security is almost everywhere diffused, in town and country alike, and it is in marked contrast to the sense of insecurity which prevailed even at the beginning of the present century. There are, of course, in most great cities, some quarters of evil repute in which assault and robbery are now and again committed. There is perhaps to be found a lingering and flickering tradition of the old sanctuaries and similar resorts. But any man of average stature and strength may wander about on foot and alone, at any hour of the day or the night, through the greatest of all cities and its suburbs, along the high roads, and through unfrequented country lanes, and never have so much as the thought of danger thrust upon him, unless he goes out of his way to court it.

Moldbug then usually contrasts this with whatever recent news article has struck his fancy about entire inner-city neighborhoods where the police are terrified to go, teenagers being mowed down in crossfire among gangs, random daylight murders, and the all the other joys of life in a 21st century British ghetto.

Of course, the plural of anecdote is not data, but the British crime statistics seem to bear him out:



(recorded offenses per 100,000 people, from [source](#))

If this is true, it is true *despite* technology. If crime rates have in fact multiplied by a factor of...well, it looks like at least 100x...this is true even though the country as a whole has gotten vastly richer, even though there are now CCTVs, DNA testing, police databases, heck, even fingerprinting hadn't been figured out yet in 1876.

This suggests that there was something inherent about Victorian society, politics, or government that made their Britain a safer place to live than modern progressive Britain.

Education is another example of something we're pretty sure we do better in. Now take a look at the [1899](#)

[entrance exam for Harvard](#). Remember, no calculators – they haven't been invented yet.

I got an SAT score well above that of the average Harvard student today (I still didn't get into Harvard, because I was a slacker in high school). But I couldn't even *begin* to take much of that test.

Okay, fine. Argue “Well, of course we don't value Latin and Greek and arithmetic and geometry and geography today, we value different things.” So fine. Tell me what the heck you think our high school students are learning that's just as difficult and impressive as the stuff on that test that you don't expect the 19th century Harvard students who aced that exam knew two hundred times better (and don't say “the history of post-World War II Europe”).

Do you honestly think the student body for whom that exam was a fair ability test would be befuddled by the *reading comprehension* questions that pass for entrance exams today? Or would it be more like “Excuse me, teacher, I'm afraid there's been a mistake. My exam paper is in English.”

As a fun exercise, read through Wikipedia's [list of multilingual presidents of the United States](#). We start with entries like this one:

Thomas Jefferson read a number of different languages. In a letter to Philadelphia publisher Joseph Delaplaine on April 12, 1817, Jefferson claimed to read and write six languages: Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, and English. After his death, a number of other books, dictionaries, and grammar manuals in various languages were found in Jefferson's library, suggesting that he studied additional languages beyond those he spoke and wrote well. Among these were books in Arabic, Gaelic, and Welsh.

and this one:

John Quincy Adams went to school in both France and the Netherlands, and spoke fluent French and conversational Dutch. Adams strove to improve his abilities in Dutch throughout his life, and at times translated a page of Dutch a day to help improve his mastery of the language. Official documents that he translated were sent to the Secretary of State of the United States, so that Adams' studies would serve a useful purpose as well. When his father appointed him United States Ambassador to Prussia, Adams dedicated himself to becoming proficient in German in order to give him the tools to strengthen relations between the two countries. He improved his skills by translating articles from German to English, and his studies made his diplomatic efforts more successful. In addition to the two languages he spoke fluently, he also studied Italian, though he admitted to making little progress in it since he had no one with whom to practice speaking and hearing the language. Adams also read Latin very well, translated a page a day of Latin text, and studied classical Greek in his spare time.

eventually proceeding to entries more like this one:

George W. Bush speaks some amount of Spanish, and has delivered speeches in the language. His speeches in Spanish have been imperfect, with English dispersed throughout. Some pundits, like Molly Ivins, have pointedly questioned the extent to which he could speak the language, noting that he kept to similar phrasing in numerous appearances.

and this one:

Barack Obama himself claims to speak no foreign languages. However, according to the President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, during a telephone conversation Obama was able to deliver a basic four-word question in “fluent Indonesian”, as well as mention the names for a few Indonesian food items. He also knows some Spanish, but admits to only knowing “15 words” and having a poor knowledge of the language.

A real Reactionary would no doubt point out that even old-timey US Presidents aren’t old-timey enough, and that we really should be looking at the British aristocracy, but this is left as an exercise for the reader.

It may be argued that yes, maybe their aristocracy was more educated than our upper-class, but we compensate for the imbalance by having education spread much more widely among the lower-classes. I endorse this position, as do, I’m sure, the hundreds of inner-city minority youth who are no doubt reading this blog post because of the massive interest in abstract political philosophy their schooling has successfully inspired in them.

Once again, today we have Wikipedia, the Internet, and as many cheap books as Amazon can supply us. Back in the old days they had to make do with whatever they could get from their local library. Even more troubling, today we start with a huge advantage – the Flynn Effect has made our average IQ 10 to 20 points higher than in 1900. Yet once again, even with our huge technological and biological head start, we are *still* doing worse than the Old Days, which suggest that here, too, the Old Days may have had some kind of social/political advantage.

So several of our claims of present superiority – wealth, health, peace, et cetera – have been found to be artifacts of higher technology levels. Several other claims – safety and education – have been found to be just plain wrong. That just leaves a few political advantages – namely, that we are freer, less racist, less sexist, less jingoistic and more humane. And the introduction has already started poking holes in the whole “freedom” thing.

That leaves our progress in tolerance, equality, and humaneness. Are these victories as impressive as we think?

## Every Time I Hear The Word “Revolver”, I Reach For My Culture

*[TRIGGER WARNING: This is the part with the racism]*

One of the most solid results from social science has been large and persistent differences in outcomes across groups. Of note, these differences are highly correlated by goodness: some groups have what we would consider “good outcomes” in many different areas, and others have what we would consider “bad outcomes” in many different areas. Crime rate, drug use, teenage pregnancy, IQ, education level, median income, health, mental health, and whatever else you want to measure.

The best presentation of this result is [The Spirit Level](#), even though the book *thinks* it’s proving something completely different. But pretty much any study even vaguely in this field will show the same effect. This also seems to be the intuition behind our division of countries into “First World” and “Third World”, and behind our division of races into “privileged” and “oppressed” (rather than “well, some races have good outcomes in some areas, but others have good outcomes in other areas, so it basically all balances out”) I don’t think this part should be very controversial. Let’s call this mysterious quality “luck”, in order to remain as agnostic as possible about the cause.

Three very broad categories of hypothesis have been proposed to explain luck differences among groups: the external, the cultural, and the biological.

The externalists claim that groups differ only because of the situations they find themselves in. Sometimes these situations are natural. Jared Diamond makes a cogent case for the naturalist externalist hypothesis in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. The Chinese found themselves on fertile agricultural land with lots of animals and plants to domesticate and lots of trade routes to learn new ideas from. The New Guinea natives found themselves in a dense jungle without many good plants or animals and totally cut off from foreign contact. Therefore, the Chinese developed a powerful civilization and the New Guineans became a footnote to history.

But in modern times, externalists tend to focus more on external *human* conditions like colonialism and oppression. White people are lucky not because of any inherent virtue, but because they had a head start and numerical advantage and used this to give themselves privileges which they deny to other social groups. Black people are unlucky not because of any inherent flaw, but because they happened to be stuck around white people who are doing everything they can to oppress them and keep them down. This is true both within societies, where unlucky races are disprivileged by racism, and across societies, where unlucky countries suffer the ravages of colonialism.

The culturalists claim that luck is based on the set of implicit traditions and beliefs held by different groups. The Chinese excelled not only because of their fertile landscape, but because their civilization valued scholarship, wealth accumulation, and nonviolence. The New Guineans must have had less useful values, maybe ones that demanded strict conformity with ancient tradition, or promoted violence, or

discouraged cooperation.

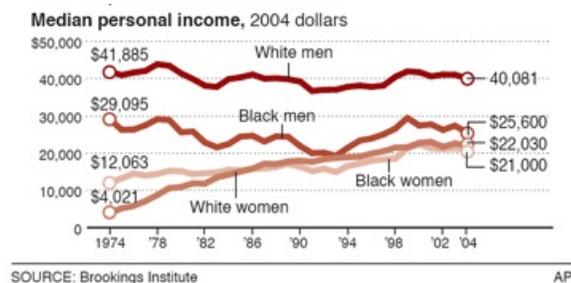
Like the externalists, they trace this forward to the present, saying that the values that served the Chinese so well in building Chinese civilization are the same ones that keep China strong today and the ones that make Chinese immigrants successful in countries like Malaysia and the USA. On the other hand, New Guinea continues to be impoverished and although I've never heard of any New Guinean immigrants I would not expect them to do very well.

The biologicalists, for whom I cannot think of a less awkward term, are probably the most notorious and require the least explanation. They are most famous for attributing between-group luck differences to genetic factors, but there are certainly more subtle theories. One of the most interesting is [parasite load](#), the idea that areas with greater parasites make people's bodies spend more energy fighting them off, leading to less energy for full neurological development. It's hard to extend this to deal with group differences in a single area (for example between-race differences in the USA) but some people have certainly made valiant attempts. Nevertheless, it's probably fair enough to just think of the biologicalists as "more or less racists".

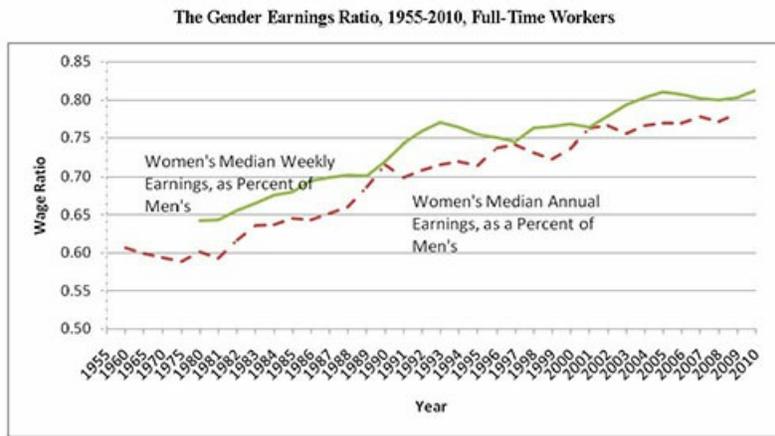
So who is right?

A decent amount of political wrangling over the years seems to involve a conflict between the conservatives – who are some vague mix of the culturalist and biologicalist position – and the liberals, who have embraced the externalist position with gusto.

But the externalist position is deeply flawed. This blog has already cited this graph to make a different point, but now that we have our Reactionary Hat on, let's try it again:



Here's the black-white income gap over time from 1974 to (almost) the present. Over those years, white oppression of black people has decreased drastically. It is not gone. But it has decreased. Yet the income gap stays exactly the same. Compare this to another example of an oppressed group suddenly becoming less oppressed:



Over the same period, the decrease in male oppression of women has resulted in an obvious and continuing rise in women's incomes. This suggests that the externalist hypothesis of women's poor incomes was at least partly correct. But an apparent corollary is that it casts doubt on the externalist hypothesis of racial income gaps.

And, in fact, not all races have a racial income gap, and not all those who do have it in the direction an externalist theory would predict. Jews and Asians faced astounding levels of discrimination when they first came to the United States, but both groups recovered quickly and both now do significantly better than average white Americans. Although the idea of a "Jewish conspiracy" is rightly mocked as anti-Semitic and stupid, it is only bringing the externalist hypothesis – that differences in the success of different races must always be due to oppression – to their natural conclusion.

In fact, Jews and Chinese are interesting in that both groups are widely scattered, both groups often find themselves in very hostile countries, and yet both groups are usually more successful than the native population wherever they go (income and education statistics available upon request). Whether it is Chinese in Malaysia or Jews in France, they seem to do unusually well for themselves despite the constant discrimination. If this is an experiment to distinguish between culturalist and externalist positions, it is a very well replicated one.

This difference in the success of immigrant groups is often closely correlated with the success of the countries they come from. Japan is very rich and advanced, Europe quite rich and advanced, Latin America not so rich or advanced, and Africa least rich and advanced of all. And in fact we find that Japanese-Americans do better than European-Americans do better than Latin-Americans do better than African-Americans. It is pretty amazing that white people manage to modulate their oppression in quite this precise a way, especially when it includes oppressing themselves.

And much of the difference between groups is in areas one would expect to be resistant to oppression. Unlucky groups tend to have higher teenage pregnancy rates, more drug use, and greater intra-group violence, *even when comparing similar economic strata*. That is, if we focus on Chinese-Americans who earn \$60,000/year and African-Americans who earn \$60,000/year, the Chinese will have markedly

better outcomes (I've seen this study done in education, but I expect it would transfer). Sampling from the same economic stratum screens off effects from impoverished starting conditions or living in bad neighborhoods, and it's hard (though of course not impossible) to figure out other ways an oppressive majority could create differential school attendance in these groups.

So luck differences are sometimes in favor of oppressed minorities, do not decrease when a minority becomes less oppressed, correlate closely across societies with widely varying amounts of oppression, and operate in areas where oppression doesn't provide a plausible mechanism. The externalist hypothesis as a collection of natural factors a la Jared Diamond may have merit, but as an oppression-based explanation for modern-day group differences, it fails miserably.

I don't want to dwell on the biological hypothesis too much, because it sort of creeps me out even in a "let me clearly explain a hypothesis I disagree with" way. I will mention that it leaves a lot unexplained, in that many of the "groups" that have such glaring luck differences are not biological groups at all, but rather religious groups such as the Mormons and the Sikhs, both of whom have strikingly different outcomes than the populations they originated from. Even many groups that are biologically different just aren't different *enough* – the English and Irish have strikingly different luck, but attributing that to differences between which *exact* tiny little branch of the Indo-European tree they came from seems like a terrible explanation (although Konkvistador disagrees with me on this one).

Nevertheless, the people who dismiss the biological hypothesis as obviously stupid and totally discredited (by which I mean everyone) are doing it a disservice. For a sympathetic and extraordinarily impressive defense of the biological hypothesis I recommend [this unpublished \(and unpublishable\) review article](#). I will add that I am *extremely* interested in comprehensive takedowns of that article (preferably a full fisking) and that if you have any counterevidence to it at all you should post it in the comments and I will be eternally grateful.

But for now I'm just going to say let's assume by fiat that the biologicalist hypothesis is false, because even with my Reactionary Hat on I find the culturalist hypothesis much more interesting.

The culturalist hypothesis avoids the pitfalls of both the externalist and biological explanations. Unlike the externalists, it can explain why some minority groups are so successful and why group success correlates across societies and immigrant populations. And unlike the biologicalists, it can explain the striking differences between biologically similar groups like the Mormons and the non-Mormon Americans, or the Sikhs and the non-Sikh Indians.

It can also explain some other lingering mysteries, like why a country that's put so much work into keeping black people down would then turn around and elect a black president. Obama was born to an African father and a white mother, raised in Indonesia, and then grew up in Hawaii. At no point did he have much contact with African-American culture, and so a culturalist wouldn't expect his life outcomes to be correlated with those of other African-Americans.

Best of all, despite what the average progressive would tell you the culturalist position isn't really *that* racist. It's a bit like the externalist position in attributing groups' luck to initial conditions, except instead of those initial conditions being how fertile their land is or who's oppressing them, it's what memplexes they happened to end out with. Change the memplexes and you can make a New Guinean population achieve Chinese-level outcomes – or vice versa.

## The Other Chinese Room Experiment

Assuming we tentatively accept the culturalist hypothesis, what policies does it suggest?

Well, the plan mentioned in the last paragraph of the last section – throw Chinese memes at the people of New Guinea until they achieve Chinese-style outcomes – higher income, less teenage pregnancy, lower crime rates. It doesn't seem like a bad idea. You could try exposing them to Chinese people and the Chinese way of life until some of it stuck. This seems like a good strategy for China, a country whose many problems definitely do not include “a shortage of Chinese people”.

On the other hand, in somewhere more like America, one could be forgiven for immediately rounding this off to some kind of dictatorial brainwashing policy of stealing New Guinean infants away from their homes and locking them in some horrible orphanage run by Chinese people who beat them every time they try to identify with their family or native culture until eventually they absorb Chinese culture through osmosis. This sounds bad.

Luckily, although we don't have quite as many Chinese people as China, we still have a majority culture whose outcomes are *almost* as good as China's and which, as has been mentioned before, permeates every facet of life and every information source like a giant metastasizing thousand-tentacled monster. So in theory, all we need to do is wait for the unstoppable monster to get them.

This strategy, with the octopoid abomination metaphor replaced with a melting pot metaphor for better branding, has been America's strategy for most of the past few centuries – assimilation. It worked for the Irish, who were once viewed with as much racism as any Hispanic or Arab is today. It worked for the Italians, who were once thought of as creepy Papist semi-retarded mafia goons until everyone decided no, they were indistinguishable from everyone else. It worked for the fourth and fifth generation Asians, at least here in suburban California, where they're considered about as “exotic” as the average Irishman. It certainly worked for the Jews, where there are some people of Jewish descent who aren't even *aware* of it until they trace their family history back. And it should be able to work for everyone else. Why isn't it?

The Reactionary's answer to this is the same as the Reactionary's answer to almost everything: because of those darned progressives!

Sometime in the latter half of this century, it became a point of political pride to help minorities resist “cultural imperialism” and the Eurocentric norms that they should feel any pressure to assimilate. Moved by this ideology, the government did everything it could to help minorities avoid assimilation and to shame and thwart anyone trying to get them to assimilate.

There's a story – I've lost the original, but it might have been in Moldbug – about a state noticing that black children were getting lower test scores. It decided, as progressivists do, that the problem was that many of the classes were taught by white teachers, and that probably this meant the black children

couldn't relate to them and were feeling oppressed. So they sent the white teachers off to whiter areas and hiring only black teachers for the black schools, and – sure enough – test scores plummeted further.

California had a sort of similar problem when I was growing up. Most schools were required to teach our large Hispanic immigrant population using bilingual education – that is, teaching them in their native Spanish until they were ready to learn English. The “ready to learn English” tended not to happen, and some people proposed that bilingual education be scrapped. There was a *huge* ruckus where the people in favor of this change were accused of being vile racists who hated Mexicans and wanted to destroy Mexican culture. Thanks to California's colorful proposition system, it passed anyway. And sure enough, as soon as the Hispanics started getting integrated with everyone else and taught in English, test scores went way up.

But this is a rare victory, and we are still very much in “try to prevent assimilation mode”. I went to elementary school just as the “melting pot” metaphor was being phased out in favor of the more politically correct “salad bowl” one – in a melting pot, everyone comes together and becomes alike, but in a salad bowl, everything comes together but stays different, and that's fine.

One externalist argument why minorities sometimes do poorly in school is the fear of “acting white” – that their peers tell them that academic achievement is a form of “acting white” by which they betray their cultural heritage. Unfortunately, we seem to be promoting this on a social level, telling people that assimilating and picking up the best features of majority culture are “acting white”. If the majority culture has useful memes that help protect people against school dropout, crime, and other bad life outcomes, that is a really bad thing to do.

So let's go back to the nightmare scenario with which we started this section – of children being seized from their homes and locked in a room with Chinese people. Is this sort of dystopia the inevitable result of trying to use culturalist theories to equalize group outcomes?

No. There is a proverb beloved of many Reactionaries: “If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.” We could make great strides in solving inequality merely by *ceasing to exert deliberate effort to make things worse*. The progressive campaign to demonize assimilation and make it taboo to even talk about some cultures being better adapted than others prevents the natural solution to inequality which worked for the Irish and the Asians and the Jews from working for the minorities of today. If we would *just stop digging the hole deeper* in order to make ourselves feel superior to our ancestors, we'd have gone a lot of the way – maybe not all of the way, but a lot of it – toward solving the problem.

## On Second Thought, Keep Your Tired And Poor To Yourself

Immigration doesn't have to be a problem. In a healthy society, immigrants will be encouraged to assimilate to the majority culture, and after a brief period of disorientation will be just as successful and well-adapted as everyone else.

But in an unhealthy society like ours that makes assimilation impossible, a culturalist will be very worried about immigration.

Let's imagine an idyllic socialist utopia with a population of 100,000. In Utopia, everyone eats healthy organic food, respects the environment and one another, lives in harmony with people of other races, and is completely non-violent. One day, the Prime Minister decides to open up immigration to Americans and discourage them from assimilating.

50,000 Americans come in and move into a part of Utopia that quickly becomes known as Americatown. They bring their guns, their McDonalds, their megachurches, and their racism.

Soon, some Utopians find their family members dying in the crossfire between American street gangs. The megachurches convert a large portion of the Utopians to evangelical Christianity, and it becomes very difficult to get abortions without being harassed and belittled. Black and homosexual Utopians find themselves the target of American hatred, and worse, some young Utopians begin to get affected by American ideas and treat them the same way. American litter fills the previously pristine streets, and Americans find some loopholes in the water quality laws and start dumping industrial waste into the rivers.

By the time society has settled down, we have a society which is maybe partway between Utopia and America. The Americans are probably influenced by Utopian ideas and not quite as bad as their cousins who remained behind in the States, but the Utopians are no longer as idyllic as their Utopian forefathers, and have inherited some of America's problems.

Would it be *racist* for a Utopian to say "Man, I wish we had never let the Americans in?" Would it be *hateful* to suggest that the borders be closed before even more Americans can enter?

If you are a culturalist, no. Utopian culture is better, at least by Utopian standards, than American culture. Although other cultures can often contribute to enrich your own, there is no law of nature saying that only the good parts of other cultures will transfer over and that no other culture can be worse than yours in any way. The Americans were clearly worse than the Utopians, and it was dumb of the Utopians to let so many Americans in without any safeguards.

Likewise, there are countries that are worse than America. Tribal Afghanistan seems like a pretty good example. Pretty much everything about tribal Afghanistan is horrible. Their culture treats women as property, enforces sharia law, and contains honor killings as a fact of life. They tend to kill apostate

Muslims and non-Muslims a lot. Not all members of Afghan tribes endorse these things, but the average Afghan tribesperson is much more likely to endorse them than the average American. If we import a bunch of Afghan tribesmen, their culture is likely to make America a worse place in the same way that American culture makes Utopia a worse place.

But it's actually much worse than this. We are a democracy. Anyone who moves here and gains citizenship eventually gets the right to vote. People with values different from ours vote for people and laws different from those we would vote for. Progressives have traditionally viewed any opposition to this as anti-immigrant and racist – and, by total coincidence, most other countries, and therefore most immigrants, are progressive.

Imagine a country called Conservia, a sprawling empire of a billion people that has a fifth-dimensional hyperborder with America. The Conservians are all evangelical Christians who hate abortion, hate gays, hate evolution, and believe all government programs should be cut.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of Conservians hop the hyperborder fence and enter America, and sympathetic presidents then pass amnesty laws granting them citizenship. As a result, the area you live – or let's use Berkeley, the area I live – gradually becomes more conservative. First the abortion clinics disappear, as Conservian protesters start harassing them out of business and a government that must increasingly pander to Conservians doesn't stop them. Then gay people stop coming out of the closet, as Conservian restaurants and businesses refuse to serve them and angry Conservian writers and journalists create an anti-gay climate. Conservians vote 90% Republican in elections, so between them and the area's native-born conservatives the Republicans easily get a majority and begin defunding public parks, libraries, and schools. Also, Conservians have one pet issue which they promote even more intently than the destruction of secular science – that *all Conservians illegally in the United States must be granted voting rights, and that no one should ever block more Conservians from coming to the US.*

Is this fair to the native Berkeleyans? It doesn't seem that way to me. And what if 10 million Conservians move into America? That's not an outrageous number – there are more Mexican immigrants than that. But it would be enough to have thrown every single Presidential election of the past fifty years to the Republicans – there has never been a Democratic candidate since LBJ who has won the native population by enough of a margin to outweigh the votes of ten million Conservians.

But isn't this incredibly racist and unrealistic? An entire nation of people whose votes skew 90% Republican? No. African-Americans' votes have historically been around 90% Democratic (93% in the last election). Latinos went over 70% Democratic in the last election. For comparison, white people were about 60% Republicans. If there had been no Mexican immigration to the United States over the past few decades, Romney would probably have won the last election.

Is it wrong for a liberal citizen of Berkeley in 2013 to want to close the hyperborder with Conservia so that California doesn't become part of the Bible Belt and Republicans don't get guaranteed presidencies

forever? Would that citizen be racist for even considering this? If not, then pity the poor conservative, who is actually in this exact situation right now.

(a real Reactionary would hasten to add this is more proof that progressives control everything. Because immigration favors progressivism, any opposition to it is racist, but the second we discover the hyperborder with Conservia, the establishment will figure out some reason why *allowing* immigration is racist. Maybe they can call it “inverse colonialism” or something.)

None of this is an argument against immigration. It’s an argument against immigration by groups with bad Luck and with noticeably different values than the average American. Let any Japanese person who wants move over. Same with the Russians, and the Jews, and the Indians. Heck, it’s not even like it’s saying no Afghans – if they swear on a stack of Korans that they’re going to try to learn English and not do any honor killings, they could qualify as well.

The United States used to have a policy sort of like this. It was called the [Immigration Act of 1924](#). Its actual specifics were dumb, because it banned for example Asians and Jews, but the principle behind it – groups with good outcomes and who are a good match for our values can immigrate as much as they want, everyone else has a slightly harder time – seems broadly wise. So of course progressives attacked it as racist and Worse Than Hitler and it got repealed in favor of the current policy: *everyone* has a really hard time immigrating but if anyone sneaks over the border under cover of darkness we grant them citizenship anyway because not doing that would be mean.

Once again, coming up with a fair and rational immigration policy wouldn’t require some incredibly interventionist act of state control. It would just require that we notice the hole we’ve been deliberately sticking ourselves in and *stop digging*.

## Imperialism Strikes Back

In an externalist/progressive worldview, the best way to help disadvantaged minorities is to eliminate the influence of more privileged majority groups. In a culturalist/Reactionary worldview, the best way to help disadvantaged minorities is to try to maximize the influence of more privileged majority groups. This suggests re-examining colonialism. But first, a thought experiment.

Suppose you are going to be reincarnated as a black person (if you are already black, as a different black person). You may choose which country you will be born in; the rest is up to Fate. What country do you choose?

The top of my list would be Britain, with similar countries like Canada and America close behind. But what if you could only choose among majority-black African countries?

Several come to my mind as comparatively liveable. Kenya. Tanzania. Botswana. South Africa. Namibia (is your list similar?) And one thing these places all have in common was being heavily, *heavily* colonized by the British.

We compare the sole African country that was never colonized, Ethiopia. Ethiopia has become a byword for senseless suffering thanks to its coups, wars, genocides, and especially famines. This seems like counter-evidence to the “colonialism is the root of all evil” hypothesis.

Yes, colonization had some horrible episodes. Anyone who tries to say King Leopold II was anything less than one of the worst people who ever lived has zero right to be taken seriously. On the other hand, eventually the Belgian people got outraged enough to take it away from Leopold, after which there follows a fifty year period that was the only time in history when the Congo was actually a kind of nice place. Mencius Moldbug likes to link to a [Time magazine article from the 1950s](#) praising the peace and prosperity of the Congo as a model colony. Then in 1960 it became independent, and I don't know what happens next because the series of civil wars and genocides and corrupt warlords after that are so horrible that I can't even read all the way through the articles about them. Seriously, not necessarily in numbers but in sheer graphic brutality it is worse than the Holocaust, the Inquisition, and Mao combined and you *do not want to know* what makes me say this.

So yes, Leopold II is one of history's great villains, but once he was taken off the scene colonial Congo improved markedly. And any attempt to attribute the nightmare that is the modern Congo to colonialism has to cope with the historical fact that the post-Leopold colonial Congo was actually pretty nice until it was decolonized at which point it immediately went to hell.

So the theory that colonialism is the source of all problems has to contend with the observation that heavily colonized countries are the most liveable, the sole never-colonized country is among the least liveable, and countries' liveability plummeted drastically as soon as colonialism stopped.

But let's stop picking on Africans. Suppose you are going to be reincarnated as a person of Middle Eastern descent (I would have said "Arab", but then we would get into the whole 'most Middle Easterners are not Arabs' debate). Once again, you can choose your country. Where do you go?

Once again, Britain, US, or somewhere of that ilk sound like your best choices.

Okay, once again we're ruling that out. You've got to go somewhere in the Middle East.

Your best choice is one of those tiny emirates where everyone is a relative of the emir and gets lots of oil money and is super-rich: I would go with Qatar. Let's rule them out too.

Your next-best choice is Israel.

Yes, Israel. Note that I am *not* saying the Occupied Palestinian Territories; that would be just as bad a choice as you expect. I'm saying Israel, where 20% of the population is Arab, and about 16% Muslim.

Israeli Arabs earn on average about \$6750 per year. Compare this to conditions in Israel's Arab neighbors. In Egypt, average earnings are \$6200; in Jordan, \$5900; in Syria, only \$5000.

Aside from the economics, there are other advantages. If you happen to be Muslim, you will have a *heck* of a lot easier time practicing your religion freely in Israel than in some Middle Eastern country where you follow the wrong sect of Islam. You'll be allowed to vote for your government, something you can't do in monarchical Jordan or war-torn Syria, and which Egypt is currently having, er, severe issues around. You can even criticize the government as much as you want (empirically quite a lot), a right Syrian and Egyptian Arabs are currently dying for. Finally, you get the benefit of living in a clean, safe, developed country with good health care and free education for all.

I'm not saying that Israeli Arabs aren't discriminated against or have it as good as Israeli Jews. I'm just saying they have it better than Arabs in most other countries. Once again, we find that colonialism, supposed to be the root of all evil, is actually preferable to non-colonialism in most easily measurable ways.

It may be the case that pre-colonial societies were better than either colonial or post-colonial societies. I actually suspect this is true, in a weird [Comanche Indians are better than all of us](#) sort of sense. But "pre-colonial" isn't a choice nowadays. Nowadays it's "how much influence do we want the better parts of the West to have over countries that have already enthusiastically absorbed the worst parts of the West?" Whatever I may feel about the Safavid Dynasty, I would at least rather be born in Afghanistan-post-American-takeover than Afghanistan-pre-American-takeover.

So does this mean some sort of nightmarish "invade every country in the world, kill their leadership, and replace them with Americans, for their own good" type scenario?

Once again, no. Look at China. They've been quietly colonizing Africa for a decade now, [and the continent](#)

[has never been doing better](#). And by “colonizing”, I mean “investing in”, with probably some sketchy currying of influence and lobbying and property-gathering going on on the side. It’s been great for China, it’s been a hugely successful injection of money and technology into Africa, and they probably couldn’t have come up with a better humanitarian intervention if they had been trying.

Why hasn’t the West done it? Because every time an idea like that has been mooted, the progressives have shot it down with “You neo-colonialist! You’re worse than King Leopold II, who was himself worse than Hitler! By the transitive property, you are *worse than Hitler!*”

No one needs to go about invading anyone else or killing their government. But if you find yourself in a hole, *stop digging*.

## The Uncanny Valley Of Dictatorship

I kind of skimmed over the Palestinian Territories in the last section. They are, indeed, a terrible dehumanizing place and the treatment of their citizens is an atrocity that blemishes a world which allows it to continue. Is this a strike against colonialism?

Any 19th century European aristocrat looking at the Palestinian Territories would note that Israel is being a *terrible colonizer*, not in a moral sense but in a purely observational sense. It's not getting any money or resources out of its colony at all! It's letting people totally just protest it and get away with it! They've even handed most of it over to a government of natives! Queen Victoria would *not* be amused.

Suppose a psychopath became Prime Minister of Israel (yes, obvious joke is obvious). He declares: "Today we are annexing the Palestinian territories. All Palestinians become Israeli residents with most of the rights of citizens except they can't vote. If anyone speaks out against Israel, we'll shoot them. If anyone commits a crime, we'll shoot them." What would happen?

Well, first, a lot of people would get shot. After that? The Palestinians would be in about the same position as Israeli Arabs are today, except without the right to vote, plus they get shot if they protest. This is vastly better than the position they're in now, and better than the position of say the people of Syria who are poorer, *also* lack the right to vote, and *also* empirically get shot if they protest.

No more worries about roadblocks. No more worries about passports. No more worries about sanctions. No more worries about economic depression. The only worry is getting shot, and you can avoid that by never speaking out against Israel. Optimal? Probably not. A heck of a lot better than what the Palestinians have today? Seems possible.

It seems like there's an uncanny valley of dictatorship. Having no dictator at all, the way it is here in America, is very good. Having a really really dictatorial dictator who controls everything, like the czar or this hypothetical Israeli psychopath, kinda sucks but it's peaceful and you know exactly where you stand. Being somewhere in the middle, where it's dictatorial enough to hurt, but not dictatorial enough for the dictator to feel secure enough to mostly leave you alone except when he wants something, is worse than either extreme.

Mencius Moldbug uses the fable of Fnargl, an omnipotent and invulnerable alien who becomes dictator of Earth. Fnargl is an old-fashioned greedy colonizer: he just wants to exploit Earth for as much gold as possible. He considers turning humans into slaves to work in gold mines, except some would have to be a special class of geologist slaves to plan the gold mines, and there would have to be other slaves to grow food to support the first two classes of slaves, and other slaves to be managers to coordinate all these other slaves, and so on. Eventually he realizes this is kind of dumb and there's already a perfectly good economy. So he levies a 20% tax on every transaction (higher might hurt the economy) and uses the money to buy gold. Aside from this he just hangs out.

Fnargl has no reason to ban free speech: let people plot against him. He's omnipotent and invulnerable; it's not going to work. Banning free speech would just force him to spend money on jackbooted thugs which he could otherwise be spending on precious, precious gold. He has no reason to torture dissidents. What are they going to do if left unmolested? *Overthrow*him?

Moldbug claims that Fnargl's government would not only be better than that of a less powerful human dictator like Mao, but that it would be *literally better than the government we have today*. Many real countries *do* restrict free speech or torture dissidents. And if you're a libertarian, Fnargl's "if it doesn't disrupt gold production, I'm okay with it" line is a dream come true.

So if the Israelis want to improve the Palestinian Territories' plight, they can do one of two things. First, they can grant it full independence. Second, they do exactly the opposite: can take away all of its independence and go full Fnargl.

We already know Israel doesn't want to just grant full independence, which leaves "problem continues forever" or "crazy psychopath alien solution". Could the latter really work?

Well, no. Why not? Because the Palestinians would probably freak out and start protesting *en masse* and the Israelis would have to shoot all of them and that would be horrible.

But it's worth noting this is not just a natural state of the world. The British successfully colonized Palestine for several decades. They certainly tried the Fnargl approach: "No way you're getting independence, so just sit here and deal with it or we shoot you." It worked pretty well then. I would hazard a guess to say the average Palestinian did much better under British rule than they're doing now. So why wouldn't it work again?

In a word, progressivism. For fifty years, progressives have been telling the colonized people of the world "If anyone colonizes you, this is the worst thing in the world, and if you have any pride in yourself you must start a rebellion, even a futile rebellion, immediately." This was non-obvious to people a hundred years ago, which is why people rarely did it. It was only after progressivism basically told colonized peoples "You're not revolting yet? What are you, *chicken*?" that the modern difficulties in colonialism took hold. And it's only after progressivism gained clout in the countries that rule foreign policy that it became politically impossible for a less progressive country to try colonialism.

If not for progressivism, Israel would have been able to peacefully annex the Palestinian territories as a colony with no more of a humanitarian crisis than Britain annexing New Zealand or somewhere. Everything would have been solved and everyone could have gone home in time for tea.

Once again, the problem with these holes is that we *keep digging them*. Maybe if we'd stop, there wouldn't be so many holes anymore.

## Humane, All Too Humane

There seem to be similar uncanny valley effects in the criminal justice system and in war.

Modern countries pride themselves on their humane treatment of prisoners. And by “humane”, I mean “lock them up in a horrible and psychologically traumatizing concrete jail for ten years of being beaten and raped and degraded, sometimes barely even seeing the sun or a green plant for that entire time, then put it on their permanent record so they can never get a good job or interact with normal people ever again when they come out.”

Compare this to what “inhumane” countries that were still into “cruel and unusual punishment” would do for the same crime. A couple of lashes with the whip, then you’re on your way.

Reader. You have just been convicted of grand theft auto (the crime, not the game). You’re innocent, but the prosecutor was very good at her job and you’ve used up all your appeals and you’re just going to have to accept the punishment. The judge gives you two options:

- 1) Five years in prison
- 2) Fifty strokes of the lash

Like everyone else except a few very interesting people who help provide erotic fantasies for the rest of us, I don’t like being whipped. But I would choose (2) in a *fraction of a heartbeat*.

And aside from being better for me, it would be better for society as well. We know that people who spend time in prison are both more likely to stay criminals in the future and [better at being criminals](#). And each year in jail costs the State \$50,000; more than it would cost to give a kid a year’s free tuition at Harvard. Cutting the prison system in half would free up approximately enough money to give free college tuition to all students at the best school they can get into.

But of course we don’t do that. We stick with the prisons and the rape and the kids who go work at McDonalds because they can’t afford college. Why? *Progressives!*

If we were to try to replace prison with some kind of corporal punishment, progressives would freak out and say we were cruel and inhumane. Since the prison population is disproportionately minority, they would probably get to use their favorite word-beginning-with-”R”, and allusions would be made to plantation owners who used to whip slaves. In fact, progressives would come up with some reason to oppose even giving criminals the *option* of corporal punishment (an option most would certainly take) and any politician insufficiently progressive to even recommend it would no doubt be in for some public flagellation himself, albeit of a less literal kind.

So once again, we have an uncanny valley. Being very nice to prisoners is humane and effective (Norway [seems to be trying ths with some success](#)), but we’re not going to do it because we’re dumb and it’s

probably too expensive anyway. Being very strict to prisoners is humane and effective – the corporal punishment option. But being somewhere in the fuzzy middle is cruel to the prisoners and incredibly destructive to society – and it’s the only route the progressives will allow us to take.

Some Reactionaries have tried to apply the same argument to warfare. Suppose that during the Vietnam War, we had nuked Hanoi. What would have happened?

Okay, fine. The Russians would have nuked us and everyone in the world would have died. Bad example. But suppose the Russians were out of the way. Wouldn’t nuking Hanoi be a massive atrocity?

Yes. But compare it to the alternative. Nuking Hiroshima killed about 150,000 people. The Vietnam War killed about 3 million. The latter also had a much greater range of non-death effects, from people being raped and tortured and starved to tens of thousands ending up with post-traumatic stress disorder and countless lives being disrupted. If nuking Hanoi would have been an alternative to the Vietnam War, it would have been a *really really good* alternative.

Most of the countries America invades know they can’t defeat the US military long-term. Their victory condition is helping US progressives bill the war as an atrocity and get the troops sent home. So the enemy’s incentive is to make the war drag on as long as possible and contain as many atrocities as possible. It’s not too hard to make the war drag on, because they can always just hide among civilians and be relatively confident the US is too humane to risk smoking them out. And it’s never too hard to commit atrocities. So they happily follow their incentives, and the progressives in the US happily hold up their side of the deal by agitating for the troops to be sent home, which they eventually are.

Compare this to the style of warfare in colonial days. “This is our country now, we’re not leaving, we don’t really care about atrocities, and we don’t really care how many civilians we end up killing.” It sounds incredibly ugly, but of colonial Britain or very-insistently-non-colonial USA, guess which one ended up pacifying Iraq after three months with only about 6,000 casualties, and guess which one took five years to re-establish a semblance of order and killed about 100,000 people in the process?

Once again we see an uncanny valley effect. Leaving Iraq alone completely would have been a reasonable humanitarian choice. Using utterly overwhelming force to pacify Iraq by any means necessary would have briefly been very ugly, but our enemies would have folded quickly and with a few assumptions this could also have been a reasonable humanitarian choice. But a wishy-washy half-hearted attempt to pacify Iraq that left the country in a state of low-grade poorly-defined war for nearly a decade was neither reasonable nor humanitarian.

Once again, the solution isn’t some drastic nightmare scenario where all prisoners are tortured and all wars are fought with sarin nerve gas. It’s that if prisoners *prefer* corporal punishment, progressives don’t call “racism!” or “atrocity!” so loudly that it becomes politically impossible to give them what they want. Once again, all we have to do is *stop digging*.



## Gender! And Now That I Have Your Attention, Let's Talk About Sex

So the two things Reactionaries like to complain about all the time are race and sex, and since we have *more* than gone overboard with our lengthy diversion into race, we might as well take a quick look at sex.

As far as I know, even the Reactionaries who are really into biological differences between races don't claim that women are intellectually inferior to men. I don't even think they necessarily believe there are biological differences between the two groups. And yet they are not really huge fans of feminism. Why?

Let's start with some studies comparing gender roles and different outcomes.

[Surveys of women show](#) that they were on average happier fifty years ago than they are today. In fact, in the 1950s, women generally self-reported higher happiness than men; today, men report significantly higher happiness than women. So the history of the past fifty years – a history of more and more progressive attitudes toward gender – have been a history of women gradually becoming worse and worse off relative to their husbands and male friends.

This doesn't *necessarily* condemn progressivism, but as the ancient proverb goes, it sure waggles its eyebrows suggestively and gestures furtively while mouthing 'look over there'.

To confirm, we would want to look within a single moment in time: that is, are feminist women with progressive gender roles *today* less happy than their traditionalist peers? The answer [appears to be yes](#).

Amusingly, because we *do* still live in a society where these things couldn't be published unless someone took a progressivist tack, the New York Times article quoted above ends by saying the *real* problem is that men are jerks who don't do their share of the housework.

But when we actually study this, we find that [progressive marriages in which men and women split housework equally are 50% more likely to end in divorce](#) than traditional marriages where the women mostly take care of it. The same is true of working outside the home: progressive marriages where both partners work [are more likely to end in divorce](#) than traditional marriages where the man works and the woman stays home.

Maybe this is just because the same people who are progressive enough to defy traditional gender roles are also the same people who are progressive enough not to think divorce is a sin? But this seems unlikely: in general religious people get divorced *more* than the irreligious. And since I did promise we'd be talking about sex, consider the studies showing people in traditional marriages have [better sex lives](#) than their feminist and progressive friends. This doesn't seem like something that could easily be explained merely by religion, unless religion has gotten *way* cooler since the last time I attended synagogue.

So why is this? I have heard some reactionaries say that although there are not intellectual differences

between men and women, there are emotional differences, and that women are (either for biological or cultural reasons) more “submissive” to men’s “dominant” – and a quick search of the BDSM community seems to both to validate the general rule and to showcase some very striking exceptions.

But my money would be on a simpler hypothesis. Every marriage involves conflict. The traditional concept of gender contains two roles that are divided in a time-tested way to minimize conflict as much as possible. In a perfect-spherical-cow sense, either the husband or the wife could step into either role, and it would still work just as well. But since men have been socialized for one role since childhood, and women socialized for the other role, it seems that in most cases the easiest solution is to stick them in the one they’ve been trained for.

We could also go with a third hypothesis: that *women aren’t actually bizarre aliens from the planet Zygra’ax with completely inexplicable preferences*. I mean, suppose you had the following two options:

1. A job working from home, where you are your own boss. The job description is “spending as much or as little time as you want with your own children and helping them grow and adjust to the adult world.” (but Sister Y also has a post on [the childless alternative](#) to this)
2. A job in the office, where you do have a boss, and she wants you to get her the Atkins report “by yesterday” or she is going to throw your sorry ass out on the street where it belongs, and there *better* not be any complaints about it this time.

Assume both jobs would give you exactly the same amount of social status and respect.

Now assume that suddenly a bunch of people come along saying that *actually*, only losers pick Job 1 and surely you’re not a *loser*, are you? And you have to watch all your former Job 1 buddies go out and take Job 2 and be praised for this and your husband asks why *you* aren’t going into Job 2 and contributing something to the family finances for once, and eventually you just give in and go to Job 2, but also you’ve got to do large portions of Job 1, and also the extra income mysteriously fails to give your family any more money and [in fact you are worse off financially than before](#).

Is it so hard to imagine that a lot of women would be less happy under this new scenario?

Now of course (most) feminists very reasonably say that it’s Totally Okay If You Want To Stay Home And We’re Not Trying To Force Anyone. But let’s use the feminists’ own criteria on that one. Suppose Disney put out a series of movies in which they had lots of great female role models who only worked in the home and were subservient to their husbands all the time, and lauded them as *real* women who were courageous and awesome and sexy and not just poor oppressed stick-in-the-muds, and then at the end they flashed a brief message “But Of Course Working Outside The Home Is Totally Okay Also”. Do you think feminists would respond “Yeah, we have no problem with this, after all they *did* flash that message at the end”?

Aside from being better for women, traditional marriages seem to have many other benefits. They allow someone to bring up the children so that they don't have to spend their childhood in front of the television being socialized by reruns of *Drug-Using Hypersexual Gangsters With Machine Guns*. They ensure that at least one member of each couple has time to be doing things that every household should be doing anyway, like keeping careful track of finances, attending parent-teacher conferences, and keeping in touch with family.

So do men need to force women to stay barefoot and in the kitchen all the time, and chase Marie Curie out of physics class so she can go home and bake for her husband?

By this point you may be noticing a trend. No, we don't need to do that. If we stopped optimizing the media to send feminist messages as loud as possible, if we stopped actively opposing any even slightly positive portrayal of a housewife as "sexist" and "behind the times", and if we stopped having entire huge lobby groups supported vehemently by millions of people *dedicated entirely to making the problem worse*, then maybe things would take care of themselves.

There's some sort of metaphor here...something about dirt...or a shovel...nah, never mind.

## Plays Well In Groups

Suppose you were kidnapped by terrorists, and you needed someone to organize a rescue. Would you prefer the task be delegated to the Unitarians, or the Mormons?

This question isn't about whether you think an *individual* Unitarian or Mormon would make a better person to rush in Rambo-style and get you out of there. It's about whether you would prefer the Unitarian Church or the Mormon Church to coordinate your rescue.

I would go with the Mormons. The Mormons seem *effective* in all sorts of ways. They're effective evangelists. They're effective fundraisers. They're effective at keeping the average believer following their commandments. They would figure out a plan, implement it, and come in guns-blazing.

The Unitarians would be a disaster. First someone would interrupt the discussion to ask whether it's fair to use the word "terrorists", or whether we should use the less judgmental "militant". Several people would note that until investigating the situation more clearly, they can't even be sure the terrorists aren't in the right in this case. In fact, what *is* "right" anyway? An attempt to shut down this discussion to focus more on the object-level problem would be met with cries of "censorship!".

If anyone did come up with a plan, a hundred different pedants would try to display their intelligence by nitpicking meaningless details. Eventually some people would say that it's an outrage that no one's even *considering* whether the bullets being used are recyclable, and decide to split off and mount their *own*, ecologically-friendly rescue attempt. In the end, four different schismatic rescue attempts would run into each other, mistake each other for the enemy, and annihilate themselves while the actual terrorists never even hear about it.

(if it were Reform Jews, the story would be broadly similar, but with *twenty* different rescue attempts, and I say this fondly, as someone who attended a liberal synagogue for ten years)

One relevant difference between Mormons and Unitarians seems to be a cultural one. It's not quite that the Mormons value conformity and the Unitarians value individuality – that's not exactly *wrong*, but it's letting progressives bend language to their will, the same way as calling the two sides of the abortion debate "pro-freedom" and "anti-woman" or whatever they do nowadays. It's more like a Mormon norm that the proper goal of a discussion is agreement, and a Unitarian norm that the proper goal of a discussion is disagreement.

There's a saying I've heard in a lot of groups, which is something along the lines of "diversity is what unites us". This is nice and memorable, but there are other groups where *unity* is what unites them, and they seem to be more, well, united.

Unity doesn't just arise by a sudden and peculiar blessing of the angel Moroni. It's the sort of thing you can create. Holidays and festivals and weird rituals create unity. If everyone jumps up and down three

times on the summer solstice, then yes, objectively this is dumb, but you feel a little more bonded with the other people who do it: *I'm* one of the solstice-jumpers, and *you're* one of the solstice-jumpers, and that makes us solstice-jumpers together.

[Robert Putnam famously found](#) that the greater the diversity in a community:

...the less people vote, the less they volunteer, and the less they give to charity and work on community projects. In the most diverse communities, neighbors trust one another about half as much as they do in the most homogenous settings. The study, the largest ever on civic engagement in America, found that virtually all measures of civic health are lower in more diverse settings. “The extent of the effect is shocking,” says Scott Paige, a University of Michigan political scientist.

I don't think this effect is particularly related to race. I bet that if you throw together a community of white, black, Asian, Hispanic, and Martian Mormons, they act as a “non-diverse” community. As we saw before, culture trumps race.

So this sort of cultural unity is exactly the sort of thing we need to improve civic life and prevent racism... and of course, it's exactly what progressives get enraged if we try to produce.

In America, progressivism focuses on pointing out how terrible American culture is and how much other people's cultures are better than ours. If we celebrate Columbus Day, we have to spend the whole time hearing about what a jerk Columbus was (disclaimer: to be fair, Columbus was a *huge* jerk). If we celebrate Washington's birthday, we have to spend the whole time hearing about how awful it was that Washington owned slaves. Goodness help us if someone tries to celebrate Christmas – there are now areas where if a city puts up Christmas decorations, it has to give equal space to atheist groups [to put up displays about how Christmas is stupid and people who celebrate it suck](#). That's...probably not the way to maximize cultural unity, exactly?

We are a culture engaged in the continuing project of subverting itself. Our heroes have been toppled, our rituals mocked, and one gains status by figuring out new and better ways to show how the things that should unite us are actually stupid and oppressive. Even the conservatives who wear American flag lapel pins and stuff spend most of their time talking about how they hate America today and the American government and everything else associated with America except for those stupid flag pins of theirs.

Compare this to olden cultures. If someone in Victorian Britain says “God save the Queen!”, then everyone else repeated “God save the Queen!”, and more important, *they mean it*. “England expects every man to do their duty” is actually perceived as a *compelling reason* why one's duty should be done.

It would seem that the Victorian British are more on the Mormon side and modern Americans more like the Unitarians. And in fact, the Victorians managed to colonize half the planet while America can't even get the Afghans to stop shooting each other. While one may not agree with Victorian Britain's aims, one

has to wonder what would happen if that kind of will, energy, and unity of purpose were directed towards a worthier goal (I wonder this about the Mormon Church too).

Reactionaries would go further and explore this idea in a depth I don't have time for, besides to say that they believe many historical cultures were carefully optimized and time-tested for unifying potential, and that they really sunk deep into the bones of the populace until failing to identify with them would have been unthinkable. The three cultures they most often cite as virtuous examples here are Imperial China, medieval Catholicism, and Victorian Britain; although it would be foolish to try to re-establish one of those exactly in a population not thoroughly steeped in them, we could at least try to make our own culture a little more like they were.

Once again, the Reactionary claim is not necessarily that we have to brainwash people or drag the Jews kicking and screaming to Christmas parties. It's just that maybe we should stop deliberately optimizing society for as little unity and shared culture as humanly possible.

## Reach For The Tsars

I have noticed a tendency of mine to reply to arguments with “Well yeah, that would work for the X Czar, but there’s no such thing.”

For example, take the problems with the scientific community, which my friends in Berkeley often discuss. There’s lots of publication bias, statistics are done in a confusing and misleading way out of sheer inertia, and replications often happen very late or not at all. And sometimes someone will say something like “I can’t believe people are too dumb to fix Science. All we would have to do is require early registration of studies to avoid publication bias, turn this new and powerful statistical technique into the new standard, and accord higher status to scientists who do replication experiments. It would be really simple and it would vastly increase scientific progress. I must just be smarter than all existing scientists, since I’m able to think of this and they aren’t.”

And I answer “Well, yeah, that would work for the Science Czar. He could just make a Science Decree that everyone has to use the right statistics, and make another Science Decree that everyone must accord replications higher status. And since we all follow the Science Czar’s Science Decrees, it would all work perfectly!”

Why exactly am I being so sarcastic? Because things that work from a czar’s-eye view don’t work from within the system. No *individual* scientist has an incentive to unilaterally switch to the new statistical technique for her *own* research, since it would make her research less likely to produce earth-shattering results and since it would just confuse all the other scientists. They just have an incentive to want *everybody else* to do it, at which point they would follow along.

Likewise, no journal has the incentive to unilaterally demand early registration, since that just means everyone who forgot to early register their studies would switch to their competitors’ journals.

And since the system is *only* made of individual scientists and individual journals, no one is ever going to switch and science will stay exactly as it is.

I use this “czar” terminology a lot. Like when people talk about reforming the education system, I point out that right now students’ incentive is to go to the most prestigious college they can get into so employers will hire them, employers’ incentive is to get students from the most prestigious college they can so that they can defend their decision to their boss if it goes wrong, and colleges’ incentive is to do whatever it takes to get more prestige, as measured in *US News and World Report* rankings. Does this lead to huge waste and poor education? Yes. Could an Education Czar notice this and make some Education Decrees that lead to a vastly more efficient system? Easily! But since there’s no Education Czar everybody is just going to follow their own incentives, which have nothing to do with education or efficiency.

There is an extraordinarily useful [pattern of refactored agency](#) in which you view humans as basically actors playing roles determined by their incentives. Anyone who strays even slightly from their role is outcompeted and replaced by an understudy who will do better. That means the final state of a system is determined entirely by its initial state and the dance of incentives inside of it.

If a system has perverse incentives, it's not going to magically fix itself; no one inside the system has an incentive to do that. The end user of the system – the student or consumer – is already part of the incentive flow, so they're not going to be helpful. The only hope is that the system can get a Czar – an Unincentivized Incentivizer, someone who controls the entire system while standing outside of it.

I alluded to this a lot in my (warning: political piece even longer than this one) [Non-Libertarian FAQ](#). I argued that because systems can't always self-improve from the inside, every so often you need a government to coordinate things.

Reactionaries would go further and say that a standard liberal democratic government is not an Unincentivized Incentivizer. Government officials are beholden to the electorate and to their campaign donors, and they need to worry about being outcompeted by the other party. They, too, are slaves to their incentives. The obvious solution to corporate welfare is “end corporate welfare”. A three year old could think of it. But anyone who tried would get outcompeted by powerful corporate interests backing the campaigns of their opponents, or outcompeted by other states that still have corporate welfare and use it to send businesses and jobs their way. It's obvious from outside the system, and completely impossible from the inside. It would appear we need some kind of a Government Czar.

You know who had a Government Czar? Imperial Russia. For short, they just called him “Czar”.

Everyone realizes our current model of government is screwed up and corrupt. We keep electing fresh new Washington Outsiders who promise with bright eyes to unupscrew and decorruptify it. And then they keep being exactly as screwed up and corrupt as the last group, because if you hire a new actor to play the same role, the lines are still going to come out exactly the same. Want reform? The lines to “Act V: An Attempt To Reform The System” are already written and have been delivered dozens of times already. How is changing the actors and actresses going to help?

A Czar could actually get stuff done. Imperial Decree 1: End all corporate welfare. Imperial Decree 2: Close all tax loopholes. Imperial Decree 3: Health care system that doesn't suck. You get the idea.

Would the Czar be corrupt and greedy and tyrannical? Yes, probably. Let's say he decided to use our tax money to build himself a mansion ten times bigger than the Palace of Versailles. The Internet suggests that building Versailles today would cost somewhere between \$200M and \$1B, so let's dectuple the high range of that estimate and say the Czar built himself a \$10 billion dollar palace. And he wants it plated in solid gold, so that's another \$10 billion. Fine. Corporate welfare is \$200B per year. If the Czar were to tell us “I am going to take your tax money and spend it on a giant palace ten times the size of Versailles

covered in solid gold”, the proper response would be “Great, but what are we going to do with the other \$180 billion dollars you’re saving us?”

(here I am being facetious. A better answer might be to point out that the British royal family already lives in a giant palace, and they by all accounts [earn the country more than they cost](#))

As for the tyranny, we have Fnargl’s shining example to inspire us. But really. Suppose Obama were named Czar. Do we really think he’d start sending Republicans to penal camps in Alaska for disagreeing with him? If Sasha took over as Czarina, do you think *she’d* do that?



Is this the face of someone who would crush you with an iron fist?

In the democratic system, the incentive is always for the country to become more progressive, because progressivism is the appeal to the lowest common denominator. There may be reversals, false starts, and Reagan Revolutions, but over the course of centuries democracy means inevitable creeping progress. As Menciuss Moldbug says, “Cthulhu swims slowly, but he always swims left.” A Czar, free from these incentives, would be able to take the best of progressivism and leave the rest behind.

(the Reactionaries I beta-tested this essay with say that the last paragraph deserves much more space, that there are many complicated theories of why this holds true, and that it is a central feature of Reactionary thought. I don’t understand this well enough to write about it yet, but you may want to read Moldbug on...no, on second thought, just let it pass.)

So who gets to be Czar? Probably the most important factor is a Schelling point: it should be someone everyone agrees has the unquestioned right to rule. Obama is not a *bad* choice, but one worries he may be a little too progressive to treat the job with the seriousness it deserves. We could import the British monarchy, but really ever since the Glorious Revolution they’ve been a bit too constitutional for our purposes. If we wanted a genuine, legitimate British monarch of the old royal line, someone with authority flowing through his very veins, our best choice is, indeed to exhume the body of [King James II](#) (ruled 1685 – 1688), clone him, and place the clone on the throne of the new United States Of The Western World.

Really, it's just common sense.

## A Brief Survey Of Not Directly Political Reactionary Philosophy

We have reached the goal we set for ourselves. Is this a comprehensive understanding of Reactionary thought?

No. This focuses on political philosophy, but Reaction is a complete philosophical movement with many other branches.

For example, Reactionary moral theories tend to focus on the dichotomy between Virtue and Decadence. Extensional definitions might do best here: consider the difference in outlook between Seneca the Stoic and the Roman Emperor Nero, or between Liu Bei and Cao Cao, or between Thomas More and Henry VIII. In each of these cases, a virtuous figure recognized the decadence of his society and willfully refused to succumb to it. Of course, an even more virtuous example would be someone like Lycurgus, who realized the decadence of his society and so *went out and fixed society*.

Reactionary aesthetic theories tend to be, well, reactions against progressive aesthetic theories. To Reactionaries, the epitome of the progressive aesthetic theory against which they rebel is the fairy tale of the Ugly Duckling, where one duckling is uglier than the rest, everyone mocks him, but then he turns out to be the most beautiful of all. The moral of the story is that ugly things are really the most beautiful, beautiful things are for bullies who just want to oppress the less beautiful things, and if you don't realize this, you're dumb and have no taste.

Therefore, decent, *sophisticated* people must scoff at anything outwardly beautiful and say that it's probably oppressive in some way, while gushing over anything apparently ugly. Cathedrals are "gaudy" or "tacky", but Brutalist concrete blocks are "revolutionary" and "groundbreaking". An especially conventionally attractive woman is probably just "self-objectifying" and "pandering", but someone with ten tattoos and a shaved head is "truly confident in her femininity". Art of the sort [people have been proven to like most](#) is old-fashioned and conformist; *real* art is urinals that artistically convey an anti-art message, or paintings so baffling that [no one can tell if they are accidentally hung upside-down](#).

The Reactionary aesthetic, then, is something so simple that if it weren't specifically a reaction to something that already exists, it would sound stupid: no, beautiful things are legitimately beautiful, ugly things are legitimately ugly, any attempt to disguise this raises suspicions of ulterior motives.

Reactionaries also seem to be really into metaphysics, especially of the scholastic variety, but I have yet to be able to understand this. Blatant racism, attempts to clone long-dead monarchs, and giving a gold-obsessed alien absolute power all seem like they could sort of make sense in the right light, but why anyone would want more metaphysics is honestly completely beyond me.

## But Seriously, What Do We Do About This Hole? And How Fast Should We Be Digging, Anyway?

We started with an argument that modern culture probably doesn't give us a very impartial view on the relative merits of modern culture, and so we should investigate this more thoroughly.

We noted that on many of the criteria we care about, the present is better only because of its improved technology. We further noted that on other criteria, even *despite* our better technology, past societies seemed to outperform us

Nevertheless, we identified some areas where the present really did seem better than the past. The present was less racist, less sexist, less colonialist, more humane, and less jingoistic.

We then went through each of those things and showed why they might not be as purely beneficial as generally believed. We found evidence that societies many would call "racist" give minorities better measurable outcomes; that societies many would call "sexist" give women higher self-reported life satisfaction; that colonialism led to peace and economic growth that decolonialism was unable to match; and that supposedly more "humane" policies end up torturing their victims far more than just getting something superficially cruel over wit would; and even that cultural unity, which some might call "jingoism", has been empirically shown to be an important factor in building communities and inspiring prosocial sentiment.

Therefore, we found that all the points we had previously noted as advantages of present over past societies were, when examined more closely, in fact points in the past societies' favor.

Next, we looked at how we might replicate these advantages of past societies in a world which seems to be moving inexorably further toward so-called progressive ideals. We independently came up with the same solution that these past societies used: the idea of a monarch, either constitutional or (preferably) absolutist. We found that many of the problems we would expect such a monarch to produce are exaggerated or unlikely.

Finally, we identified this ideal monarch as a clone of James II of the United Kingdom.

We also went into a survey of a couple of other Reactionary ideas. Other such ideas I have *not* included simply because I was totally unable to understand or sympathize with them and so couldn't give them fair treatment include: an obsession with chastity, highly positive feelings about Catholicism that never go as far as actually going to church or believing any Catholic doctrine in a non-ironic way, neo-formalism, and what the heck the Whigs have to do with anything.

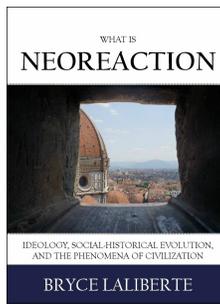
Nevertheless, I hope that this has been a not-entirely futile exercise in trying to [Ideological Turing Test](#) an opposing belief. I think Reactionaries are correct that some liberal ideas have managed to make their

way into an echo chamber that makes them hard to examine. And even though the Reactionaries themselves are way too rightist, I think it's good to have their ideas out there in the Hegelian sense of "and then the unexamined-conservatism touched the unexamined-liberalism and in a puff of smoke they merged to magically become the perfect political system!"

## Outro

Once again, expect my counterargument to this sometime in the next while. I would be interested in hearing other people's counterarguments in the meantime and am very likely to steal them. I am also likely to ignore some of them if they make arguments I already agree with and so feel no need to debate, but I would still enjoy reading them. Basically I welcome comments and discussion from all sides.

With one exception. Yes, I have included the racist parts of Reactionary philosophy above. Yes, those points need to be debated, and some of that debate may be in favor. But any comment that moves away from the sort of dry scientific racism used to prove or disprove political theorems, and toward the sort where they're just shouting ethnic slurs and attacking racial groups to make their members feel bad, *will* be deleted and the person involved probably IP-banned. I also reserve the right to edit comments that don't quite reach that point but are noticeably in need of rephrasing.



# What is Neoreaction: Ideology, Social-Historical Evolution, and the Phenomena of Civilization

September 29, 2013

<http://www.amazon.com/What-Neoreaction-Social-Historical-Evolution-Civilization-ebook/dp/BooFIVERoK/>

by Bryce Laliberte

*The high theory of neoreaction*



# Initial Remarks

# Introduction to the Neoreaction

April 7, 2013

<http://anomalyuk.blogspot.ca/2013/04/introduction-to-neoreaction.html>

by Anomaly UK

*The high theory of neoreaction*

**Anomaly** UK

Generally, when I'm asked to explain "What is a neoreactionary?" (perhaps using alternative terms such as nu-reaction or the Dark Enlightenment), my response is to point elsewhere, at [Moldbug](#) or at [Nick Land](#), or even at [Scott Alexander's](#) outsider's view.

However, good sources though they are, they're not always appropriate. They're all extremely verbose. Moldbug and Alexander are really writing for very politically aware progressives, and Land is even more abstruse. Moldbug is the Jeremy Clarkson of political philosophy: while I find his style of presentation highly enjoyable, there's no doubt that many others find it unbearable.

So maybe we need a more concise introduction.

### **The Concise Introduction**

For five hundred years, there have been attempts to reorder human society on the basis that hereditary privilege, and many other kinds of inequality between humans, are unjust. Reformers have attempted to alter systems of government and other institutions of society with the goal of reducing or eliminating these injustices.

These reformers have consistently underestimated the difficulty of getting people to cooperate in a society. The intellectual techniques of science and engineering that produced miracles in terms of manipulating the natural world, have, time after time, failed catastrophically to improve the lives of humans through changing government and society.

There are a number of reasons for this: For one thing, humans are much more complex than any of the parts and tools with which engineers have made machines. They will not fit in where they are put. Attempts to persuade or compel them to fit into the machine have to be built into the machine themselves, and end up changing the functioning of the machine so much that it no longer achieves its intended goal.

Most importantly, humans have evolved to compete for influence and power, by violence and by deceit. Any reform which attempts to limit or remove the power of the holders of power creates a competition for that power, which will lead to spectacular efforts by everybody else to win it. The innovations that will be produced by such high-stakes competition are impossible to predict or plan for.

Meanwhile, developments in technology have improved people's lives so much that the calamitous decline in quality of government has been disguised. All mainstream political factions are intellectual descendants of the original reformers, and none have any interest in fairly comparing present-day government with traditional government. Those that are called "conservatives" are only reformers who oppose the most recently enacted or proposed reforms: none of them question the principle or the intellectual basis of progressivism.

Most neoreactionary writing consists of detailed criticism of particular progressive reforms, with particular emphasis on the flaws in one specific idea — [democracy](#).

Ultimately, however, if after all these centuries of trying to improve society based on abstract ideas of justice have only made life worse than it would have been under pre-Enlightenment social systems, the time has come to simply give up the whole project and revert to traditional forms whose basis we might not be able to establish rationally, but which have the evidence of history to support them.

### **Neoreaction for Reactionaries**

Some of the inquiries I spoke of at the beginning have come from old-fashioned reactionaries. The short answer for them is that it doesn't matter. Neoreaction is not a new, better form of reaction that you should be upgrading to — rather, you've found a short-cut past what for us has generally been a long and laborious journey, one that has mostly passed through libertarianism or other forms of liberalism. A lot of our discussion will seem wrong-headed to you, and your theology is mostly irrelevant to us, but when the subject is more immediately practical, we are likely to be closer together.

# Neoreaction (for dummies)

April 17, 2013

<http://www.xenosystems.net/neoreaction-for-dummies/>

by Nick Land

*Involvements with reality*

Kill the hyphen, *Anomaly UK* advised (somewhere) – it lets Google Search dissolve and avoid the subject. Writing ‘neo-reaction’ as ‘neoreaction’ nudges it towards becoming *a thing*.

Google Search gets to edit our self-definition? That’s the ‘neo’ in ‘neoreaction’, right there. It not only promotes drastic regression, but highly-advanced drastic regression. Like retrofuturism, paleomodernism, and cybergothic, the word ‘neoreaction’ compactly describes a time-twisted vector that spirals forwards into the past, and backwards into the future. It emerges, almost automatically, as the present is torn tidally apart – when the democratic-Keynesian politics of postponement-displacement exhausts itself, and the kicked-can runs out of road.

Expressed with [abstruse verbosity](#), therefore, neoreaction is a time-crisis, manifested through paradox, whose further elaboration can wait (if not for long). Disordering our most basic intuitions, it is, by its very nature, difficult to grasp. Could anything easily be said about it?

*Anomaly UK* [offers](#) a down-to-earth explanation for the reversal of socio-political course:

*Ultimately, however, if after all these centuries of trying to improve society based on abstract ideas of justice have only made life worse than it would have been under pre-Enlightenment social systems, the time has come to simply give up the whole project and revert to traditional forms whose basis we might not be able to establish rationally, but which have the evidence of history to support them.*

This understanding of neoreaction – undoubtedly capturing its predominant sentiment – equates it with a radicalized Burkean conservatism, designed for an age in which almost everything has been lost. Since the progressive destruction of traditional society has been broadly accomplished, hanging on to what remains is no longer enough. It is necessary to go back, beyond the origin of Enlightenment, because Reason has failed the test of history.

Neoreaction is only *a thing* if some measure of consensus is achievable. Burke-on-steroids is an excellent candidate for that. Firstly, because *all neoreactionaries define themselves through antagonism to the Cathedral*, and the Cathedral is the self-proclaimed consummation of Enlightenment rationalism. Secondly, for more complicated, positive reasons ...

Spandrell helpfully [decomposes](#) neoreaction into two or three principal currents:

*There are two lines of [our contemporary] reactionary thought. One is the traditionalist branch, and [the other is] the futurist branch.*

Or perhaps there [are] three. There’s the religious/traditionalist branch, the ethnic/nationalist branch, and the capitalist branch.

Futurists and traditionalists are distinguished by distinct, one-sided emphases on ‘neo’ and ‘reaction’, and their disagreements lose identity in the neoreactionary spiral. The triadic differentiation is more

resiliently conflictual, yet these ‘branches’ are branches of something, and that thing is an ultra-Burkean trunk.

Reactionary theonomists, ethno-nationalists, and techno-commercialists share a fundamental aversion to rationalistic social reconstruction, because each subordinates reason to history and its tacit norms – to ‘tradition’ (diversely understood). Whether the sovereign lineage is considered to be predominantly religious, bio-cultural, or customary, it originates outside the self-reflective (enlightenment) state, and remains opaque to rational analysis. Faith, liturgy, or scripture is not soluble within criticism; communal identity is not reducible to ideology; and common law, reputational structure, or productive specialism is not amenable to legislative oversight. The *deep order of society* – whatever that is taken to be – is not open to political meddling, without predictably disastrous consequences.

This Burkean junction, where neoreactionary agreement begins, is also where it ends. Divine revelation, racial continuity, and evolutionary discovery (catallaxy) are sources of ultimate sovereignty, instantiated in tradition, beyond the Cathedral-state, but they are self-evidently different – and only precariously compatible. Awkwardly, but inescapably, it has to be acknowledged that each major branch of the neoreactionary super-family tends to a social outcome that its siblings would find even more horrifying than Cathedralist actuality.

Left intellectuals have no difficulty envisaging Theocratic White-Supremacist Hyper-Capitalism®. In fact, most seem to consider this mode of social organization the modern Western norm. For those hunkered-down in the tangled, Cathedral-blasted trenches of neoreaction, on the other hand, the manifold absurdities of this construction are not so easily overlooked. Indeed, each branch of the reaction has dissected the others more incisively – and brutally – than the left has been able to.

When theonomists scrutinize ethno-nationalists and techno-commercialists they see evil heathens. When ethno-nationalists scrutinize theonomists and techno-commercialists they see deluded race-traitors.

When techno-commercialists scrutinize theonomists and ethno-nationalists they see retarded crypto-communists.

(The details of these diagnoses exceed the present discussion.)

When developed beyond its ultra-Burkean trunk, therefore, the prospects for neoreactionary consensus – for a *neoreactionary thing* – depend upon disintegration. If we’re compelled to share a post-Cathedral state, we’ll kill each other. (The zapped hyphen was just a foretaste.)

# The Reactionary Consensus

April 7, 2013

<http://nickbsteves.wordpress.com/2013/05/07/the-reactionary-consensus/>

by Nick B. Steves

*The high theory of neoreaction*



To be reactionary is to be anti-revolutionary. The more of them you're against, the more reactionary you are. You cannot stop revolutions by having more revolutions. You can only stop them by restoration. The act of restoration is The Reaction®. When The Reaction® comes, revolutions will cease, and civilizations can go about their business of building civilization again. The Reaction® will be ours, so long as we can hold it.

So over the past few weeks, we've been [having much discussion](#) (and [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) and a zillion other places) in the Reactosphere about the Spandrellian Trichotomy and what voices make up the reactionary consensus.

I am interested in the *content* of the consensus. What can Catholic Traditionalists, Ethno-Nationalists, and Techno-Commercialists, and assorted Particularists and non-brain-dead PUAs agree on? It must be a consensus of sufficient breadth and metaphysical humility to be attractive to the vast majority of those who see little but the death of civilization on our current path. At the same time, the consensus must be of sufficient specificity, depth, and rigor so that it cannot [be Cathedralized](#) and thereby neutralized. When The Reaction® comes, the Cathedral must be dead, “completely dead”, and no pill of Miracle Max must be allowed to work on it.

I tried fleshing out some of this consensus [here](#) (Sharlach's *first* public post and wow was it a duesy!). Now that I have a blog, I can get the bullets to work. And those were with a few addenda:

- Hierarchical social structures: Hierarchy is not only not bad, but natural and absolutely essential to the proper functioning of any social structure;
- Sex Realism: Sex differences are real, are ordained by nature or nature's god or both, and we ignore them at our peril;
- Race Realism: Race and group differences are real, are ordained by nature or nature's god or both, and we ignore them at our peril;
- Memetic Realism (“Deep Heritage”): Traditional folkways tend to be real, i.e., non-ideological, and naturally arising adaptations to social realities, which therefore represent pretty good (at least) local solutions to very (or intractably) complex problems;
- Economic Realism (later badly dubbed “Microeconomics” and we still await a name for the phenomenon): In any economy where an absolutely fixed supply of (properly divisible) money is deemed impossible or impractical, there is *ipso facto* a con game going where the issuance of money has itself become a political weapon;
- (Hyper)Federalism: Local optima rarely scale well; subsidiarity; the right of exit must be guaranteed;
- Social Justice: If social justice is anything at all, it is merely justice;
- Democracy: The best and brightest of any society were ordained by nature or nature's god or both to lead. Expansion of the franchise beyond that natural aristocracy is tragically foolish;

- Politics: Defined as competition for parcels of power over unrelated others, usually as a means of redistributing wealth, politics is rightly minimized in any sane society.

In short, there is an agreement about reality as we see it. As I've discussed at length with my many betters over at Nick Land's, (neo)reaction can be seen as a [disposition toward truth](#), varnished or otherwise.

Is that enough? Do these points define the core (neo)reaction? A core? Are there objections? How deep does the agreement go? Is there anything else we happen to agree on?

[Update: Thanks Christopher. Yes, "hierarchy"... editing html in plain text produces so many red squiggles that you tend to ignore them...]

# Reactionary Unity

April 20, 2013

<http://anomalyuk.blogspot.com/2013/04/reactionary-unity.html>

by Anomaly UK

*Anomalous Opinions*

**Anomaly** UK

[Spandrell talks of](#) three groups among the reactionary movement: capitalist, religious/traditionalist, and ethnic/nationalists. He [and Nick Land](#) both consider the degree to which the three groups will be able to work together.

The answer, for me, depends entirely on what the work is that is to be done. That depends again on what the path is for getting to a reactionary state, which I am long overdue to pay more attention to.

It has to depend on local circumstances. For Britain, the path that looks most plausible to me is the restoration of the existing monarchy to power. America needs to take some other path: possibly a secession, possibly a military takeover. The future reactionary ruler could get there by commanding an army or militia, by being stonkingly rich, or a TV personality, or even a prophet.

In any case, what I see as the future goal is not a ruling politburo of reactionary philosophers, whether neoreactionary, orthodox, ethno-nationalist or any combination thereof. What seems more likely is someone who gets power by a more practical method, in a crisis, then points at all the reactionary theory and explains that he's not going to form a transitional administration with the goal of free elections in X months because that would be repeating the mistakes of the past. Rather, he is going to continue to govern according to these fine guiding principles which these clever people have worked out, and will rule in a reactionary manner.

The supporters of this regime will overwhelmingly not be neoreactionaries, they will not be ethnonationalists, they will be ordinary people whose reasoning is "Fuck it, maybe this will work, nothing else has". That's the key constituency.

For this to happen, some ideas will have to be widespread: that the solution to the problems of democracy is not more democracy, that the obsessions of the lefter-than-thou pharisees of progressivism are insane, that stable government is so much preferable to anarchy that unpleasant policies should be tolerated for the sake of peace.

However, though distrust of democracy and progressive purity are spreading and might easily become widespread over the next decade or so, true apathy — the belief that, like it or dislike it, government policy is not your responsibility — is a much tougher goal. Stirring up apathy, in Lord Whitelaw's immortal words, is very difficult. That's why I believe the wheel has to go full circle — we will have to experience anarchy before we can have the reaction. If we are lucky the anarchy may be brief and not too destructive.

Without anarchy, there will still be a progressive party. If a reactionary movement defeats it, it will remain as an opposition and have to be fought at every turn, and the process of fighting it will nullify most of the advantages that reaction brings. The government will have to actively court popularity in order to weaken the progressive opposition, and that dependence on public opinion politicises what should be the non-political aspects of government.

Progressivism needs to be so discredited that the population will view it with revulsion without the state needing to bargain with them to reject it.

Because I do not see a “reactionary party” as forming any part in the process, the question of cooperation between the wings of the reactionary movement does not really arise. The work we have to do is to get the theory done, and prepare the ground. We will do that between us, and whether in overt cooperation or in rivalrous competition doesn’t really matter. If the first ruler is there because he wins a race war, then the contribution to theory of the ethnonationalists will be important. If he has raised an army of religious crusaders, the orthodox will be more important. If he has carved a peaceful oasis out of the anarchy by hiring mercenaries with the profits from his data haven business, he’s going to be paying attention to the futurists. The initial political formula doesn’t matter too much, provided that it’s not demotist. The political formula that will stick is, “this is what gives us peace and order”.

You cannot claim that formula if you start out by attacking the peace and order that exists already. That is why reaction has to wait. It has to *restore* order from anarchy. The standard to initially rally around will not be reactionary theory per se. It will be something that can restore order — flag, crown, cross, or something else. I don’t think it is likely that there will be multiple reactionary choices at this stage. Whatever has the best chance of producing order will attract the support. The reason I emphasise royalty and call myself a royalist is because, in Britain, the Crown looks like the most likely candidate. Religion frankly isn’t at all plausible here — several football clubs have a better chance of concentrating sufficient power than any church does. Ethno-nationalists are also a possibility (the distinction between nationalist groups and football supporters’ groups is a blurry one anyway). Is Tesco in the running too? I doubt it, but who knows?

The old order will fall when parallel power structures start to form outside its control. This could happen first in some localities or it could happen all at once (if the state is no longer able to pay its employees, for example). When it is no longer a case of trying to take over the existing state, but rather to create a new one, it becomes possible for reactionaries to act.

The rivals will be the democrats, the hard left, and Islam. The old hard left has pretty much dissolved into the establishment, and does not look like much of an independent threat. Islam doesn’t have the numbers, even in Luton, though it will probably organise effectively earlier than anyone else. Assuming the actual state institutions are not functioning, the democrats will be fighting on equal terms with the others, but with the aim of restoring democracy. At that point, it becomes OK to fight them, though it would be preferable to ignore them. Immediate tactical necessity is likely to dominate strategy at this stage — that’s why the strategic propaganda work has to already have been done, the narrative that says that democracy and progressivism brought on the breakdown, that it was predictable and expected, and that only those who truly value order can now achieve it, has to already be in place. The failure has to be seen as the failure of the system, not of one party or faction. That will reduce the support that politicians get during the anarchy, compared to other authority figures. Even the authority figures who are gathering

forces at that point will not be talking theory, they will be asking for support to create local, short-term order. If the ground has been prepared properly, the traditional conservatives, the Christians, the ethno-nationalists and the neoreactionaries will all support the same quasi-state.

That said, some political formulæ will cause more difficulties than others. The problem with religion is that people will disagree about it, and claim it justifies them in fighting the (new) state. For that reason, I don't think a reactionary state that fundamentally justifies itself on religious grounds will be successful for long. However, a state that justifies itself on the grounds of protecting Christianity from outside enemies (progressivism, Islam, etc.) should be able to earn the loyalty of the faithful without getting tied up in the theological disputes among them. The arms-length relationship between church and state that we have in Britain seems about right\* — the ruler is Defender of the Faith, but not Priest-King.

The facts that we have to spread among the public ahead of time are much less than full reaction. They are just the context in which reaction can take its place:

- There is such a thing as progressivism, and there are non-progressive ideas, not just more and less progressive ideas
- There are otherwise sane people who hold non-progressive ideas
- That some aspects of government are the result of the democratic *system*, and not of the particular politicians who have been elected
- That a more peaceful and ordered society is possible, and that even the peace and order we still have are at risk

If those ideas are widespread, then reality will do the rest when the time comes.

\* bit of a fishy coincidence there, but I can't see a hole in it. It would make sense to back off a little from "Head of the Church".

# What unites neoreaction?

April 29, 2013

<http://blog.jim.com/culture/what-unites-neoreaction.html>

by Jim

*Liberty in an unfree world*

Firstly, why neoreaction, rather than reaction?

Because the principles and social organization that we want to restore are completely dead, available only in dusty old books whose language is a little bit strange. We are not reacting to the latest outrage, but to outrages that were a *fait accompli* a hundred years ago. Since what was an *fait accompli* a hundred years ago has led to the disastrous consequences predicted, the possibility now opens of reversing what was supposedly irreversible. The Neoreaction is heavily influenced by books long, long, out of print, and previously inaccessible.

Neoreactionaries, all of them, respect the past. Traditional solutions derive from Nature, or, some would say, from Nature's God, and embody unspoken and difficult to explain wisdom. Sweeping them aside was apt to have disastrous consequences, and, in substantial part, did have disastrous consequences.

Reactionaries, all of them, are realists, seeing the real, not the official truth.

Neoreactionaries, all of them, recognize that races are different, the sexes are different, and man is a hierarchical animal.

Neoreactionaries, all of them, regard the official truth, the Cathedral as highly unlikely to have any connection to the truth, indeed as evil and insane. If all academics and the New York Times agree on X, the neoreactionary assumption is that X is likely to be a lie. The only way one would get such agreement is if it is enforced, and, if enforced, must be untrue.

That being said, what divides neoreactionaries?

Christian Traditionalists are just not all that neoreactionary, even though they are supposed to be faithful to a very ancient book. Everything the Christian Manosphere, such as Dalrock, says about trad-cons tends to be somewhat true of Christian Traditionalists. The left would imagine the Christian Traditionalists as proposing a Christian Theocracy with fire and brimstone, and that each variant of Christian Traditionalism proposed to burn each of the others at the stake, but even those who do in fact propose a Christian theocracy, such as Bruce Charleton, want a King, not a priest, at the top. They are alarmingly willing to render unto Caesar not only what is Caesar's, but also what is God's. Saint Paul wanted the Church practices to symbolically and socially enforce male supremacy. Women were to be silent in Church, and in Church dress in a way symbolizing modesty and submission. Today's Christian Traditionalists, reasonably enough, shrink from such a blatant confrontation with the Cathedral. They hope for a Caesar that will permit them to be more authentically Christian, but have no great inclination to stick their heads out when today's Caesar prohibits key parts of the New Testament.

If Bruce Charleton had his King, and the King mandated Mormonism, Bruce would gladly be a Mormon, if Greek Orthodoxy, he would be Greek Orthodox, if Restoration Anglicanism, he would be Anglican. Any King that mandated something that was not violently unchristian would be an improvement for Bruce

Charleton.

Ethno-Nationalists, like Christian Traditionalists, tend to be not all that reactionary. An ethno nationalist typically believes that if we adjusted borders to get some predominantly white nations, and if our ruling elite was ethnically homogeneous, we would be fine. A neoreactionary thinks our problems are too serious to be solved in that manner.

The Ethno Nationalist correctly observes that Jewish members of the elite tend to think of themselves as non white, and hate whites. Indeed they hate whites and Christians so much that if destroying the white race and Christendom destroyed the Jewish race and Judaism, as seems rather likely, they would be fine with that. The Ethno Nationalist however fails to observe that our ruling elite has hated whites and Christendom even back when it was ethnically homogeneous and nominally Christian. Nineteenth Century Whitehall imperialism was anti colonialist, an attack on eighteenth century British colonialism. Anti colonialism goes back to the nineteenth century British gentry sneering at those that got rich in India. Until 1950 or so, there were few or no Jews in the ruling elite, yet it still hated whites and Christendom.

Thus the Ethno-Nationalist tends to say, “Let us turn the clock back to 1950”, while I say, 1800. In the great debate about whether Nazis are left or right, the answer is that Nazis are 1950s leftists. The Zietgeist has moved leftwards since then. Although as recently as 1950, our ruling elite thought of leftism as a form of Christianity, indeed as more Christian than regular Christianity, nonetheless as early as the War Between the States, the Christian left was aware that its religious beliefs differed radically from traditional Christianity, and were correspondingly hostile to traditional Christianity.

Suppose we magically got whiteopia borders – nation states that were all white, and indeed each of a single white ethnicity. And suppose government employees in powerful positions were also all of single ethnicity. (Suppose we fired all the Jews.) Government employees would still be fireproof, thus power would still be diffused. Being diffused, we get rule by consensus. Jim’s rule of large committees applies: That consensus will always wind up dominated by the evil and the insane, which is to say the left. To maintain the appearance of democracy the government needs to manufacture or import an electorate that will vote for what it is going to do anyway, which is how we lost ethnic homogeneity in the first place.

Still, turning the clock back to 1950 is a good start, and as far as I can tell most Ethno-Nationalists want to make government employees fireable at will, so my primary disagreement with them is that they underestimate the scope of the problem. Purging the civil service and the voter rolls is easier done, and more likely to be effective, than adjusting borders.

If we adjusted the borders, which is what the Ethno-Nationalists want, and ensured that the ruling elite was ethnically homogeneous, the fundamental causes that got us into this problem would still be acting. The government would still suck in pretty much the way it sucks now. On the other hand, making public

servants fireable at will would go a long way to fixing things. We would then merely be stuck with an army of fatherless children and single mothers voting for handouts.

By and large, fatherlessness is a bigger problem than race. We would get more mileage making it hard for the fatherless to vote, than hard for the black to vote.

To the Christians in the neoreaction, the Masculine Reaction seems to be in favor of social decay. Heartiste claims to be a minion of Satan. But, in fact Heartiste is not in favor social decay. Rather he is against males being required to take the traditional male obligations unreciprocated in a society that is in decay, against white males attempting to carry carry the impossible burden of a society that has already collapsed. Absent socially and legally enforceable contracts, love is war. All is fair in love and war. Heartiste and company represent sex realism, as the HBD branch of the neoreaction represents race realism.

Obviously Neoreactionaries do not favor a society in which each individual pursues his best interests without regard to the costs that he imposes on others. But in sex and reproduction, we have such a society. It is possible to establish, by force of character and reckless will to power, a family with different rules, though it is a lot easier if one's starting material is an aristocratic girl brought up in a profoundly conservative family within a profoundly conservative society. For most young men today, that is not an option. Marriage is collapsing, even among the white elite, even among those white males whose income is high enough that marriage to them is higher status than marriage to Uncle Sam the Big Pimp.

# Trichotomy

April 30, 2013

<http://www.xenosystems.net/trichotomy/>

by Nick Land

*Involvements with reality*

The ‘Spandrellian Trichotomy’ (Nick B. Steves’ coinage, based on [this](#) post) has become an awesome engine of discussion. The topic is seething to such an extent that any linkage list will be out of date as soon as it is compiled. Among the most obvious way-markers are [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#). Given the need to refer to this complex succinctly, I trust that abbreviating it to ‘the Trichotomy’ will not be interpreted as a clumsy attempt to obstruct Spandrell’s Nobel Peace Prize candidacy.

What is already broadly agreed?

(1) There is a substratum of neoreactionary consensus, involving a variety of abominated realist insights, especially the contribution of deep heritage to socio-political outcomes. Whilst emphasis differs, an ultra-Burkean attitude is tacitly shared, and among those writers who self-identify with the *Dark Enlightenment*, the importance of HBD is generally foregrounded.

(2) Neoreaction also shares an enemy: the *Cathedral* (as delineated by Mencius Moldbug). On the nature of this enemy much is agreed, not least that it is defined by a project of deep heritage erasure — both ideological and practical — which simultaneously effaces its own deep heritage as a profound religious syndrome, of a peculiar type. Further elaboration of Cathedral genealogy, however, ventures into controversy. (In particular, its consistency with Christianity is a fiercely contested topic.)

(3) As neoreactionary perspectives are systematized, they tend to fall into a trichotomous pattern of dissensus. This, ironically, is *something that can be agreed*. The Trichotomy, or neoreactionary triad, is determined by divergent identifications of the Western tradition that the Cathedral *primarily* suppresses: Christian, Caucasian, or Capitalist. [My](#) preferred terms for the resultant neoreactionary strains are, respectively, the *Theonomist*; the *Ethno-Nationalist*; and the *Techno-Commercial*. These labels are intended to be accurate, neutral descriptions, without intrinsic polemical baggage.

It is to be expected — at least initially, and occasionally — that each strain will seek to dismiss, subordinate, or amalgamate the other two. If they were not so tempted, their trichotomous disintegration would never have arisen. Each *must* believe that it, alone, has the truth, or the road to truth, unless sheer insincerity reigns.

*Outside in* does not pretend to impartiality, but it asserts an invincible disillusionment.

– If the Trichotomy was reducible, the new reaction would already be one thing. It isn’t, and it isn’t (soon) going to be.

– As astrology reveals, and more ‘sophisticated’ systems confirm, people delight in being categorized, accepting non-universality as the real price of identification. (The response to Scharlach’s diagram attests to that.)

– Accepting the Trichotomy and the arguments it organizes is a way to be tested, and any neoreactionary position that refuses it will die a flabby death.

– The Trichotomy makes it impossible for neoreaction to play at dialectics with the Cathedral. For that reason alone, we should be grateful to it. Unity — even oppositional unity — was never on our side.



# A formalist manifesto

April 23 2013

<http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.com/2007/04/formalist-manifesto-originally-posted.html>

by Mencijs Moldbug

*Reactionary Enlightenment*

The other day I was tinkering around in my garage and I decided to build a new ideology.

What? I mean, am I crazy or something? First of all, you can't just build an ideology. They're handed down across the centuries, like lasagna recipes. They need to age, like bourbon. You can't just drink it straight out of the radiator.

And look what happens if you try. What causes all the problems of the world? Ideology, that's what. What do Bush and Osama have in common? They're both ideological nutcases. We're supposed to need more of this?

Furthermore, it's simply not possible to build a new ideology. People have been talking about ideology since Jesus was a little boy. At least! And I'm supposedly going to improve on this? Some random person on the Internet, who flunked out of grad school, who doesn't know Greek *or* Latin? Who do I think I am, [Wallace Shawn](#)?

All excellent objections. Let's answer them and then we'll talk about formalism.

First, of course, there are a couple of beautifully aged traditional ideologies which the Internet now brings us in glorious detail. They go by lots of names, but let's call them [progressivism](#) and [conservatism](#).

My beef with progressivism is that for at least the last 100 years, the vast majority of writers and thinkers and smart people in general have been progressives. Therefore, any intellectual in 2007, which unless there has been some kind of Internet space warp and my words are being carried live on Fox News, is anyone reading this, is basically marinated in progressive ideology.

Perhaps this might slightly impair one's ability to see any problems that may exist in the progressive worldview.

As for conservatism, not all Muslims are terrorists, but most terrorists are Muslims. Similarly, not all conservatives are cretins, but most cretins are conservatives. The modern American conservative movement - which is paradoxically much younger than the progressive movement, if only because it had to be reinvented after the Roosevelt dictatorship - has been distinctly affected by this audience. It also suffers from the electoral coincidence that it has to despise everything that progressivism adores, a bizarre birth defect which does not appear to be treatable.

Most people who don't consider themselves "progressives" or "conservatives" are one of two things. Either they're "moderates," or they're "libertarians."

In my experience, most sensible people consider themselves "moderate," "centrist," "independent," "unideological," "pragmatic," "apolitical," etc. Considering the vast tragedies wrought by 20th-century politics, this attitude is quite understandable. It is also, in my opinion, responsible for most of the death and destruction in the world today.

Moderation is not an ideology. It is not an opinion. It is not a thought. It is an absence of thought. If you believe the status quo of 2007 is basically righteous, then you should believe the same thing if a time machine transported you to Vienna in 1907. But if you went around Vienna in 1907 saying that there should be a European Union, that Africans and Arabs should rule their own countries and even colonize Europe, that any form of government except parliamentary democracy is evil, that paper money is good for business, that all doctors should work for the State, etc, etc - well, you could probably find people who agreed with you. They wouldn't call themselves "moderates," and nor would anyone else.

No, if you were a moderate in Vienna in 1907, you thought Franz Josef I was the greatest thing since sliced bread. So which is it? Hapsburgs, or Eurocrats? Pretty hard to split the difference on that one.

In other words, the problem with moderation is that the "center" is not fixed. It moves. And since it moves, and people being people, people will try to move it. This creates an incentive for violence - something we formalists try to avoid. More on this in a bit.

That leaves libertarians. Now, I love libertarians to death. My CPU practically has a permanent open socket to the [Mises Institute](#). In my opinion, anyone who has intentionally chosen to remain ignorant of libertarian (and, in particular, Misesian-Rothbardian) thought, in an era when a couple of mouse clicks will feed you enough high-test libertarianism to drown a moose, is not an intellectually serious person. Furthermore, I am a computer programmer who has read far too much science fiction - two major risk factors for libertarianism. So I could just say, "read Rothbard," and call it a day.

On the other hand, it is hard to avoid noticing two basic facts about the universe. One is that libertarianism is an extremely obvious idea. The other is that it has never been successfully implemented.

This does not prove anything. But what it suggests is that libertarianism is, as its detractors are always quick to claim, an essentially impractical ideology. I would love to live in a libertarian society. The question is: is there a path from here to there? And if we get there, will we stay there? If your answer to both questions is obviously "yes," perhaps your definition of "obvious" is not the same as mine.

So this is why I decided to build my own ideology - "formalism."

Of course, there is nothing new in formalism. Progressives, conservatives, moderates, and libertarians will all recognize large chunks of their own undigested realities. Even the word "formalism" is borrowed from [legal formalism](#), which is basically the same idea in more modest attire.

I am not Vizzini. I am just some dude who buys a lot of obscure used books, and is not afraid to grind them down, add flavor, and rebrand the result as a kind of political surimi. Most everything I have to say is available, with better writing, more detail and much more erudition, in [Jouvenel](#), [Kuehnelt-Leddihn](#), [Leoni](#), [Burnham](#), [Nock](#), etc, etc.

If you've never heard of any of these people, neither had I until I started the procedure. If that scares you, it should. Replacing your own ideology is a lot like do-it-yourself brain surgery. It requires patience, tolerance, a high pain threshold, and very steady hands. Whoever you are, you already have an ideology in there, and if it wanted to come out it would have done so on its own.

There is no point in starting this messy experiment only to install some other ideology that's the way it is just because someone said so. Formalism, as we'll see, is an ideology designed by geeks for other geeks. It's not a kit. It doesn't come with batteries. You can't just pop it in. At best, it's a rough starting point to help you build your own DIY ideology. If you're not comfortable working with a table saw, an oscilloscope and an autoclave, formalism is not for you.

That said:

The basic idea of formalism is just that the main problem in human affairs is violence. The goal is to design a way for humans to interact, on a planet of remarkably limited size, without violence.

Especially organized violence. Next to organized human-on-human violence, a good formalist believes, all other problems - Poverty, Global Warming, Moral Decay, etc, etc, etc - are basically insignificant. Perhaps once we get rid of violence we can worry a little about Moral Decay, but given that organized violence killed a couple of hundred million people in the last century, whereas Moral Decay gave us "American Idol," I think the priorities are pretty clear.

The key is to look at this not as a moral problem, but as an engineering problem. Any solution that solves the problem is acceptable. Any solution that does not solve the problem is not acceptable.

For example, there is an existing idea called [pacifism](#), part of the general progressive suite, which claims to be a solution for violence. As I understand it, the idea of pacifism is that if you and I can not be violent, everyone else will not be violent, too.

There's no doubt in my mind that pacifism is effective in some cases. In Northern Ireland, for example, it seems to be just the thing. But there is a kind of "hundredth-monkey" logic to it that consistently eludes my linear, Western mind. It strikes me that if everyone is a pacifist and then one person decides not to be a pacifist, he will wind up ruling the world. Hmm.

A further difficulty is that the definition of "violence" isn't so obvious. If I gently relieve you of your wallet, and you chase after me with your Glock and make me beg to be allowed to give it back, which of us is being violent? Suppose I say, well, it was your wallet - but it's my wallet now?

This suggests, at the very least, that we need a rule that tells us whose wallet is whose. Violence, then, is anything that breaks the rule, or replaces it with a different rule. If the rule is clear and everyone follows it, there is no violence.

In other words, violence equals *conflict plus uncertainty*. While there are wallets in the world, conflict will exist. But if we can eliminate uncertainty - if there is an unambiguous, unbreakable rule that tells us, in advance, who gets the wallet - I have no reason to sneak my hand into your pocket, and you have no reason to run after me shooting wildly into the air. Neither of our actions, by definition, can affect the outcome of the conflict.

Violence of any size makes no sense without uncertainty. Consider a war. If one army knows it will lose the war, perhaps on the advice of some infallible oracle, it has no reason to fight. Why not surrender and get it over with?

But this has only multiplied our difficulties. Where do all these rules come from? Who makes them unbreakable? Who gets to be the oracle? Why is the wallet "yours," rather than "mine"? What happens if we disagree on this? If there's one rule for every wallet, how can everyone remember them all? And suppose it's not you, but me, who's got the Glock?

Fortunately, great philosophers have spent many long hours pondering these details. The answers I give you are theirs, not mine.

First, one sensible way to make rules is that you're bound by a rule if, and only if, you agree to it. We don't have rules that are made by the gods somewhere. What we have is actually not rules at all, but agreements. Surely, agreeing to something and then, at your own convenience, un-agreeing to it, is the act of a cad. In fact, when you make an agreement, the agreement itself may well include the consequences of this kind of irresponsible behavior.

If you're a wild man and you agree to nothing - not even that you won't just kill people randomly on the street - this is fine. Go and live in the jungle, or something. Don't expect anyone to let you walk around on their street, any more than they would tolerate, say, a polar bear. There is no absolute moral principle that says that polar bears are evil, but their presence is just not compatible with modern urban living.

We are starting to see two kinds of agreements here. There are agreements made with other specific individuals - I agree to paint your house, you agree to pay me. And there are agreements like, "I won't kill anyone on the street." But are these agreements really different? I don't think so. I think the second kind of agreement is just your agreement with *whoever owns the street*.

If wallets have owners, why shouldn't streets have owners? Wallets have to have owners, obviously, because ultimately someone has to decide what happens with the wallet. Does it ride off in your pocket, or mine? Streets stay put, but there are still a lot of decisions that have to be taken - who paves the street? When and why? Are people allowed to kill people on the street, or is it one of those special no-killing streets? What about street vendors? And so on.

Obviously, if I own 44th Street and you own 45th and 43rd, the possibility of a complex relationship

between us becomes nontrivial. And complexity is next to ambiguity, which is next to uncertainty, and the Glocks come out again. So, realistically, we are probably talking more about owning not streets, but larger, more clearly-defined units - blocks, maybe, or even cities.

Owning a city! Now that would be pretty cool. But it gets us back to an issue that we've completely skipped, which is who owns what. How do we decide? Do I deserve to own a city? Am I so meritorious? I think I am. Maybe you could keep your wallet, and I could get, say, Baltimore.

There is this idea called [social justice](#) that a lot of people believe in. The notion is, in fact, fairly universal as of this writing. What it tells us is that Earth is small and has a limited set of resources, such as cities, which we all want as much of as possible. But we can't all have a city, or even a street, so we should share equally. Because all of us people are equal and no one is more equal than anyone else.

Social justice sounds very nice. But there are three problems with it.

One is that many of these nice things are not directly comparable. If I get an apple and you get an orange, are we equal? One could debate the subject - with Glocks, perhaps.

Two is that even if everyone starts with equal everything, people being different, having different needs and skills and so on, and the concept of ownership implying that if you own something you can give it to someone else, all is not likely to stay equal. In fact, it's basically impossible to combine a system in which agreements stay agreed with one in which equality stays equal.

This tells us that if we try to enforce permanent equality, we can probably expect permanent violence. I am not a big fan of "empirical evidence," but I think this prediction corresponds pretty well to reality.

But three, which is the real killer - so to speak - is that we are not, in fact, designing an abstract utopia here. We are trying to fix the real world, which in case you hadn't noticed, is extremely screwed up. In many cases, there is no clear agreement on who owns what (Palestine, anyone?), but most of the good things in the world do seem to have a rather definite chain of control.

If we have to start by equalizing the distribution of goods, or in fact by changing this distribution at all, we are putting ourselves quite unnecessarily behind the 8-ball. We are saying, we come in peace, we believe all should be free and equal, let us embrace. Put your arms around me. Feel that lump in my back pocket? Yup, that's what you think it is. And it's loaded. Now hand over your city / wallet / apple / orange, because I know someone who needs it more than you.

The goal of formalism is to avoid this unpleasant little detour. Formalism says: let's figure out exactly who has what, *now*, and give them a little fancy certificate. Let's not get into who *should* have what. Because, like it or not, this is simply a recipe for more violence. It is very hard to come up with a rule that explains why the Palestinians should get Haifa back, and doesn't explain why the Welsh should get London back.

So far this probably sounds a lot like libertarianism. But there's a big difference.

Libertarians may think the Welsh should get London back. Or not. I am still not sure I can interpret Rothbard on this one - which is, as we've seen, in itself a problem.

But if there is one thing all libertarians do believe, it's that *the Americans should get America back*. In other words, libertarians (at least, real libertarians) believe the US is basically an illegitimate and usurping authority, that taxation is theft, that they are essentially being treated as fur-bearing animals by this weird, officious armed mafia, which has somehow convinced everyone else in the country to worship it like it was the Church of God or something, not just a bunch of guys with fancy badges and big guns.

A good formalist will have none of this.

Because to a formalist, the fact that the US can determine what happens on the North American continent between the 49th parallel and the Rio Grande, AK and HI, etc, means that it is the entity which owns that territory. And the fact that the US extracts regular payments from the aforementioned fur-bearing critters means no more than that it owns that right. The various maneuvers and pseudo-legalities by which it acquired these properties are all just history. What matters is that it has them now and it doesn't want to give them over, any more than you want to give me your wallet.

So if the responsibility to fork over some cut of your paycheck makes you a [serf](#) (a reasonable reuse of the word, surely, for our less agricultural age), that's what Americans are - serfs.

Corporate serfs, to be exact, because the US is nothing but a corporation. That is, it is a formal structure by which a group of individuals agree to act collectively to achieve some result.

So what? So I'm a corporate serf. Is this so horrible? I seem to be pretty used to it. Two days out of the week I work for Lord Snooty-Snoot. Or Faceless Global Products. Or whoever. Does it matter who the check is written to?

The modern distinction between "private" corporations and "governments" is actually a [rather recent development](#). The US is certainly different from, say, Microsoft, in that the US handles its own security. On the other hand, just as Microsoft depends on the US for most of its security, the US depends on Microsoft for most of its software. It's not clear why this should make one of these corporations special, and the other not-special.

Of course, the purpose of Microsoft is not to write software, but to make money for its shareholders. The American Cancer Society is a corporation, too, and it has a purpose as well - to cure cancer. I have lost a lot of work on account of Microsoft's so-called "software," and its stock, frankly, is going nowhere. And cancer still seems to be around.

In case the CEO of either MSFT or the ACS is reading this, though, I don't really have a message for you

guys. You know what you're trying to do and your people are probably doing as good a job of it as they can. And if not, fire the bastards.

But I have no idea what the purpose of the US is.

I have heard that there's someone who supposedly runs it. But he doesn't appear to even be able to fire his own [employees](#), which is probably good, because I hear he's not exactly Jack Welch, if you know what I [mean](#). In fact, if anyone can identify one significant event that has occurred in North America because Bush and not Kerry was elected in 2004, I'd be delighted to hear of it. Because my impression is that basically the President has about as much effect on the actions of the US as the Heavenly Sovereign Emperor, the Divine Mikado, has on the actions of Japan. Which is pretty much none.

Obviously, the US exists. Obviously, it does stuff. But the way in which it decides what stuff it's going to do is so opaque that, as far as anyone outside the Beltway is concerned, it might as well be consulting [ox entrails](#).

So this is the formalist manifesto: that the US is just a corporation. It is not a mystic trust consigned to us by the generations. It is not the repository of our hopes and fears, the voice of conscience and the avenging sword of justice. It is just an big old company that holds a huge pile of assets, has no clear idea of what it's trying to do with them, and is thrashing around like a ten-gallon shark in a five-gallon bucket, red ink spouting from each of its bazillion gills.

To a formalist, the way to fix the US is to dispense with the ancient mystical horseradish, the [corporate prayers](#) and [war chants](#), figure out who owns this monstrosity, and let them decide what in the heck they are going to do with it. I don't think it's too crazy to say that all options - including restructuring and liquidation - should be on the table.

Whether we're talking about the US, Baltimore, or your wallet, a formalist is only happy when ownership and control are one and the same. To reformalize, therefore, we need to figure out who has actual power in the US, and assign shares in such a way as to reproduce this distribution as closely as possible.

Of course, if you believe in the mystical horseradish, you'll probably say that every citizen should get one share. But this is a rather starry-eyed view of the US's actual power structure. Remember, our goal is not to figure out who *should* have what, but to figure out who *does* have what.

For example, if the New York Times was to endorse our reformalization plan, it would be much more likely to happen. This suggests that the New York Times has quite a bit of power, and therefore that it should get quite a few shares.

But wait. We haven't answered the question. What is the purpose of the US? Suppose, solely for illustration, we give *all* the shares to the New York Times. What will "[Punch](#)" [Sulzberger](#) do with his shiny new country?

Many people, probably including Mr. Sulzberger, seem to think of the US as a charitable venture. Like the American Cancer Society, just with a broader mission. Perhaps the purpose of the US is simply to do good in the world.

This is a very understandable perspective. Surely, if anything ungood remains in the world, it can be vanquished by a gigantic, heavily armed mega-charity, with H-bombs, a flag, and 250 million serfs. In fact, it's actually rather astounding that, considering the prodigious endowments of this great philanthropic institution, it seems to do so little good.

Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that it's run so efficiently that it hasn't balanced its budget since the 1830s. Perhaps, if you reformed the US, ran it like an actual business, and distributed its shares among a large set of separate charities, each presumably with some specific charter for some actual specific purpose, more good might occur.

Of course, the US doesn't just have assets. Sadly, it also has [debts](#). Some of these debts, such as T-bills, are already very well-formalized. Others, such as Social Security and Medicare, are informal and subject to political uncertainties. If these obligations were reformed, their recipients could only benefit. Of course, they would thus become negotiable instruments and could be, for example, sold. Perhaps in exchange for crack. Reform thus requires us to distinguish between property and charity, a hard problem but an important one.

All this fails to answer the question: are nation-states, such as the US, even useful? If you reformed the US, the question would be left to its shareholders. Perhaps cities work the best when they're independently owned and operated. If so, they should probably be spun off as separate corporations.

The existence of successful city-states such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Dubai certainly suggests an answer to this question. Whatever we call them, these places are remarkable for their prosperity and their relative absence of politics. In fact, perhaps the only way to make them more stable and secure would be to transform them from effectively family-owned (Singapore and Dubai) or subsidiary (Hong Kong) corporations, to anonymous public ownership, thus eliminating the long-term risk that political violence might develop.

Certainly, the absence of democracy in these city-states has not made them comparable in any way to Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. Any restrictions on personal freedom that they do maintain seem primarily aimed at preventing the development of democracy - an understandable concern given the history of rule by the People. In fact, both the [Third Reich](#) and the [Communist world](#) often claimed to represent the true spirit of democracy.

As [Dubai](#) in particular shows, a government (like any corporation) can deliver excellent customer service without either owning or being owned by its customers. Most of Dubai's residents are not even citizens. If Sheik al-Maktoum has a cunning plan to seize them all, chain them and make them work in the salt

mines, he's doing it in a very devious way.

Dubai, as a place, has almost nothing to recommend it. The weather is horrible, the sights are nonexistent, and the neighborhood is atrocious. It's tiny, in the the middle of nowhere, and surrounded by Allah-crazed maniacs with a suspicious affinity for high-speed centrifuges. Nonetheless it has a quarter of the world's cranes and is growing like a weed. If we let the Maktoums run, say, Baltimore, what would happen?

One conclusion of formalism is that democracy is - as most writers before the 19th century agreed - an ineffective and destructive system of government. The concept of democracy without politics makes no sense at all, and as we've seen, politics and war are a continuum. Democratic politics is best understood as a sort of symbolic violence, like deciding who wins the battle by how many troops they brought.

Formalists attribute the success of Europe, Japan and the US after World War II not to democracy, but its absence. While retaining the symbolic structures of democracy, much as the Roman Principate retained the Senate, the postwar Western system has assigned almost all actual decision-making power to its civil servants and judges, who are "apolitical" and "nonpartisan," ie, nondemocratic.

Because in the absence of effective external control, these civil services more or less manage themselves, like any unmanaged enterprise they often seem to exist and expand for the sake of existing and expanding. But they avoid the [spoils system](#) which invariably develops when the tribunes of the people have actual power. And they do a reasonable, if hardly stellar, job of maintaining some semblance of law.

In other words, "democracy" appears to work because it is not in fact democracy, but a mediocre implementation of formalism. This relationship between symbolism and reality has received an educational if depressing test in the form of Iraq, where there is no law at all, but which we have endowed with the purest and most elegant form of democracy (proportional representation), and ministers who actually seem to run their ministries. While history does no controlled experiments, surely the comparison of Iraq to Dubai makes a fine case for formalism over democracy.

(originally posted at over at [2Blowhards](#) - thanks, Michael! If you have comments, there's already a thread there...)

# Potential Approximations of Neoreaction

November 6, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/11/06/potential-approximations-of-neoreaction/>

by Bryce Laliberte

*The high theory of neoreaction*



My friends at Amos & Gromar wrote a little something on "[Making Neoreaction Simple](#)." This isn't an entirely bad idea, as it shouldn't be pretended that more than 2% of the world will ever be able to give an intellectually qualified assessment of neoreaction. Assuming an individual is unable or, more likely, unwilling to educate themselves of [certain conceptual tools](#), I don't think it is possible to actually articulate anything essentially neoreactionary. In my book I postulate the possibility that a "true understanding of how society works" may not be accessible to anyone outside the ruling class, but that's assuming a sane system in the first place.

So if we suppose a typical individual asks me what neoreaction is about, say at the bar, where I know I don't have the possibility to inculcate them in notions such as time preference, ideological superstructures, social construction, and so on, I think I would be left to give some "initial approximations" of what it means to be a neoreactionary, with the caveat that these are necessarily incomplete and can only represent one aspect of the whole in much the same way as the blind men grasp the fabled elephant. Conciseness and a reference to generally understood cultural groups will work best, with the intent that these might be entry points to beginning to understand the whole, but for those who will never deign to go on and do this, these at least won't be harmful understandings. So without further ado, I might propose these approximations of neoreaction:

*Libertarians who have given up on democracy, because democracy gave up on them.*

*Conservatives who got tired of losing.*

*Conservatives who hate the Republican party more than the Democratic party.*

*Race realists who want to be left alone rather than have any notions of "racial equality" or "diversity" imposed on them or anyone else.*

*Anarcho-capitalists who can see a use for the state in a society that isn't smart enough to handle anarcho-capitalism.*

*Monarchists who understand votes are bullets in a low intensity civil war.*

*Social theorists who want to make human nature a feature, not a bug, in the system.*

*Men who see that feminism makes us work against our biological programming which makes us miserable.*

*Christians who want your progressive religion out of their homes, schools, and businesses.*

Those are some approximations based on group identities, how should certain tenets be stated? I think the tenets are going to have to assume a better willingness to grapple with the theory, so if we suppose an individual is willing to think out what the above approximations mean, I would propose these initial articulations of our tenets, without supposing this is a complete list or that all neoreactionaries agree

with the proposition theoretically or emphatically.

1. Civilization does not happen by accident.
2. Expect consequences, some which you won't like, when you mess with the way things have always been done.
3. If something's always been done a certain way, you're better trying to figure out a reason why such a norm is stabilizing.
4. The existence and concentration of power cannot be eliminated; don't waste your time trying to do so.
5. High degrees of power asymmetry tend to be stable.
6. Individuals must be socialized into their autonomy and independence.
7. Freedom imposes responsibilities, and the inability to exercise those responsibilities should entail a limiting of that freedom.
8. The innate qualities of human individuals explains a lot about society.
9. It is better to benefit the group than the individuals of that group.
10. Social structures instrumentally transform human nature into social capital.
11. Don't fight human nature, make it work for you.
12. Justice is equality, and no one is the same.
13. There are no "rights," only what you're afforded by society.
14. If you won't let someone lose, you won't let society win.
15. Social roles should be adopted for the benefit of most, not eliminated for the benefit of a few.

I imagine many will want to contribute other approximations. Keep in mind these aren't meant to be a list of conclusions per se, i.e. "Traditional gender roles are good," but principles which neoreactionaries respect in their attempt to understand society and how it works.

# Oaks vs. Sandboxes

July 26, 2013

<http://www.moreright.net/oaks-vs-sandboxes/>

by Michael Anissimov

*Questioning Modernity*



A Canadian study found that [extreme conservatives are happier people](#). The sample group was 247 female college students. Here's the abstract:

Although authoritarianism can negatively impact others (e.g., by predicting prejudiced intergroup attitudes), implications for the self are mixed and require clarification. Extending previous research, we examined the association between generalized authoritarianism (GA, indicated by right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation) and subjective well-being (SWB, indicated by positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction) by testing simultaneously the general-level association between GA and SWB as well as specific residual associations between GA and SWB components, independent of basic personality dimensions. We observed a significant general-level association between GA and SWB whereby heightened authoritarianism predicted greater SWB. No residual associations were found between specific GA and SWB components. Despite being “bad” for others, generalized authoritarianism may be “good” for the self.

To measure the presence of generalized authoritarian attitudes, participants were asked to express their level of agreement with statements like, “Some groups of people are just more worthy than others” and “In getting what your group wants, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.” To assess their subjective well-being, the participants were asked to rate their current life on a scale of 1 to 10, as well as being given 20 adjectives (10 positive, 10 negative) and asked to what extent these words applied to how they feel “in general.” The study found a clear association between heightened authoritarianism, in-group orientation, and subjective well-being. The *Salon* article comments:

In some ways, this result is counterintuitive. Much previous research has tied conservatism to [higher levels of perceived threat](#). It's hard to reconcile how people can both feel threatened and have a strong sense of well-being. On the other hand, a strong sense of social hierarchy (the notion that everyone has their place) can arguably provide a coherent structure that makes the world seem less chaotic—and theoretically more controllable. That could, in turn, promote a sense of well-being. It's also important to note that the study participants were overwhelmingly young and female. They were also Canadians, who as a group report [higher levels of well-being](#) than Americans. It's conceivable that an older, more male-skewing, U.S. sample could produce different results. Still, this research calls into serious question the notion of far right-wingers being grumps who are taking out their misery on those around them. If these results are correct, they may be making others (such as, say, Republican moderates) plenty miserable, but on a personal level, they're doing quite OK.

Let me make a few comments about the general idea of social hierarchy, which is explicitly mentioned above. Before the dawn of civilization, men lived in tribes and small villages. Leadership would have been primarily local, and the social pyramid relatively small; [about 150 people](#). Then, roughly 5400 BC, something impressive happened. After 188,600 or so years of *Homo sapiens* living in small tribes, the first known city, [Eridu](#), was built. The foundation of civilization brought many changes:

- social differentiation and hierarchy, new social roles
- writing systems, standardized language, record-keeping, mathematics
- refinement of agriculture
- social order, legal code
- an official state religion and mythology
- a true economy, mass production of bowls and disposable items
- unprecedented population density (50-80,000 living in 6 km<sup>2</sup> of walled area)
- permanent military and bureaucracy
- sense of solidarity extending beyond the tribe
- organized housing structures
- organized ports facilitating distant trade and exploration
- the first towers, including the likely structure that inspired the [Tower of Babel](#) story
- networks of small cities, almost within sight of one another (national organization)
- canal systems, called “Venice in the desert”
- intellectual classes that didn’t perform manual labor
- courtyard buildings, great halls, temples, elaborate buttresses, mosaics, aqueducts, fortresses, granaries, etc.

From the Wikipedia page on [Uruk](#):

In addition to being one of the first cities, Uruk was the main force of [urbanization](#) during the [Uruk period](#) (4000–3200 BC). This period of 800 years saw a shift from small, agricultural villages to a larger urban center with a full-time bureaucracy, military, and stratified society.

Why did it take us 188,600 years to figure out this basic concept, civilization? No one really knows. It would have saved us a lot of trouble if we had founded civilization earlier. For all that time prior to civilization, life was nasty, brutish, and short, not to mention repetitive. Technological innovations occurred over the course of millennia.

What held back the establishment of civilization prior to the flowering in Sumeria? We can put the blame on several factors; lack of knowledge and lack of solidarity. Traditionally, village size had been limited to 100-300 people, a quantity known as [Dunbar’s number](#). Some force had to intervene to make larger aggregation possible. From the evidence, we know the primary factor driving this: farmers growing enough food to support warrior and administrative castes.

Warriors and administrators made larger social aggregation possible. Warriors are needed to resolve

internal social conflicts, defend the city from external invaders, enforce the law, and protect farmers outside the city walls. Administrators are needed to provide the core structure of the bureaucracy. Together, they make the city-state possible.

These early city states were the first forms of social aggregation significantly larger than the Dunbar number. A couple thousand years before Uruk and Eridu, there were cities like [Çatalhöyük](#), but these were essentially slums with no public buildings or social differentiation. The population of Uruk and Eridu in 4000 BC were about 5,000 and 4,000, respectively, and these were true cities, complete with social differentiation and stratification.

According to the [Sumerian kinglist](#), Eridu was the first city in the World. The opening line reads:

*“When kingship from heaven was lowered, the kingship was in Eridu.”*

Thus we see the the foundation of the first city, Eridu, is also synonymous with the foundation of monarchy and civilization.

Settlements significantly larger than Dunbar’s number meant new rules. It meant you would be living around so many people that you couldn’t know them all personally. To make society function smoothly would now require social roles that can be easily identified and mutually understood by citizens who happen to be strangers. It also requires a degree of trust and faith in co-nationals not required for the inhabitants of small villages, where everyone knows one another personally.

The foundation of a city state, like any human aggregation, rests on the idea of an in-group and an out-group. The members of the city-state are the in-group, visitors and outsiders are the out-group. Sumerian city states were raided by barbarians living in the mountains to the north, what is now present-day southwest Iran. To ensure their continued existence, these city states would have to kill or repel the invaders. They constantly struggled with the [Elamite Empire](#) to the north, as well.

Since co-nationals could not know each other all personally, but had a kinship with one another as citizens of the same nation-state, their relationship had to be abstracted in term of a “national idea.” For the Sumerians, their national identity would have been based on shared ethnicity and mythology. The concrete manifestation of this shared culture was the [ziggurats](#), huge step temples. Their nationalism took Sumerians from being a small smattering of disconnected tribes to a history-changing and highly organized nation state, setting the foundation for a mighty empire.

### **Universalism and Equality**

In historically recent time, the principles of monarchy, social hierarchy, and nationalism have been replaced with ideals such as equality and universalism. Reactionaries are revolutionary conservatives who reject equality and universalism, replacing them with the traditional principles of hierarchy and

particularism. The Canadian study provides evidence that this makes extreme conservatives happier people. The study authors, psychologist [Cara MacInnis](#) of the University of Toronto and [Michael Busseri](#) of Brock University, said these findings are “*in line with evidence that conservative ideology... may promote positive psychological outcomes.*”

The structure in traditional societies such as Eridu and modern democracies such as the United States can be compared to the difference between an oak and a sandbox. In modern democracies, with their emphasis on human rights and discouraging social hierarchy as much as possible, we have an open stage to articulate ourselves, though there is a lack of social structure. They are like [sandboxes](#). The focus is not on building lasting structures, but pursuing our goals in isolation, insulated from traditional social hierarchy by modernist and democratic principles. I specifically use the term “sandbox” to invoke [open-ended games](#) like SecondLife. SecondLife is a chaotic virtual world without much of a central organizing principle. When I use the term “sandbox” I am referring to this kind of virtual world, rather than a literal sandbox.

In contrast, traditional societies like Eridu are like oaks. They have a central direction of growth, physical contact between constituent parts, fundamental interdependence, shared reserves, in-group mentality, a master plan, and long-term stability. The condition for establishing this kind of society is a *group spirit* that overcomes selfish impulses and ennobles man by connecting him to something larger than himself. In *Men Among the Ruins* (1953), Julius Evola describes the structure of the traditional State:

The statolatry of the modern age has nothing to do with the traditional political view; the impersonal State, when regarded as a heavy juridical and bureaucratic entity (e.g., Nietzsche’s “cold monster”), is also an aberration. Every society and State is made of people; individual human beings are their primary element. What kind of human beings? Not people as they are conceived by individualism, as atoms or a mass of atoms, but people as persons, as differentiated beings, each one endowed with a different rank, a different freedom, a different right within the social hierarchy based on the values of creating, constructing, obeying, and commanding. With people such as these it is possible to establish the true State, namely an antiliberal, antidemocratic, and organic State. The idea behind such a State is the priority of the person over any abstract social, political, or juridical entity, and not of the person as a neuter, leveled reality, a mere number in the world of quantity and universal suffrage.

The perfection of the human being is the end to which every healthy social institution must be subordinated, and it must be promoted as much as possible. This perfection must be conceived on the basis of a process of individuation and of progressive differentiation. In this regard we must consider the view expressed by Paul de Lagarde, which can be expressed approximately in these terms: everything that is under the aegis of humanitarianism, the doctrine of natural law, and collectivity corresponds to the inferior dimension. Merely being a “man” is a minus compared to being a man belonging to a given nation and society; this, in turn, is still a minus compared to being

a “person,” a quality that implies the shift to a plane that is higher than the merely naturalistic and “social” one. In turn, being a person is something that needs to be further differentiated into degrees, functions, and dignities with which, beyond the social and horizontal plane, the properly political world is defined vertically in its bodies, functional classes, corporations, or particular unities, according to a pyramid-like structure, at the top of which one would expect to find people who more or less embody the absolute person. What is meant by “absolute person” is the supremely realized person who represents the end, and the natural center of gravity, of the whole system. The “absolute person” is obviously the opposite of the individual. The atomic, unqualified, socialized, or standardized unity to which the individual corresponds is opposed in the absolute person by the actual synthesis of the fundamental possibilities and by the full control of the powers inherent in the idea of man (in the limiting case), or of a man of a given race (in a more relative, specialized, and historical domain): that is, by an extreme individuation that corresponds to a de-individualization and to a certain universalization of the types corresponding to it. Thus, this is the disposition required to embody pure authority, to assume the symbol and the power of sovereignty, or the form from above, namely the imperium.

Going from humanity, through “society” or a collectivity based on natural law and the nation, and then proceeding in the political world all the way to a personality variously integrated, and finally to a dominating super-personality, means to ascend from lower degrees to degrees that are increasingly filled with “being” and value, each one the natural end of the previous one: this is how we should understand the principle according to which man is the end or the primary end of society, and not vice versa.

This view of society as a tool for the perfection of man, rather than as an end in itself, is a quintessential traditionalist perspective. The idea of a central sovereign or monarch as the “absolute person” is in direct defiance of the principles of equality espoused in the Western world since the French Revolution. The notion of “individuation and progressive differentiation” as the path towards perfection of man, implying social hierarchy and varying social roles, is also an illiberal notion.

The point of the traditional model is not to create a society where the strong rule the weak, but to create an organic social structure that operates as a harmonious unit. Certain people in this kind of society would have privileges and responsibilities that others do not. Through individuation and progressive differentiation, an embryonic, undifferentiated “man” becomes a man belonging to a given nation and society, and then a unique, differentiated *person*. This applies equally to every person from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy.

By belonging to a given group and articulating his own identity, man becomes part of a larger whole that goes beyond himself, and is distinct and valued because of his unique and particular merits in a rich social context. Rather than adhering to the universal leveling mentality of “everyone gets a trophy,” the traditional society rewards human excellence and accords due respect to the highest achievers within

each group in the social strata. Through meritocratic allotment of social kudos and pursuit of honor and *mana*, a “metaphysical tension” animates the state, motivating citizens to heroic accomplishment. This is in contrast to the “American Dream,” which is more about achieving a life of consumer leisure and *de facto* social independence than any higher ideals.

Evola wrote about the relationship between leaders and followers in a traditional society:

Superiority and power need to go hand in hand, as long as we remember that power is based on superiority and not vice versa, and that superiority is connected with qualities that have always been thought by most people to constitute the true foundation of what others attempt to explain in terms of brutal “natural selection.” Ancient primitive man essentially obeyed not the strongest members of society, but those in whom he perceived a saturation of *mana* (i.e., a sacred energy and life force) and who, for this reason, seemed to him best qualified to perform activities usually precluded to others. An analogous situation occurs where certain men have been followed, obeyed, and venerated for displaying a high degree of endurance, responsibility, lucidity, and a dangerous, open, and heroic life that others could not; it was decisive here to be able to recognize a special right and a special dignity in a free way. To depend on such leaders constituted not the subjugation, but rather the elevation of the person; this, however, makes no sense to the defenders of the “immortal principles” and to the supporters of “human dignity” because of their obtuseness. It is only the presence of superior individuals that bestows on a multitude of beings and on a system of disciplines of material life a meaning and a justification they previously lacked. It is the inferior who needs the superior, and not the other way around. The inferior never lives a fuller life than when he feels his existence is subsumed in a greater order endowed with a center; then he feels like a man standing before leaders of men, and experiences the pride of serving as a free man in his proper station. The noblest things that human nature has to offer are found in similar situations, and not in the anodyne and shallow climate proper to democratic and social ideologies.

Consider — do you feel happier or fulfilled when 1) working with a team complete with a leader, a sense of camaraderie, and a difficult task at hand that requires cooperation to overcome, or 2) being socially disconnected, with no responsibilities to anyone outside your 9-to-5, pursuing leisure or entertainment for your own hedonistic desires? The second lifestyle is what capitalist democracies (sandboxes) tend to encourage, whereas the first lifestyle is what traditional societies (oaks) tend to encourage.

Hierarchy and social differentiation are a must for any society to run its best, and this is reflected in the strong hierarchies in the corporate and government worlds. The reason these hierarchies are necessary is that human productivity and sense of accomplishment is usually much enhanced (to a point) when large groups follow a coherent plan rather than taking actions based only on personal initiative and local information. Leaders of the group formulate plans and put them into action. Humans, being social animals who evolved in hierarchical tribes for millions of years, naturally respond to the charisma of effective leaders. We are more motivated by the guidance of an effective leader than we are working by

ourselves. This also applies to abstract areas such as academia. It gives us a feeling of meaning and dignity we otherwise lack.

To revolutionary conservatives, reactionaries, and nationalists, people who embrace the “sandbox” vision of society are social defectors. By forgoing the “oak” societal vision, these democrats and republicans (in the original sense of the words, not the political parties) de-differentiate the individual, turning him into a faceless, “equal” citizen. The citizen’s vanity is flattered by having his opinion officially solicited (through voting) on political decisions he knows nothing about. Social alienation is magnified because there is no overall hierarchical structure that socially links all citizens and gives them meaningful roles. Instead, capitalist and materialist concerns provide the overall structure for society.

Some people are inherently more anti-authoritarian and less cooperative than others. In modern democracies, anti-authoritarianism is elevated to the level of a virtue. This might have something to do with the increasing population and multicultural mixing producing a more disconnected society where the average citizen believes more in himself and his immediate family than society at large. This concept of modernity-fueled social alienation, de-differentiation, and “turtling” is explored in detail in Robert D. Putnam’s academic work [\*Bowling Alone: the Collapse of American Community\*](#) and Charles Murray’s recently published book [\*Coming Apart: the State of White America 1960-2010\*](#).

Though there is much more to explain and justify, I will stop there for the time being. I have introduced key traditional principles and values that embody what revolutionary conservatives consider the foundation of civilization, and attempted to justify them. Some of these traditional principles may be underlying the [resurgence in conservatism](#) among youth in places like the United Kingdom and parts of the United States, and the significant recent growth of the online and offline neo-reactionary movement.

# Premises Of Neoreactionary Thought

December 13, 2013

<http://www.moreright.net/premises-of-reactionary-thought/>

by Michael Anissimov

*Questioning Modernity*



## 1. Right is right and left is wrong.

To reactionaries, this is axiomatic. The phrase was popularized by [Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddin](#), who along with Carlyle and Evola, is part of the central canon of neoreactionary thought. If someone disagrees with this phrase, they may be a perfectly delightful person, someone I'd enjoy having tea with, but they would not be a reactionary. Moldbug cites this phrase in his "[Journey from Mises to Carlyle](#)" post. In "[A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations](#)," he says:

On the other hand, it is also quite easy to construct a very clean value system in which order is simply good, and chaos is simply evil. I have chosen this path. It leaves quite a capacious cavity in the back of my skull, and allows me to call myself a *reactionary*. To you, perhaps, it is the dark side. But this is only because the treatment is not yet complete.

Again, basic stuff. He also writes:

The left is chaos and anarchy, and the more anarchy you have, the more power there is to go around. The more orderly a system is, the fewer people get to issue orders. The same asymmetry is why corporations and the military, whose system of hierarchical executive authority is inherently orderly, cluster to the right.

## 2. Hierarchy is basically a good idea.

In general, hierarchy promotes stability, order, direction, cohesion, and so on. Reactionaries object to the rigid hierarchies of totalitarianism, which turn men into cogs in a machine. (See [Fascism Viewed from the Right](#) by Julius Evola for a reactionary critique of fascism, or chapter four of [Men Among the Ruins](#).) If you have trouble distinguishing reactionary thought from fascism, you must read chapter four of *Men Among the Ruins*, or you will never get it. Rather than advocating rigid hierarchies that [crush human autonomy](#), reactionaries support the "organic State," which Evola describes:

Every society and State is made of people; individual human beings are their primary element. What kind of human beings? Not people as they are conceived by individualism, as atoms or a mass of atoms, but people as persons, as differentiated beings, each one endowed with a different rank, a different freedom, a different right within the social hierarchy based on the values of creating, constructing, obeying, and commanding. With people such as these it is possible to establish the true State, namely an antiliberal, antidemocratic, and organic State. The idea behind such a State is the priority of the person over any abstract social, political, or juridical entity, and not of the person as a neuter, leveled reality, a mere number in the world of quantity and universal suffrage.

The goal of the organic State is to foster "*a process of individuation and of progressive differentiation*" of persons, rather than a universalist, leveling aesthetic. Some people are natural leaders, others are not. This is not about all reactionaries fantasizing ourselves to be natural leaders, destined for a spot up the

totem poll Come the Revolution. The idea is creating a society that offers a pleasant differentiation and individuation from top to bottom. There are reasons why this actually makes being at the bottom a better and more interesting experience than it is now, but that's a whole 'nother topic.

### 3. Traditional sex roles are basically a good idea.

It's tiresome to go into this one, since the feminists are so rabid about it, but reactionaries basically approve of traditional sex roles. In traditional societies, women did in fact take on some jobs and roles that might be considered careers by today's standards. They were not all stay-at-home wives, and even if they were, many were extremely industrious. I'm not sure why staying at home, making clothing, cooking, gardening, and raising children is any less empowering or worthwhile than male activities like digging ditches, welding, or sitting at an office desk on a computer all day.

Conversely, if a man chooses to stay home and raise children, many other men will think less of him. No amount of progressive propaganda and reeducation camps will change this, because it's hard-coded into our brains through millions of years of evolution. Men respect other men who go out into the world and do masculine things. Similarly, the pressure to conform to gender norms is [stronger in all-girl schools than in mixed schools](#), exploding the myth that it is men who [instigate and police gender norms](#), to the detriment of women. People can and do create bizarro-world bubbles where these roles are turned upside-down, but they are not very stable.

Women are [less happy today](#) than they were 40 years ago, despite all the [alleged advances](#) made by feminism during that time. One reactionary woman I've spoken with has said that feminism is fundamentally dishonest because it is a movement for women without children, while it portraying itself as helpful to all women. Another woman [says](#), "*I would prefer that norms strongly support functional families and that anyone who wants to do something else has to swim upstream*", which is a fair summation of the reactionary position.

### 4. Libertarianism is retarded.

Many reactionaries are post-libertarians, i.e., *not libertarians*. A rite of passage into reaction/neoreaction is the renunciation of libertarianism. I was never a libertarian, so it's taken me a bit of time to fully understand the relationship between libertarianism and neoreaction, but I understand it now. Libertarians make personal freedom axiomatic, and refuse to consider the negative externalities of that freedom to traditional structures like society and the family. This is anathema to reactionaries.

Neoreaction has a close relationship with traditionalism, which upholds social obligations, norms, some degree of group conformity/homogeneity, and so on. Neoreaction has libertarian qualities, such as advocating for a smaller government and the exclusion of government from traditionally private spheres, but rejects libertarianism overall.

Libertarianism, if it could work at all, would only be suitable for a portion of the population, maybe 15-20%, who are willing to go Galt and lock themselves in a metaphorical fortress against the world. If a libertarian society would leave many out in the cold, libertarians seem not to care. Meanwhile, reactionaries foster community, family, and social cohesion. A couple months ago, I [stated](#), “*socialism*” that traditionalism advocates is family and friends helping each other of their own free will.” That sums up the reactionary position on mutual assistance, which is theoretically compatible with libertarianism, but is not compatible with the mood and spirit of libertarianism as it is in fact lived and practiced. Also, reactionaries tend to view libertarians as excessively materialistic.

For a final tidbit of food for thought on this one, someone on Twitter [said](#), “*if you took libertarianism but made the basic social unit the family rather than the individual you would come close to what neoreaction is*”. Debatable, but interesting.

## **5. Democracy is irredeemably flawed and we need to do away with it.**

Democracy has been a disaster. Read [Democracy: the God That Failed](#) for an explanation. If you have not read at least some of this book, you will be lost. At the very least, reading some of it will give you exposure to serious academic discourse on the failure of democracy. Dismissing anything anti-democratic as “fascism” simply [marks you as an idiot](#), a man of no intellectual depth. At least people like Scott Alexander are capable of [going a little deeper](#) and providing a defense of democracy that avoids relying on the fascist boogeyman.

**That’s it.**

I considered including “opposition to the Cathedral,” here, but decided to leave it out since “Cathedral” is just a lame neologism to outsiders, and I want my posts to be digestible by normal people with no prior exposure to reactionary thought. Also, the question of what the Cathedral is, exactly, is a very complicated one.

I limit the premises to five because I want them to be definitional and exhaustive — anyone who does agree with all five of these premises is almost certainly a reactionary, or at least on the Far Right, while anyone who disagrees with any one of them is almost certainly *not* a reactionary. We have to draw the line somewhere. Having in-groups and out-groups is another premise of reactionary thought.

# Taking the Red Pill

# How to Look at the World Like a Neoreactionary

November 25, 2013 - December 3, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/11/25/how-to-neoreaction/>

by Bryce Laliberte

*The high theory of neoreaction*



## Part 1

November 25, 2013

Neoreaction has just entered the mainstream sooner than we'd expected, so where I thought I would have the time to think a bit longer on how to provide an introduction to neoreaction for the newly initiated making their way from MSM sources, it seems better to go ahead and try that now. I don't want to retread the territory already gone over in my two favorite introductions, [Nick Land's Dark Enlightenment sequence](#) and [Scott Alexander's Reactionary Philosophy in an Enormous, Planet-Sized Nutshell](#) (I would include [Nick B. Steves' Reactionary Consensus](#), but it's incomplete, so I can't say it's one of my favorites yet), so I will try something different. Rather than a blow-by-blow analysis of neoreactionary ideology, I think a primer on the habits of neoreactionary thought might help to overcome the initial confusion of how one is supposed to understand something such as the advocacy of kings, housewives, and ethnic community, which explains the inevitable tendency to over-emphasize and misunderstand crucial distinctions when neoreaction is given an outsider's view.

This, then, is an introduction to the neoreactionary mind and how he sees the world.

Neoreaction bootstraps itself out of the modernist thought paradigm which dominates Western civilization through a process of dialectical reductio. It is inevitable that you were socialized into this way of thinking such that you are literally incapable of working your way out of it without someone pointing out the contradictions in the system. In fact, you just take this way of thinking as normal. So normal, you don't even see it, like contacts.

There is a reason an introduction to neoreaction might be thought of as a red pill. When you "get it," suddenly the illusions of society are seen for what they really are. The orthodoxy which guides the elites from Harvard to the LA Times becomes obviously suspect in light of certain insights.

To consider how radically different all societies have been before the 18th century, when Progress became a theme, is to suppose that people will believe and consider normal almost anything they are socialized into. Women waited since the dawn of civilization to change things for themselves because it took that long for women to see through the illusion that was patriarchy, and were otherwise imprisoned in a false consciousness. The obviousness of woman's subjugation under man, the obviousness of royalty's control, and the obviousness of the Church's right to inform the moral instruction of children were all things people were simply indoctrinated to. You can't realistically expect a society to bootstrap themselves to Progressive ideals, because education can be a prison as well as freedom.

The neoreactionary would ask you to accept the truth of the principles behind such an explanation of the drastically anti-Progressive nature of all societies in all ways before the 18th century, only that you turn the same scrutiny on your own society.

How is it that a society of 300 million+ manages to have a very tightly distributed range of political views? Differences in presidents appear to be merely theoretical, and there was a wider range of political candidates to choose from in earlier elections. This doesn't seem like a change in the nature of people. Why are opinion editorials between the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times essentially interchangeable? Why are virtually all universities in perfect lockstep on how society must be *diverse* and *tolerant*? We have more people and even more reason for more competition between sociopolitical and religious traditions, yet there is such little deviation from the orthodoxy that an academic who insists merely on documenting the findings of research stands to lose his job whenever that research threatens the empirical predictions of the orthodoxy.

Consider yourself. Why do you think you're beyond the effects of socialization? Do you think all "those others" in history didn't think they were perfectly normal as well? "I got through public school, and I'm fine." That may be, but consider: many also get through child abuse. By what metric do you reckon you're fine anyhow? Because you're educated, you have a job, you're not a bad person? Isn't that the metric you were taught by the system? "No, the system teaches me to buy things." And what taught you that this is what the system is like, if not the system? It may not teach you to buy things so much as it informs you of what to buy, and even if we suppose advertising has no effect on you, you still like the taste of Coca Cola. What is Coca Cola anyway? Sugar and water. If you could be adapted to drinking a superstimulus so patently unavailable in nature, what makes you think you couldn't be adapted to the superstimuli of democratic theater and other forms of intellectual pornography?

I'm suggesting, in other words, that living inside a reality carefully constructed through the years by elaborate conditioning rituals, cult-like indoctrination techniques, and a state of the art and well-funded program of community organization can make people think the world around them is normal, well, and good, sometimes even the best. If you're like most who grew up in America, you spent 12 years of your life in school, you're aware of most the same news and cultural background, and you also have remarkably similar values to registered Democrats and Republicans. At least, "remarkably similar" when you consider all the political views that have been held by reasonable people throughout history and in other countries, and especially remarkably similar if you imagine everyone reached their political views through a process of reason. The Tea Party is obviously not as urgent a problem as the KKK, and yet declaring oneself a sympathizer with the Tea Party is about as dangerous a thought crime as the white guy will allow himself in company.

Education is touted as broadening horizons, and we arguably have more education than ever before. Why, then, the tighter distribution of political views? Assuming a random distribution, then a larger territory of political philosophy that one can appropriate should entail fewer essential agreements. Education does not seem so much about learning as it is about socialization into correct forms of thought, or catechesis. Such is the program the Church used through the Middle Ages, after all, right? Having more resources in society devoted to catechesis means a greater possibility for indoctrination. And in which society is this the case; ours, or the hypothetical superstitious peasant of Medieval

England?

The more certain you are that you're okay, the better it worked. Adaptation of a view that is contrary would be very difficult just in principle. The difficulty you find in understanding how neoreactionary views are understood and justified is an example of exactly that phenomenon in action. Why do you presume that, were you born into a different era with different norms, you would even think to challenge those norms? Do you think to challenge the norms present in society? The answer is probably negative in both cases.

A neoreactionary is aware how far outside the mainstream he stands. He has ceased to participate in politics the way the average man does. You won't persuade him by calling him a racist, a sexist, unenlightened, or uneducated. In fact, were you to do so, the neoreactionary will point out that this behavior is exactly a case in point; it never has the effect of persuading the accused, but serves to consolidate the opinion of the audience. The hit piece is an ancestor of tribal ostracism. And the neoreactionary probably wears the accusation as a badge of honor, besides.

The point of elucidating where you stand is that "getting" neoreaction is a process which begins but is never finished. To get it is to believe it, but only because actually getting it is taboo. Acknowledging realities, which is the foundational conceit of the neoreactionary understanding, by itself makes one appear much more reactionary than modernist, implying a high standard of devotion required of the true believer. Neoreaction admits that people are different, and that as such it doesn't make sense to afford everyone the same, whether that be income, opportunity, or even mere social approval. These differences are multidimensional, and include sexual, racial, and class categories. In contrast to the modernist, egalitarian paradigm which insists on treating everyone the same regardless of actual or probable ability, the neoreactionary insists that sound policy ought to treat differently as accords their real differences. This will improve human flourishing overall; a genius deprived of a more intensive education has undeveloped potential, while an idiot given a more intensive education is only having his time wasted.

These differences, understood by society and acted upon, lead to inequalities which make even the libertarian squirm. But they are only unequal as accords their actual inequality.

The threat of justice in this case depends on a fundamental inversion which the modernist fails to appreciate. Plato and Aristotle tell us that justice is equality, and we are not disagreed on this point. However, we believe ourselves more consistent in pursuing justice, for we do not attempt to treat people the same. Equality is treating like things as like, and unlike things as unlike. From this it follows necessarily that different things shouldn't be treated the same; it does an injustice to all who are different than the presumed "likeness" we all supposedly share.

This is as short an explanation as can be given for the views neoreactionaries hold on race, sex, intelligence, and so on. The return to treating things as though they are different, because they are different, is the essence of reaction. The "neo" is that this is all given a thorough defending via abstractive

philosophical, economic, and scientific reasoning.

There is certainly more that can be said, but the purpose of this post is less explanation and more to provoke the doubt of modernity. If you believe neoreaction is wrong, and you think you believe in equality, how do you justify it? Why is that metric best? What considerations are you leaving out? If your vision is radically different than has ever existed in human history before, what makes you so confident in it despite the lack of evidence in its favor? Why do you trust your education? What would you have to see in order to change your mind?

Continued in [Part 2](#).

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Original Article: <http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/11/25/how-to-neoreaction/>

## Part 2

November 26, 2013

### [Part 1.](#)

Neoreaction is not a political philosophy. Rather, it is more like a philosophy of political philosophy. How we can check the course of our ideas remains a habit of neoreactionary dialectic, for we are, or at least I am, intensely concerned with a worldview that is basically persuasive. The process of changing out of your modernist paradigm to try on another must be thought of as bootstrapping for it proceeds by an almost inevitable process of perpetual motion.

A snarky opponent will jump on my claim that I want to put together a system that is “basically persuasive,” pointing out how thoroughly unconvinced he is, as though 1) I haven’t thought of this already and 2) it were relevant. The better question is, what do I mean by “basically persuasive?”

We are on a journey, an adventure as it were, and I regret to inform you that while at the end of our journey lies a lot of excitement, sometimes you must make your way through a bog. This is one of those bogs, but I promise to make it as painless as possible.

I am an essentially disagreeable person. On the Big 5 personality test, I score in the 1st percentile in Agreeableness, which is another way of saying that I am less agreeable than 99% of people. Why does this matter? Because it leads to the perpetuation of mental models of how one might disagree with my position, the pruning of those theoretical counter-responses counting as my development of the concept. In other words, I think through things by arguing out both sides using all background philosophy as a resource for ways of rounding up arguments. I’ve also noticed a pattern, a philosophy of analysis as it were, in the way I argue out a position to myself. The first and most critical factor is identifying the hypothesis and determining the conditions which serve to confirm, disconfirm, and corroborate a hypothesis. That is to say, describing a position through the principles by which it ought to prove persuasive.

My defense and explanation of a corpus of thought such as neoreaction then proceeds less as a straightforward defense of certain theses, but the construction of “reason generators.” This has to do with my theory of conversion. As I am, in a potentially oblique fashion attempting the conversion of souls who appreciate a good argument, and neoreaction is intrinsically self-referential, it is only fitting that my explanation of the neoreactionary worldview would provide a philosophy for how and why an individual would/should be lead to adopt it as an interpretation of the world. This is the bootstrapping element in play, for I am trying to throw a ladder down the pit of modernism which has so far throughout your life convinced you to disregard certain essential biases that evolved for a reason.

An argument cannot of itself persuade an individual, save for the area of pure logic or metaphysics,

which is by nature detached from experience. Where claims relevant to interpreting the phenomena of civilization come into play, however, we can put them through a proto-scientific schema of testing. Modernism is predicated on a number of fundamental claims concerning human nature and the potential ways in which society may work. These claims are essentially egalitarian, and, from the neoreactionary perspective, the denial of HBD science that demonstrates the reality of race-like populations of humans can only be interpreted as the Leftist version of Creationism. Where there is a conflict with the empirical claims of a religion and what science indicates, the science must be thrown out, only naturally. The inability to separate disinterested and genuine scientific analysis of a significantly arguable reality does not seem to indicate a consensus of scientific evidence.

If an argument will not persuade, what will? Reference to experience. My purpose is not to persuade here and now, but to budge you on the way you would tend to interpret the world around you; to demonstrate that the kinds of theses and explanations that are generated from this corpus of thought also tend to be corroborated. The predictions it generates gives it the ability to explain ongoing history in a way unavailable to the modernist paradigm.

You can see the kind of irony in the argument I'm developing. Supposedly you are here in the first place because you're willing to be persuaded in theory, even if you are generally hostile to my overall worldview. You want to be able to give a reason why you reject me other than that fitting in as polite society might require. I'm backing this up in order to ask how someone could ever be persuaded. I want to leave my reader with the impression that certain questions remain live. Modernism never killed off its philosophical rivals, it just convinced everyone that it had. If you can't be persuaded, this is a waste of both our times. Only if, in theory, you could be persuaded, could a counter-argument count as something more than a post hoc rationalization. After all, if you can't be persuaded just in principle, then you would use any reasonable enough sounding argument. We don't want that.

Generally, "persuasiveness" is taken as an unalloyed good in an argument. This is because it is assumed that the more logically excellent an argument is, the logic should be perceived as its own superiority. However, if I may propose another interpretation of argument, one which is more realistic given our nature as animals evolved to do more things than develop and be persuaded by logically excellent arguments. Persuasiveness may be a defect in that it covers up its assumptions better than less persuasive but subtler and more accurate accounts of a phenomena. The mind is attracted to easy and definite choices; it lightens the load of existential anxiety concerning whether or not your beliefs are correct or even sane. Why do you think fallacies are so common? Furthermore, why have we been led to believe fallacies are intrinsically wrong?

Logical fallacies are not, contrary to popular wisdom, intrinsically incorrect, nor are they even markers of stupidity and ignorance. As it is said, a little education may handicap the mind by allowing the pretense of access to information adequate to make a judgment. This correlates to the insight among a number of us that human prejudices are not intrinsically flawed so much as they may tend to be expressed in

incomplete or less than optimal ways. Being opposed to racial stereotyping is a trend of midwits, and is a brilliant example of how a little knowledge can handicap.

Racial stereotyping may be considered in two ways. The first is that of psychological bias. It seems to be more or less proven that we evolved to have implicit racially based biases and prejudices which disposes us to differences in the tendency of in-group/out-group evaluation. Why would these evolve at all? This shouldn't be difficult to understand. In the more ancestral environment in which humanity evolved for over 100,000 years, the survival of the individual depended essentially on his integration with a tribe. The tribe's survival in turn depended on the individuals within having a tendency to like each other and to prefer the company of each other rather than those of other tribes. Were a tribe to have overwhelmingly out-group focused breeding tendencies, such a tribe would quickly breed itself out of existence. As such, it is inevitable that the tribes which do survive, through a process of evolutionary selection if we think of tribes as organisms, shall have members which have distinct in-group/out-group prejudices (of varying kinds and expressions) that reflects a tribal equilibrium with the environment.

Those who are too stupid to appreciate that their biases have shortcomings remain in the thrall of those biases. As such, it is worth pointing out, by the neoreactionary and likely supposed "racist," that racism being stereotyped as an indicator of stupid is highly accurate. This is, however, not because racism is intrinsically stupid, so much as what we tend to identify as racism is the less-than-optimal expression of these innate in-group/out-group biases. The midwit, who appreciates that our innate biases have shortcomings, comes to distrust his own biases, and comes to believe that the rejection of the utility of these biases is itself a mark of intelligence.

This response to learning that our biases are incomplete, i.e. the absolute rejection of their utility in all potential circumstances, is itself an immature response. Those biases developed in us for a very good reason. The reason should be obvious; were they disadvantageous in terms of increasing the likelihood of reproduction, they would have been selected out. But these biases did evolve in us, implying that they serve adaptive, i.e. reproductive, value.

To put it rather tongue in cheek, semi-seriously, to be a little bit racist is to be closer to nature.

Not that I'm advocating racism per se. Racism is, I think, best understood as the sub-optimal expression of racial biases. This definition, however, also implies that there is such a thing as the optimal expression of racial biases. This is why, as it were, anti-racism is the prejudice of the midwitted, while racism is the prejudice of those outside the IQ range of 100-125. This may sound like a concession to the modernist, to point out that racial discrimination is difficult to defend. This not because it is wrong, but that because what one wants to defend is practices which lead to optimal solutions, and understanding how to exercise racial discrimination in an optimal fashion is the difficult part.

This is the second way in which racism may be considered. It is expressed through a specific form of behavior. What sort of behavior? Ideally, it appears that the problem with any "-ism" vice is that it does

not give a person his due. What is a person's due? What right does a person have to an optimal evaluation?

We want to say that a person should always and everywhere exercise as thorough and complete an evaluation of the character of another as possible. That is all well and good, but the reality of the world is that such an optimal evaluation is not always afforded by the world. An optimal evaluation may prove either impossible or too costly to justify other things which must be given up in order to perform such an evaluation. Our judgment is required in situations where the evaluation we'd like to make is precluded. It is useless to insist that "a person should, always and everywhere, perform an optimal evaluation." That doesn't answer what an individual is to do in those cases where he has less than perfect information and obtaining it proves far more costly than any expected benefit.

The mandate to perform an optimal evaluation of another person's character cannot require an individual putting himself at grave risk. Yes, the guy with tattoos on his face bragging about his recent stint in the slammer could be a really interesting, complex individual who has a lot of good in him. But getting to know such an individual could prove very costly, in the form of harm suffered by oneself for failing to exercise due prudence in one's association with the criminal elements.

Racial discrimination is not an end-all be-all of an individual. Like I've mentioned, I'm not interested in a defense of racial discrimination, full stop (and in fact, I'm not even interested in here defending racial discrimination, so much as I'm interested in providing an example of how the neoreactionary proceeds in his examination). I'm interested in a defense of due racial discrimination. Racial discrimination is justified in particular instances and not in others. The optimal exercise of discrimination is difficult, and must be guided by a philosophy of discrimination.

This is all to show that a ground level difference between the neoreactionary and the modernist is this. The modernist rails against all bias, insisting that it never has a place in our reasoning. The neoreactionary suggests that we have bias for a reason, and we should seek to improve upon the function it evolved to provide. Where the modernist asks us to root out all our tendencies in thought, to constantly undermine the way we tend to reason, the neoreactionary seeks to examine and refine it. Iron ore may have little use of itself, but in the hands of one with the right tools, much may be wrought.

What all does this have to do with persuasiveness? This asks a question. Do you really want to be able to persuade the most? Psychologically, we are jerry-rigged with a number of biases which predispose us to fallacious and sub-optimal expressions of prejudice. But we cannot eliminate prejudice; anti-prejudice is just a prejudice against prejudicial reasoning, and prejudicial reasoning is optimal in the case that judicial reasoning is precluded, i.e. when access to adequate information for optimal evaluation is more costly than expected benefits. This is the real world, and in the real world you aren't always allowed to dissociate yourself by behavior from what a racist would do, because sometimes what the racist would do is the safest and best thing to do.

The biases are good enough to allow stupid racists to spread their genes; in fact, in a population where everyone is stupid, racism would be better than a stupid refusal to not utilize prejudice when it is called for. To act with prejudice is to admit one is ignorant, which is not always a bad thing. The refusal to admit one's ignorance is a vice in the case when the presumption of knowledge proves a more dangerous habit. Admitting and acting by one's ignorance, i.e. to reserve oneself to methods and practices which are known to work rather than the definitely unknown, is wiser than to refuse to act with respect to knowledge that one knows one does not possess. To be ignorant is only to not know, and we know that we do not always know, which is just to say that we know that sometimes we are ignorant. This cannot be overcome by "Don't be ignorant." It cannot be overcome by good thoughts or the insistence that "One should try to get access to the best information possible." That is a matter of course and we are already agreed, but we aren't talking about how one should act in the case one has perfect information.

Neoreaction is how to act when you know you don't have perfect information. It is a call to humility. If your vision is fundamentally utopian and forms a perfect contrast to the vagaries of human history, and can only be accomplished through a fundamental change in the way people tend to act, it is incomplete. You can do better, and you can do better by being harder to persuade.

Don't wonder how you would persuade me to modernism. It is better first to know, how do you persuade yourself? I don't pose a threat to your well-being as much as you do. I likely couldn't persuade you with a silver tongue, but we know individuals can persuade themselves with the thinnest of feel good lies. Isn't that what we think of religion, after all?

Continued in [Part 3](#).

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## Part 3

November 26, 2013

### [Part 2.](#)

In the last part we walked through an outline of how the neoreactionary approaches the issue of racial discrimination. The purpose, I hope as was obvious, was less to be a defense of racial discrimination, but to illustrate the methodology, which questions were being asked. A text such as this should be treated as a way of practicing reasoning. I'm not trying to acquaint you with a set of doctrines, but a set of maxims. One should approach a school of thought as one does a school of martial arts. Throw out your assumptions. The modernist habit in approaching neoreaction will insistently come back to a revulsion. "They advocate what?! Don't they know what that implies? They must not, which makes them stupid." As though that were it.

I will give you some training wheels to get through this next section. If you can't understand what a neoreactionary is meaning unless you interpret him as either stupid or evil, choose evil. He likely isn't stupid. But remember these are training wheels; do not treat an experience assisted by an incomplete but helpful heuristic the same as biking with the training wheels off. Or, to put it another way, a baby might start learning to walk with motherly assistance, but walking with motherly assistance cannot and should not be mistaken for the real thing.

"But I just want it straight! Why can't you just provide a straightforward argument defending your views? This is so roundabout." Well, yes. Isn't the concept of Progress rather roundabout? Why not go straight to utopia? Why must we proceed by way of protracted social struggles? Why didn't MLK advocate for gay marriage, free birth control, and mandatory public education? "You can't expect people to understand immediately, we are handicapped by our socialization." I wouldn't tend to call it a handicap per se, though at least sub-optimal. Anyway, you see my point. From my perspective, you're in a hole and you need help getting out. I'm trying to throw you a ladder.

"But you're the one who needs help!" Probably. But consider: I had more or less the same kind of socialization as you. Public school, friends, TV, internet, college. I have a pretty good idea of what you would tend to think about me because I'm acquainted with all the same memes. I watch the same movies and eat the same food. If we met at a party and you didn't know my sociopolitical sentiments, you would think I'm a pretty cool guy.

So how can I be so different? Shouldn't the good of Progressive values be obvious enough? If the explanation for why I hold different views isn't that we were socialized into different values, it must be something else. Either we're just incapable of seeing the light, or we refuse to see the light. Put another way, either we're stupid or we're evil. And I should think it clear we're not stupid.

So we're evil, in other words. We aren't ignorant of Progressivism. We're unpersuaded. Unconvinced. Tried and found wanting. I won't protest. What would be the point? Practically no one believes himself to be evil. I don't actually think I'm evil (though I do take pleasure in thinking how uncomprehending progs think I'm evil). You don't think you're evil. I bet Hitler didn't think he was evil. Anyone could, and would, claim they're good overall.

Here's something you need to explain. How can evil people like us exist? If Progressivism is really so obvious (hell, even *you* can understand it!) and good, and shaming us doesn't suffice to bring us back to the fold, i.e. we are unrepentant heretics, then there must be something just psychologically *off* about us. We have to be different in a deep, disturbed, innate way. If all those years of education couldn't beat sense into us, we're simply not able to be saved. We're a part of the damned. It's really quite that simple. If we were being merciful, we would let people like us be put out of our misery. We simply don't have the right psychology to appreciate the marvels and wonders of modern living. Maybe Darwin should be allowed to work his magic, and people like us should be selected out of the gene pool. So what if it flirts with eugenics.

It's a mercenary kind of logic, but ultimately, for the good of civilization, it may be required. If the only reason Progress doesn't happen is because there are always some in society who hold Progress back, because they're stupid or evil, then certainly one can justify a little systematic murder. It's utilitarian, but if it would mean the end of homophobia, rape culture, patriarchy, pro-life, racism, sexism, and all those other classic pastimes of white male culture, the benefits outweigh the costs. If you won't do that, you're depriving the marginalized the justice of being restored to full integration with society sooner rather than later, when it's too late to save those suffering now. Do you have sympathy for the oppressors? Do you want to let the micro-aggressor get away with it? Progress demands more Progress now.

"Now, hold on," you'll insist. "That's a straw man. I would never advocate the wholesale slaughter of my opponents. That is not only misrepresentative of Progressivism, it is completely contrary to the spirit." Is it? Then you are suggesting it is okay to allow people like us to take our rightful place in society? I mean, if you're not working to stop us, then capitalism wins, right? Doesn't evil win when good people, such as yourself, stand by and do nothing?

"If there is anything that needs to be done about people like you, it wouldn't be that drastic." Like losing our jobs? Being barred from employment? Facing penalties, fines, persecution? Being generally disenfranchised from wider society, being rounded up into the ghettos, before we board the trains for... re-education camps?

"This is insane! I just said I wouldn't advocate that!" I'm not saying you did. It's a question of faith. If you really believe in Progress, how far are you willing to go to see it happen? Whenever Progress doesn't happen like it's supposed to, why is that? Is it because reality is an impediment, or is it due to sinister plots?

By the neoreactionary's lights, if we didn't exist, you'd have to invent us. We are your Emmanuel Goldstein, and yes, we would actually write a book with the title of *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*. And yes, it would be about your team, the Cathedral.

The purpose of neoreaction is not merely to stand athwart history, telling it to stop. We want to hijack history. We really are the enemy of Progressivism. Progress and our existence is not compatible. If you will not kill us, you will at least have to wait for us to die off, delaying Progress and ensuring the suffering of all who presently suffer due to injustice. If you won't, it is only because you are a coward. You do not really believe in Progress. You only like to associate yourself with it, taking glory in the work of another party like one does when rooting for their favorite baseball team. You root for the Progressivists in the way you root for the Red Sox. You don't actually play for the team, and couldn't if you tried. You are as essential to Progress as a man to a woman. You are only riding the coattails of history and claiming all the credit. You bask in the privilege of being on the right side of history and exploit it against all those who are wrong.

You don't believe in Progress, in other words, you believe in belief. If you did actually believe, you would be willing to do almost anything to see it done. As much as Progressivism is important, it is more important than anything else; that including the existence of its enemies or the moral scruples its advocates imagine themselves able to afford.

The Progressivists shall have to make a choice. In fact, they have been making this choice. When faced with the fact that Progress cannot occur without further change, it seems apparent that further change is called for. But, if the neoreactionary is right, then the vision of Progress will always be hampered, requiring further change. How much should society expend trying to equalize the gender wage gap? This is a serious question. If the gender wage gap is due to the institutionalization of sexism, then it will cost the expenditure of a certain amount of resources to root it out. How much should society be willing to give up to solve this problem? Surely more than a million, right? But precisely how much? A billion? A trillion? Several decades of lost GDP growth? The political cohesion of the Union?

"Equalizing the gender wage gap wouldn't cost that much." Maybe, maybe not. But you shouldn't pretend that Progress is costless. Pretending that your goal can be achieved without giving up something else is stupid. Utopia at no cost, just add water?

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Just vote for Obama, that will save America. Okay, vote for him again, America needs more saving. Alright, we're going to need a new version of Obama, because this is taking a little longer than we thought...

My suggestion here is that Progress will prove more expensive than it was originally sold as. It suffers from that most ancient problem of infrastructure and construction projects, cost overrun. It will cost something, at least. That money we spend on welfare so that people with insufficient means can feed themselves could be spent on other things. That's a cost. "It's a worthwhile cost!" That may be, but you

must admit it is a cost. You cannot neglect the cost side of the cost-benefit analysis of undertaking certain social changes. It would not only be imprudent, it would be dishonest. After all, if you're so right, you should have nothing to fear in admitting to the costs Progressivism incurs. The benefits will always be greater, right? You should have nothing to fear from an accurate and extensive summarization of the costs of Progress. Progress is for you like L'Oréal, *because you're worth it*.

Come back to my question of equalizing the gender wage gap. Simple biology also plays a role in explaining the wage gap. The above cost analysis assumed that eliminating institutionalized sexism is a one time cost that, once it was eliminated, egalitarian views would perpetuate themselves. However, if biology is different between men and women, then biology poses the potential to disadvantage one sex in the market. And wouldn't you know it, there is a very obvious disadvantage that women face when competing with men in the marketplace. Women are more likely than men to become pregnant. Actually, women are the only sex to become pregnant. Insofar as there is a cost to being pregnant, all this cost is borne by women, in the form of advances and raises given up due to lost time. Equalizing the playing field requires not only a one time cost to eliminate the ongoing effects of patriarchy, it requires ongoing costs to provide women the opportunity to enter the market without facing any disadvantages particular to being a woman.

I won't go into particular schemes of how such equalizing will be done, I only care to point out that this cost will be borne by men. It has to be, otherwise it would remain a cost borne uniquely by women, which is antithetical to equality. It is a necessity that men be forced, whether explicitly or implicitly, to subsidize the work of their female co-workers. It is the duty of men to work in order that women may be afforded the opportunity to work.

However it is done, you will see a value transfer payment somehow, even if it can't be explicitly examined in terms of monetary cost. Since men are seeing less reward for their work, this disinclines them from working so much or so hard. The response of the Progressivist is to moralize, to chastise men who would work less because their pay is being implicitly cut in order to subsidize women's wages. But this presupposes a rather interesting view of the dynamic of the sexes. If men must be forced to sacrifice for the sake of women because it is their duty to subsidize the existence of women, there is a certain inequality in play. Women do not appear to have a duty to subsidize the existence of men; it is only right and natural that men have a subordinate position to women in society. A man's place is as the slave so that women may finally be afforded their independence. Insofar as men are disinclined from doing this in order to give women their independence, that is just because they are evil, and inasmuch as they are evil, they deserve to be unequal to women.

Maybe you don't like this cost so much. Maybe you would like to replace this cost with something else. Maybe some other sort of tax that doesn't tax men for being sinfully better at work. It will have to be something, at least. If Progress is so great, if it has so many benefits, how much would you be willing to pay for it? If you won't pay anything for it, or imagine that you won't have to pay for it, I don't believe

you're a proponent of Progress. You don't actually disagree with neoreaction. You just want to signal that you are holier than thou and that you should receive praise for your "enlightened opinion," when you're really nothing but a Puritan pretender. You pray in public and have your reward in full.

What does it ultimately mean to be "for Progress?" We need to determine this before we can even approach the question of what it means to be neoreactionary. Until the biases and prejudices of the modern age are outed, it would be pointless to try going forward with this discussion. Consider the plank in your own eye before pointing to the mote in another's.

Continued in [Part 4](#).

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Original Article: <http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/11/26/how-to-look-at-the-world-like-a-neoreactionary-part-3/>

## Part 4

November 28, 2013

### [Part 3.](#)

There is no demographic trend more evocative and damning of modernism than precipitously declining birth rates. It seems as though every modern trend which has an effect on birth rate depresses it ever further. This will be an exercise in how the neoreactionary approaches the world, with an eye to the unrecognized costs of benefits which are virtually always taken for granted in society. These costs are almost always of an invisible sort; the cost is the opportunity of something else that fails to take place. In this way, modernism is marked by an increasing absence, an atomization of the individuals in society amidst a receding community. The symbol of modernism is the childless home.

The modern man is an irony. As developed before, he works in order that women may work, negating the value of his work to himself and his society. If he should like to pass over the allure of a narcissistic lifestyle wherein he treats the accumulation of material possessions as an end of living and concern himself instead with the work of civilization, i.e. starting a family and raising children ready to take their own place in society, he has everything in the world working against him. Though I intend no romanticism, a man who should like to be a provider to a loving wife and family has virtually every force conspiring against him. At the age which he should like to begin being a man, all other women his age who he should like to woo are distracted and occupied by education, Facebook, a career, and predatory socio-sexual aristocrats who have no qualms with using women for sex and nothing more. One might try and enjoin this man to partake of the pleasures of his age, and maybe he shall give in, since otherwise the rewards of his labor shall be a lonely 20's where he feels crushed by his inability to attract a wife interested in the vision of a family. And when attention is finally given to him, his wife might concede to having a second child if she doesn't divorce him or somehow ruin the marriage.

Such a situation is almost a perfect contradiction to the plight of the man growing up earlier than 50 years ago. Where our hypothetical modern young man is probably chastised for wanting to marry young, he would've been chastised for not trying to marry young. This would've been the life experience for most men growing up down through history. It is hard to even see at first that our society is so very, very different from all other societies before it. We would have to appear as a thoroughly foreign culture to anyone born before 1850, and that doesn't have anything to do with our level of technology. The declining of birth rates, the fracturing of families, the delaying of adulthood, these would be the background of a dystopian novel were it written in 1890.

Yet, and this would be surprising to a reader from 1890, virtually none of us suspect that anything has gone wrong. It would appear virtually certain that Apocalypse came and went, yet none of us seem capable of remarking on the fact. When did it happen? It might be like marking the end of the Roman

empire. It really depends on the metric you're going with.

So even if we are not presently living in a dystopia, it is arguable that we are transitioning into one. And why is that? It may have something to do with how civilization isn't getting made anymore. Our hypothetical young man was not merely partaking of biological function in reproducing, but a societal good as well. The perpetuation of society does not occur unless people actually form families and raise children. Apart from this, civilization literally does not go on; an empty home does not become occupied when the childless couple die, it remains a tomb of forfeited genetic legacy. The breakdown of civilization is marked by increasing absence, like a complex machine in which small yet significant parts are going missing, only disturbing its operation in a way not observable to those standing outside it. But, as the machine continues operating, the absences accumulate and exacerbate the machine's decay, until eventually something essential in the short term becomes noticeable. Such is how civilization darkens, without anyone realizing the lights are going off until all the rest of them go off at once. But the event of chaos is only epiphenomenal and cannot be stopped; it was guaranteed to occur a long time before anyone even realized something was amiss.

It isn't normal for children to be worse off than their parents. While there will always be calamitous events which have an influence outside the control of society, in a society such as ours we have the technology and capital available to protect against all but the most catastrophic of natural events. In order to explain why the children of a society such as ours face a future worse than that of their own parents or grandparents, the explanation must be social. It wasn't an asteroid or plague which has left us worse off; it is the burning up of social capital without replacing that so the future generations have the benefit of these institutions. We weren't made worse off so much as our own parents, and the parents before them, did nothing to make our situation better off. They did not do what they could to strengthen their own marriages and families, instead they clamored to divert to themselves all possible resources at any expense to the future. They never sought to make sure their children would be well off, but were focused on promoting egalitarianism. They tried to rescue everyone from poverty and just assumed that everything they were afforded while growing up would be around even if they did nothing to actually make it be around.

Why do we tax cigarettes? Besides that it is a way for the government to give itself your money, the purpose is to be punitive. A higher price induces lower quantity demanded. This is very simple economics. The more something costs, the less people want of something.

And it works, to a point. There is a limit, however, to the amount of cigarette smoking that can be effectively prevented through high punitive taxes. At a sufficiently high level of taxation, it becomes feasible for those more criminally inclined to smuggle in cigarettes from regions where the tax is not so high. In some places, the punitive tax has the effect of driving most cigarette sales underground. Cigarettes are not banned or prohibited, but they practically are, with the price pushed outside of tolerability for most who would choose to smoke cigarettes in the first place.

Agree or disagree with whether cigarette smoking ought to be stigmatized, the effect must be kept in mind. The disincentivizing of a behavior through increasing the cost of it is one of the most basic principles of social organization. Whatever you increase the cost of, you get less of.

It should be apparent that the change in equilibrium rates of marriage and family formation is due to some changes in society. It is not an effect without cause. The suggestion of the neoreactionary is that the cost of marriage and family formation has been increased. It is more costly to make happen, it is more costly to undertake, and it is more costly to sustain. This explains very easily and simply why the rates of marriage and birth have declined so precipitously. It is not so much that society re-evaluated its desire for marriage so much as marriage itself was changed. It isn't technically prohibited, but its costs have been raised substantially over the last 100 years in ways explicit and implicit. The family is essential, as it is literally the institution which perpetuates society. To make the family more costly is to make the perpetuation of society more costly.

That is, in sum, your problem right there. Entropy is always working on society, but it never succeeded at total ruin because what was taken from society by nature was replaced more than sufficiently by society. Except that now the mechanism to replace the failing parts of society is less reliable, less useful, less effective. The death of the family is the death of society.

Where did it go wrong? What was the first domino that saw the family become more difficult to develop in a society with literally no excuse? At least back then people were poor, so you can understand the "literally too poor to take care of a family" problem many people likely faced. In fact, the problem was so bad at times that children would die for want of basic necessities that their parents couldn't provide. Even the likelihood of miserable failure and suffering didn't decrease the equilibrium rate of marriage substantially.

No, the first domino was not birth control. That might seem an obvious answer, but the widespread acceptance and adoption of the Pill is part of a trend that began in the 19th century. That trend is the cult of childhood.

Childhood? What could possibly be wrong with childhood? Childhood is a happy, innocent age. The cult of childhood seems like it should increase the rates of marriage and birth, not decrease them. If the cult of childhood is an unequivocally modern norm, then clearly whatever would have to critique childhood is an inherently medieval worldview.

That might not be the worst. Let us examine the cult of childhood, to see why it is so abnormal and prohibitively costly.

The cult of childhood may be summarized as the view that children have an inalienable right to a period of development up to the age of 18 and sometimes even beyond which is free of significant life responsibilities or decisions. It is the responsibility of parents to provide their children with a high ease

of living and many opportunities to indulge in carefree pursuits without a care in the world. Such a view seems only right given the prosperity of a society such as ours. To deprive a child of his childhood is to deprive someone of an essential life experience without which a person is incomplete. Life without a childhood is like a life without friends. Doable by all technical means, but probably worse than death.

Furthermore, even after childhood is technically finished, it is also the norm to spend several years at a postsecondary institution accumulating debt and foregoing all opportunities to work and start a family. Indeed, as has been covered extensively elsewhere in many ways, such a cultural norm of itself decreases the rates of family formation.

Providing a child with such a developmental experience is extremely costly when you consider that until the 19th century it was the norm for children to begin working with or for their family about the age of 14. When you consider that this could practically eliminate the financial cost of raising a child, you can see how this increases the cost of family formation radically. Although presently youth can begin work at the age of 16, sometimes 15 or 14 given certain legal exceptions, the expectation of every youth to finish high school before he is allowed to actually begin the work of life increases the difficulty of someone trying to go to work when they can. Extended adolescence and delayed adulthood are the norms; it should not surprise us when trends indicate that the phenomenal norms of adolescence pervade a person's life through their 20's, with very little effort put into family formation and much more expended building a substantially delayed career.

A one size fits all approach to the maturation of children simply doesn't make sense. It should be taken as a practical reality that not all children are equally benefited by being afforded (or trying to afford, cf. inner-city schools) the same opportunities. Resources expended trying to raise an idiot to the educational attainment of a genius is obviously futile, but this is only an extreme instance of the same principle. It doesn't make sense for society to afford the same developmental experience to all individuals. College isn't for everyone. Nor is high school. Many would be better off if they were taught a trade beginning at the age of 14; you don't need to know how to read Hemingway or how to calculate the area under a curve to do plumbing or construction, and all those hours spent in school learning such useless information are a disadvantage to the young man who would be better off if we instead afforded him the opportunity to begin building up work experience in a socially beneficial trade.

Note, of course, that I am not saying an extensive education should never be afforded to children. Many (I won't say most, but it could be) are better off for it. However, that there are some who are better off for it does not entail all are better off for it. A diversity of realistic approaches to preparing children for the stresses of society was the historical norm, and it seems a return to this norm would help in restoring cultural norms to sustainable levels of family formation.

The point here is not only that a modern childhood is expensive, but our assumption that it is normal and of perfect benefit to everyone in every situation is problematic. At its logical extremes, it leads to first

world Western nations trying to ban child labor in third world countries where child labor is the norm because that is what must be done to get by. Banning child labor in poor countries will not have the benefit of putting children in schools; if anything, it will leave the families of these children even worse off, putting education even further out of reach. An imperialist cultural chauvinism makes us blind to the fact that our view of childhood is but a mere cultural norm which differs greatly in other cultures that face different social and economic problems.

It isn't sufficient to insist that "more should be done." Every intervention which contravenes the market to make a *society* better off has the unintended consequence of pushing people to less optimal means of solving the basic dilemmas of acquiring food and shelter. The effect of banning child labor decreases the birth rate. While this effect will not be so pronounced in first world nations which have a high median income, this effect must be substantially more pronounced in those societies where the prohibition of sending/allowing your children to work only makes it more difficult to feed your children at all.

A plummeting birth rate is simply not sustainable. If a society will not replace its aging and dying members, it will wither like a body denied food. The body may continue along for a while, cannibalizing the protein of its muscles and organs in order to go on, but unless it obtains for itself more nutrients, it will die due to catastrophic organ failure. We cannot assume that civilization takes care of itself, that others have it covered. Nor can we even hope of ourselves that we will do it without incentivizing ourselves to do it. This implies that what has occurred is not a mere change in expectations, but a change in the structure of incentives which face a person in how he decides to live his life. There are many more things to say about the structure of family formation as it currently exists in our society, but the cultural view of childhood seems the most overlooked despite the way it substantially informs the decision to be married.

The costs of the cult of childhood are substantial and cannot be passed over with little attention. The majority of these costs are invisible, and showcase themselves through curious absences; the empty womb, the empty house, the empty marriage. Nothing in the modern world is beyond critique, even its most sacred dogmas.

Continued in [Part 5](#).

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## Part 5

November 30, 2013

### [Part 4.](#)

If the lesson of the above extended examples of neoreactionary analysis may be expressed as principles, it is that apparent benefits often have unaccounted for costs, and that apparent costs often have unaccounted for benefits. Socialization, racism, and a dearth of childhood have their costs, but the fact of these costs should not make us blind to the benefits. Nor, I hope at this point, is the complicated reality of a protracted cost-benefit analysis of social norms going to leave anyone with the impression the optimal policies are universal. Admitting that a norm has benefits is not to say that it is good or even ever acceptable, while admitting that a norm has costs is not to say that it is bad or even never acceptable.

I am aware, on the one hand, that a simpler exposition could appeal to a wider population. Though, on the other hand which is always present, an oversimplification of any crucial point, the failure to note an essential distinction, even an accurate but poorly expressed idea will not only fail to convey the essence of neoreaction, it will obfuscate the core and put it beyond reach. The emphasis on costs that must be considered, the creation of winners and losers, is an integral concern.

*What is neoreaction*, ultimately? Though I have written a book with that title, no answer has yet been given. The previous parts have accomplished, I hope, not so much arguments which demonstrate the benefits and costs associated with certain present norms, but an introduction to the way in which the neoreactionary approaches the world. It is difficult to explain because unlike a political philosophy, it is not a set of doctrines which are individually examined and advocated, for it sees through a plurality of feasible doctrines which have the potential to serve some particular population well. Or, at least as well as any population could be served by that set of political doctrines.

To cop an illustration from the setup of many role playing games, the effectiveness of a character has at least two primary components; the ability of the character in question and the equipment he utilizes. When a character is first being created, there are a scarcity of skill points which must be administered, creating an opportunity cost. To make a character more skilled at magic, he will be less skilled in areas of strength, and vice versa. Likewise, the excellence of a weapon may yield a greater attack damage, but it may require a sufficiently high level to be utilized. It is not that the wooden sword is preferred overall, but it is preferable when the next best weapon, say an iron sword, is unable to be wielded by your character due to his low level.

Societies can be given the same treatment. There is the innate qualities inherent to a population, and then there is the form of governance it has. Though neoreaction frequently comes around to an anti-democratic perspective, this is no necessity and a democratic advocacy is compatible. However, this is only the case where a society is limited by some very strict conditions. One of these conditions is almost

certainly that the population is extremely small, no larger than 150 or so. This is due to the intrinsically equalizing nature of democracy when promoted at sizes larger than this, where it becomes the interest of groups to vote themselves benefits at the expense of other groups. When everyone in the tribe technically prefers each other and there is no out-group which might be extorted, that failure mode of democracy simply cannot occur. Granted, this democratic arrangement remains very unstable, as it may be very easily subverted by a conspiracy of only a few of the most powerful members of the tribe; however, more stable arrangements, such as monarchy, are a greater disadvantage.

The advantage-disadvantage paradigm applies to every potential form of governance. Each form has its advantages and disadvantages, even those which are at certain scales very sub-optimal. As an aspirational anarcho-capitalist (I believe anarcho-capitalism is most likely the optimal form of governance, provided the best kind of society), it is a paradox to admit that I find statist arrangements tolerable. This is simply due to the nature of a society such as ours, which is highly disadvantaged by democracy whereas it would be better advantaged by a more monarchical or even corporate model. As such, it is simplistic to say neoreaction is pro-monarchy, anti-democracy. While it is true that is the political philosophy many of us adapt, it is adapted contingent on the kind of society available to be structured by a set of political doctrines.

If this may be contrasted with modernism, modernism is over-universalistic. It is guided by a key conclusion: that every group should be practically the same in outcome. This conclusion is the result of two fundamental principles. The first is that justice is equality, and the second is the all are essentially the same. The biological differences between the sexes and the races have a negligible effect on how well people choose to do, and since everyone is practically equal, it follows that in an ideal world where no one has any accidental advantage over another, outcomes will be roughly equal. Any systematic inequalities, as they cannot be due to significant differences between groups, must be due to the injustice of people being treated differently, without respect to their essentially (same) dignity. Ergo it is assumed that systematic inequalities are due to insufficiently egalitarian social norms, the institutionalization of racism and sexism, and the accident of luck in the initial distribution of capital. You can see how this produces the thesis of Jared Diamond concerning Africa's failure to sustain civilization that it is due to disadvantageous agricultural features. The modernist perspective sees the problem with Africa is Africa. This is in contrast to the neoreactionary perspective, which sees the problem with Africa is Africans.

Getting to the end of equal outcome between groups tends to be the end of politics even between both socialists and libertarians. Both argue their society is preferable on the basis that it would lead to this preferable outcome; more wealth for more people. The differences between them are not moral in character, but only material. They are disagreed as to the material effects of policy more than any moral effects. They are strictly secular. This has its most concentrated articulation by modern economists, who make a simplistic equivalence between GDP and utility. It is no concern of theirs what that GDP is constituted by, be it entirely pizzas and beer or charity and religious iconography. Utility is money, money is utility. As all money is strictly fungible, so is utility. They may protest and say this is itself a

simplistic characterization, it yet captures the spirit. Inasmuch as the libertarian accepts systematic differences of outcome between groups, this is due to the problem of social knowledge.

The insight of neoreaction, contrasting this, is that the differences between groups *do* significantly determine the optimal form of governance. To different groups, different political doctrines. Insofar as different treatment of groups is institutionalized, it tends to be institutionalized in respect of the differences those groups. A different group of people calls for a difference in evaluation. This will not and in most cases should not be simplistic, but again, the most optimal forms of evaluation are not going to be able to be wielded by every society. It is easy for an individual who has received an extensive education and been afforded the opportunity to form associations with other races to imagine that different races can and should get along; but to a medieval peasant, these differences in races almost always are correlated to very uncomfortable and bothersome behaviors. Most nations first formed along racial lines, which entailed that all interstate violence was almost always a racial conflict in addition to a political conflict. The separating of race and politics may not ever be afforded to societies.

A pessimistic conclusion this must be considering the modernist definition of “optimism” which conflates with the dissolution of all in-group/out-group cultural properties. But then again, considering the penchant for progressivists to insist that institutions can be “invisibly racist” and individuals to be “subconsciously racist,” the principle of suggesting that the group of individuals who assent to and form an identity under Progress are invisibly and subconsciously tribalistic themselves. This should explain to progressive atheists why progressivism uniquely attracts those of New Age, neo-pagan, and animal rights persuasion. The willingness of progressivists to signal affiliation with progressive policies is just correlated in the first place to a willingness to signal through belief as attire. These are beliefs held not so much for their own sake, but because of the cost involved with maintaining them (e.g. due to what other understanding of the world it precludes), they form an effective of means to distinguish between who is a true believer of the given religion. The crazier someone is willing to believe, the crazier someone is willing to dress, the crazier someone is willing to act, this signals their affiliation to the group. After all, it is the tendency of liberals in general to signal tribal affiliation through what newspapers they read, what TV shows they watch, and what cars they drive. A person who reads the New York Times, watches The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, and drives a Toyota Prius probably didn’t vote for Romney in the last election. Is there a conservative equivalent? Certainly, but the stereotype is much less frequently occurring. And yes, in case the liberal feels like I’m picking on him too much (never enough, in my opinion), conservatives have their ways of signaling tribal affiliation. NRA anyone? (Mind you, I’m generally opposed to firearms regulations. That doesn’t mean NRA isn’t a bit fanatical.)

The essential disagreement of neoreaction and modernism might not be any significant moral disagreement, only the deepest material disagreement. Both believe that justice is equality, but both disagree as to whether everyone is equal. If modernism is correct, then all people are equal, and justice requires equal treatment. If neoreaction is correct, then all people are not equal, and justice requires unequal treatment.

If I may ask the progressive for the first time to suspend his assumptions about how the world is, let us suppose that the people living in a very traditional, religious society are also the happiest they may be given any level of economic development. This is just a thought experiment; you don't need to believe this is actually, but work from that assumption for the sake of argument. It seems clear that creatures being happiest in a highly asymmetric society is not outside the realm of possibility. If people are happiest in such a society, on what grounds would you insist that it is the duty of people to suffer in the name of egalitarianism? Why is the end of society in something else other than human flourishing?

What justifies modernism, if not simply its promise of happiness?

Continued in [Part 6](#).

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## Part 6

December 2, 2013

### [Part 5.](#)

There is nothing that indicates failure of a belief about society than when its advocate must propose the given end be pursued “at all costs.” This point in the negotiation, where it is literally admitted that, must one choose between any other possible thing which might be had, all these would be expended in pursuit of the end.

A good thing pursued *at all costs* becomes evil. Consider an anti-racist. It is all well and good that they should like people to not exercise undue racial prejudices, and that if possible schemes of mutual understanding and interaction be formed. These are benign sentiments, and certainly no neoreactionary would object to some sense of this. However, such a good becomes evil when even greater goods are sacrificed for it. If we suppose we had to make a choice between a world that was more racist and a world that literally blew up (absurd it may seem), it seems better to tolerate a little more racism than to tolerate a lot of death. Go to your priest and have yourself absolved however you must for exercising a utilitarian method, but this seems at least common sense. No one is saying it would be fair for the negatively affected races, but as you must realize, life isn't fair. No, really. Good and evil might not roughly equal out. We can hope that there will be in sum more good, but we should plan as though there would be in sum more evil. It exposes us to fewer risks.

Fairness is only one good amongst others. It is a value worth upholding where possible and when just, but it is not always just to institute certain understandings of “fairness.” It seems permissible to give a higher income to someone who sacrifices more for society, which is an inequality. This can, and should, be done in the name of excellence.

The problem with modernism is its all-too-easy insistence on achieving its vision *at all costs*. If we suppose that the African-American population could've been brought to an economic parity with the majority white population with a one time public expense which would have no significant effect on government debt or taxes, it would be hard to argue against such a proposal except from concerns relating to problems particular to government, not the issue per se.

But what if we don't live in that world? It is tempting to think we live in such a world; just throw money at your problems, and they'll go away of their own accord! Suppose you knew, for ironclad economic reasons, that such a policy would make everyone significantly worse off. You wouldn't be a racist to oppose the policy, given your grounds.

It doesn't matter whether you believe such a scenario is practically impossible. Perhaps you happen to believe a well-executed public program could reverse institutional racism. The point of this is to diagnose

how your morals operate in systems that follow different material laws. The neoreactionary perspective is very nearby ultimately, it only requires the right focus. And to turn the lights on.

It is like having made your way to the light, only to find that the reason it is so difficult to persuade those still in the cave is that the world above you tell them about doesn't fit their preconceptions. What if, in a certain way, it was worse outside?

Humans naturally exercise prejudice. Every age thinks they do not, and particularly their own age. That they thought they weren't beholden to any unjust prejudice is evidence precisely of how in the thrall of prejudice all these people were.

Have we escaped the meaner depths of our nature? We believe ourselves to be free of prejudice, which is prime evidence that we are subject to massive prejudice. What are our prejudices in this day and age, save that of anti-racist and anti-sexist sympathies? We are, in other words, prejudiced against racists and misogynists. This may not seem to you the greatest evil, and perhaps it is not, but that makes it no less a prejudice. That we excuse our prejudice with an insistence on the prejudice is proof of its grip. "Well, they really are like that!" Prejudice is prejudice, whether rightly or wrongly exercised.

The point is not that this prejudice is somehow worse, only that we naturally exercise prejudices. The tendency of humans to stereotype is instinctual. We can help but think about the world through stereotypes. We can recognize the limitations of our stereotypes, but that does not mean we adopt a heuristic of stereotypes in our snap decisions. We must think our feelings and thoughts as being adaptive features in the same way our bodies are evolutionarily descended on the basis of its adaptiveness to its environment. We have a physiological frame as we do because it is adapted to our environment. What does not contribute to survival and sexual reproduction is wasted resources. Thoughts and feelings are the same; the reason we evolved an inner life is because it proved more adaptive given the environment compared to those with a dearth of inner life. In other words, you have the feelings you do about yourself and others, and these typical feelings tend to be felt by everyone, because they prove more adaptive overall to the perpetuation of those genes. If the emotions of happiness, sadness, boredom, and so on did not promote the survival and reproductive success of the individual, evolution would never have produced them.

The software of our inner life then must have proved adaptive value. This should make us stop and think. If the troglodyte survived because he exercised more prejudice, and we call people who more obviously exercise prejudice troglodytes, aren't we essentially saying they are exercising a proven strategy for survival and reproductive success? Exercising prejudice is as natural as smiling when we're happy. We don't think there is anything intrinsically wrong with smiling, yet smiling has noticeable failure modes, such as when it lets on to others that we're lying or they succeed in making us laugh when we stubbornly wished to refuse to do so. What is so different about prejudice? It would not have evolved in us unless it had provided some net benefit in terms of evolutionary success.

It doesn't tell us that we're fatalistically inclined towards perpetual violence and warfare. We are, but that has less to do with our natures than with the varying strategies available to groups who would both prefer their own existence over the others (and there isn't always the possibility of peaceable compromise that doesn't still leave one certainly worse off). When we are afforded the conditions that do not put distinct groups in competition with one another, we can form cooperative ventures with each other to beneficial ends. But sometimes, due to the accidents of history or geography, groups come into conflict.

The appropriate response to the knowledge that we are subject to these evolutionarily-descended psychological heuristics is not to give in to it in the most vulgar fashion, nor to ignore them, but to inquire as to information the possession of a prejudice-forming psychology indicates about the world we live in. If perfect cooperation had always proved most adaptive, we would have evolved to it. (Likewise, if perfect competition had proved most adaptive, we would have evolved to it.) Human evolution is pitted against itself. Those people who are able to fulfill some social role are able to survive individually, indicating the prevalence of a number of distinct personalities according to a roughly adaptive ratio (e.g. so many INTP's and so few ESFJ's). This indicates, furthermore, a spectrum of psychological types which have stronger and weaker correlations to political sympathies. Some people just are biologically liberal, some just are biologically conservative. This won't be an exploration of how political views are influenced by psychological type, but the fact that there is a specific variability should indicate there is a group benefit to the back-and-forth of conservative and liberal types in the social dynamics of the tribe. We might see how much is lost due to the competitive nature of man, but what would there be to see if man had no competitive nature at all?

Human nature is not only a brute fact we should design our systems around, it also provides valuable information. That a definite and specific behavior has psychologically innate qualities indicates it provides some level of adaptedness by being exercised. This is a fact that by necessity cannot be integrated into an ideology which essentially rejects the potential for prejudice to ever be compatible with optimal outcomes.

The God of Biomechanics is a stern taskmaster. His only goal is your survival and reproductive success, and he has designed your feelings to optimize your behavior to these ends. You feel happy or sad as accords whether feeling positively or negatively at certain times influences your behavior in certain ways. The God of Biomechanics is a moral idiot savant; he maximizes only for the maximal perpetuation of genes, and must be balanced among the other Nature's Gods as to our optimal end. But he never lies, and his dictates provide valuable information we cannot profitably discard.

Continued in [the final part](#).

## Part 7

December 3, 2013

### [Part 6.](#)

John Stuart Mill, that prototypical synthesis of English sensibility and Enlightenment philosophy, forwards a maxim to the effect that we should generally leave people alone to their own will save in the case their behavior has a negative effect on other people. Translated in the language of classical liberalism, this is the harm principle: people are free to do what they will so long as it does not bring harm to others. This means that, even if people are doing something harmful to themselves, they should be left to themselves, since it is a greater cost to violate this person's right to self-determination than for this person to suffer harm at their own poor judgment.

That is, at least, the intent of Mill's harm principle. It must be seen in a far more pervasive sense.

The harm principle trades on the intuition that another person's behavior is in some sense ours to decide so long as that person's behavior has a level of determination on our own outcomes. A person wielding a gun is obviously trying to effect a particularly brutal determination on another person, i.e. ending their life, and so it is clear that it is permissible to use force against this person. The cost, i.e. the violation of their right to autonomy, is overridden by the benefit, which is preserving an individual's right to life who has not threatened coercion.

There is a curious consequence which arises if we accept his harm principle. The very integration and dependence of individuals on the complexity of the society around them. All means available to us for getting along in the world depend upon someone else in the world working a steady job. There are all these levels of order which we depend upon that, though we don't tend to think about it, are actually done by someone at some point. Someone is standing at a factory making sure your food is getting processed properly, and someone is having all those children which we're putting through school. Society depends upon being being reliable and acting in a regulated manner.

It is generally impossible to act without this having some level of influence over another person's outcome. If I buy bananas, this has the theoretical effect of making the price of bananas be higher in the future than they would otherwise be, which has an effect on how many bananas you are actually able to consume in the future. Considering the numerous economic effects at play, and granted it is microscopic, the decision to buy bananas has an external effect.

Given Mill's harm principle, it follows that the decision of others to buy bananas, or not, falls under the set of behaviors which may be technically regulated.

But let us back off for a moment. It is too simplistic to think of "regulation" only in terms of state policy. The state is a part of society; it is not the entirety of it (at least not presently), nor is it even best to think

of it as “on top” of society. It is an integral part which cannot be left out, but it isn’t the only structure with causal influence over society. In the distribution and structure of power, it has its power via networks of dependency by others on it. But it is likewise dependent on networks of advocacy and capital which it does not produce only by its own effort. Policy, or legal regulation, is only one means of changing society. Regulations may be enforced only by increasing the cost of an associated behavior. Want to decrease racism? A level of stigmatization of racist behavior may help with that. State enforcement may be unnecessary.

So, if we’re thinking through the application of the harm principle outside of the paradigm that only new laws can achieve social change, then it becomes apparent we can perceive two different kinds of causality in play. There is the influence of policy by social norms, which is rather memetically direct. The ideas of society define the boundaries of how policy may be articulated. Policy, on the other hand, has a more indirect means of influence.

Policy, understood as laws and regulations which enforce certain limits of interaction between individuals (e.g. a minimum wage law which prohibits employers from offering or employees from accepting an hourly wage below a certain threshold), has systematic effects on the way social interactions are structured. Given a new structure, the means by which individuals may act in order to procure their desired ends are likewise shifted. Certain actions become more costly, certain actions become less costly. What is penalized becomes less frequent, what is subsidized becomes more frequent.

And this whether the consequences are political or legal in nature. The institutionalization of certain attitudes in the populace can achieve a more selective influence on populations which cannot be separated on the basis of income, race, or some other section which could exist on a government form. You need a microscopic enforcement of social norms. It isn’t perfect, but it nets more gain than policies acting on the macro scale could because it is less costly. Society is able to work because of the prevalence of de facto systematic treatment of particular qualities in society, in order that, to some extent, those traits which have negative externalities are mitigated, and those traits which have positive externalities are promoted. In other words, norms.

There are two kinds of norms, each facilitating, under normal conditions, an equilibrium effect on the stagnation and formation of newly adapted social institutions. The first is a norm which promotes openness to new social arrangements via an orthodoxy: more emphasis on right thought, less on right practice. The second is an antithetical norm, which promotes the maintenance of received traditions via an orthopraxy: more emphasis on right practice, less on right thought. These contrasting norms for approaching the fabric of power at the micro scale on the whole balance out, allowing an ideal mix of maintaining the generation of social capital while inculcating a fringe where experimentation in social norms occurs allowing for more dynamic social responses to environmental factors. This is, at least, highly adaptive if this process is highly demotic, i.e. influenced by the mass of the people, given a tribal environment. Otherwise, the demotic process becomes maladaptive, as it too generally favors particular

psychologies over others, which is correlated to an increasing openness, a hyper-orthodoxy that comes at the expense of any sensible orthopraxy.

An execution of power which allows for this orthodoxy-orthopraxy dialectic to go on, optimizing for experimentation and preservation of sustainable generation of social capital, goes on best in environments which allow the facilitation of tribe-like affiliations by the power wielders among themselves, so that on balance government does not systematically tend to the left ceaselessly (it is less difficult to tend to the right ceaselessly; the lack of orthodoxy enforcement which is the conservative norm entails that increasing rightness entails an increasing insistence on preserving institutions as they are according to a received image of right practice).

It might be pointed out that progressives advocate certain behaviors, while conservatives advocate certain arguments, which is certainly true. It is a matter of emphasis. Conservatives promote some particular vision, e.g. the family, while progressives promote some general vision, e.g. an openness to sexual practices outside the norm. Both visions come at the expense of the other. Less orthopraxy means a diffusion of social norms and the breakdown of vulnerable institutions. Less orthodoxy means less freedom to experiment with new arrangements.

Yes, science is a progressive phenomena, at least relative the conservative emphasis on previous ways of knowing. However, science remains a progressive phenomena only so long as it serves to displace and disrupt our means of justifying the received social order. Science ceases to be progressive as soon as conservatives come around to it and are able to provide the argument, here as elsewhere, that societies existed and developed as they did because they were highly adaptive to their environment. We are now founding out from a bevy of many forms of evidence, be that sociological and anthropological studies which document surprisingly narrow distributions of political sentiment within large populations to the utilization of economic and evolutionary theory to motivate a healthy respect for human nature and what forms of interaction it is optimized for.

There is latent in all this foregoing a justification of natural slavery. No, banish from your mind visions of antebellum South, this is not a notion of slavery that need involve actual ownership of the individual like property. Chattel slavery is a species of slavery, not the whole of it. Slavery as a kind of relationship involves a dependency, such that he on whom the one is dependent cannot structure his own access to resources except through this other person. Those who are more dependent, through having less immediate access to resources, i.e. a mediated and/or enabled access by some intermediary person or institution they rely on, are more slave-like. The master-slave is not a binary, but a continuum. Below some point of mastery, one is entirely dependent; this includes all those who would be unable to make a living of the kind they enjoy by their own means, such as children. Power structures enslave.

However, this means not that power structures are innately evil. Far left thinkers are right to diagnose the structures which hold over us as instances and kinds of slavery, but where they take this to mean

power structures must everywhere be destroyed, this is an inversion of their argument. Slavery is natural and innate to the human condition. One cannot eliminate one without eliminating the other. To eliminate the human condition, I think should be plain, would be to eliminate humans.

In reality, all instances of rights have been a modernist means of smuggling in natural slavery to society. The distributed set of mutual obligations between people is an appropriation of each other's resources which can only be justified in the case we are all, in some way, slaves of each other. Obviously, this entails that he who is beholden to no one is not a slave; this is either the complete social outcast, who makes his way without depending on anyone (this more frequently reduces an individual to a miserly, hermetic existence, since it involves completely dropping out of society), or the king, who has no essential social obligations to anyone (sometimes).

The institution of taxation is a prime example of how society makes us all kinds of slaves. It doesn't make much sense to think of taxation as merely theft, since taxation is but one of many other things government elects the power to do to/for us. The state has the just power not only to appropriate for itself the product of our labor, but also to regulate our lives and decide for us, to some extent, what we shall do and how we shall live. The master-slave relationship is the best model of that between state and citizen and, assuming the justice of slavery under certain conditions, gives a delightfully simple, yet anti-modern, justification for all that the state does in society.

The right to rule is the might to rule, and vice versa. Given agents who are under bounded rationality acting by their best knowledge to maximize the return on what they value, society as it actually is is society at its optimal equilibrium. This is the panglossian dilemma.

This is not to say the future could be made better than otherwise through the careful application of wisdom. But this is really only analytic. No one disagrees with this. However, it dissolves a fascination over reconciling rights to each other. If the whole edifice of social obligations and social roles can be justified through a master-slave paradigm, the social-metaphysical necessity of existential representation by the masses in the influence of the system becomes pointless. If democracy does not promote the flourishing of first world Western societies, then it should simply be abandoned. And how can it, articulated as it is through abstract "rights" without reference to actual abilities? It only appears a sensible interpretation that someone immature to the exercise of freedom will be made worse off by having freedom. A child is better off ruled by his parents, and we have no reason to suppose many people are much more than children with adult appetites. "Inferiors" are better off ruled, in other words; this is only what we mean when we understand that children need a parent and strong guidance by the community to be brought to maturity. Socialization has not the effect of diminishing our autonomy, but of cultivating our social senses and giving it a sophisticated expression through personality.

The problem of civilization is less equality and making sure that it will go on. The two virtues of continuity are stability and sustainability. When a society maintains priorities higher than these, those

societies are quickly reduced and overtaken by outsiders who practice a more stable and sustainable social order. At one time, Rome ruled without parallel, but it was eventually carved up by barbarian tribes when the social capital Rome had generated was not re-invested sufficiently, but the people became more worried with making sure their own lives would be better off than they were with making sure their children's lives would be better off. The wealth of future generations is literally robbed from them before their time, sold into bondage to foreigners. I'm speaking not only of the actual bills, but the social costs. Higher social costs decrease coordination, where coordination itself decreases social costs. This puts society in a feedback loop where decreasing formation of social institutions makes it more difficult to form social institutions.

There is a saying in philosophy, that one man's *modus ponens* is another's *modus tollens*. Modernism and neoreaction are opposed to each other in this sense. Where modernism sees an incompatibility between equality and human nature, it chooses to make human nature conform. Neoreaction makes the opposite choice. It bootstraps itself out of the modernist paradigm of thought by finding that dangerous *what if*. What if Malthus was right about the growth of population, but Darwin was right about the evolution of population? Neoreaction doesn't even disagree that a society with high downward mobility is oppressive, but that doesn't mean a regulated rate of failure (i.e. failure to reproduce and all that entails) isn't still good for the society as a whole. The good of individuals is not identical to the good of that group of individuals; the fallacy of composition should make one see the potential for dissociating the two. What if the good of individuals comes at the expense of the good of the group, and vice versa? A healthy tradeoff between the two seems the best way to promote human flourishing.

What if rule by the most has different properties from rule by the best? Nothing in principle guarantees that the massed decisions of people about a subject they are entirely ignorant of, and frequently misinformed on, will on the whole work themselves out to a moderately positive return. What if it really works its way out to a moderately negative return? What if not only the Soviet children were indoctrinated, but we were too?

Most already here have made it by asking simpler, more innocuous seeming questions. What if race really exists? What if men and women really are different? What if we're in decline?

Neoreaction will be interpreted as broadly conservative. Maybe there is some truth to this, at least in terms of constituency. It is perhaps fair to admit most of us tend right more than left. However, it still seems that the right-left heuristic has little relevance within neoreaction. The implicit meta-analysis of innate psychological orientation entails a view of institutions that seeks to capture a benefit from the expenditure of conflict between those left-oriented and right-oriented. It is not "How can the conservatives win and make sure they never lose again?" but "How can society maximize for stability, sustainability, and flourishing?" The political is within the social by this model. The political is just the beginning of how society works.

Fin.

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Original Article: <http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/12/03/how-to-look-at-the-world-like-a-neoreactionary-part-7/>

# An introduction to group dynamics

March 27, 2013

<http://nydwraqu.wordpress.com/2013/03/27/why-anarcho-fascism-an-introduction-to-group-dynamics/>

by nydwraqu

*reactionary futurism, critical legalism*

As the Enlightenment began with the premise that man is a rational animal and the post-Enlightenment began with the premise that man is an irrational animal, so begins the Dark Enlightenment with the premise that man is a social animal—and this beginning, one must hope, heralds the birth of the *meta-Enlightenment*, the extension of the realm of the movement that booted reflexivity to encompass not only the world but also *itself*, drawing into question the premises of not only the enemy memplex to be outcompeted but also the new outcompetitor sprung Dionysus-like from the thigh of the old. This shows the importance of the reference-point of Chinese philosophy referenced obliquely by Mencius Moldbug (who then proceeded, in true libertarian fashion, to ignore the question) and explicitly by myself: they began not with the answer of rationality, but—note that Douglas Adams continues to be the prophet of our time—with the corresponding *question*. The fundamental difference between Mencius and Xunzi is that the former held that human nature was good and the latter held that it was bad; both proceeded accordingly from there, but the philosophical tradition, unlike ours, was at least conscious that the question must be asked.

So. Man is a social animal. Enlightenment philosophers, believing themselves to be *atoms of reason*, still functioned according to the social laws of man. National Socialism has its roots not only in the masses of the unenlightened, but also in Fichte, the Kantian. But what are these laws? I have referred to a certain subset of them before as *group dynamics*: the rules governing individual affiliation to the superindividual, to *ingroups*, and individual disaffiliation with the superindividuals contrary to their own, with *outgroups*. But these terms are derivationally clumsy: to derive the necessary terminology from them would result in weighty, awkward polysyllabisms of the sort that would make even an amateur black magician shudder in disgust; and the true wizard notices that group dynamics are [embedded](#) in the Germanic languages themselves, as I have previously [noted](#).

Language is a clumsy weapon, but in the hands of an expert wielder it can be made slightly less so. Instead of ingroups and outgroups—certainly instead of *tribes*, which do not allow us so much as a descriptor for the foreign—we can speak of *thedes* and *elthedes*.

What is a thede? Definitions of the prerationally grasped can only be imperfect, but to begin, a thede is a superindividual grouping that its constituent individuals feel affiliation with and (therefore?) positive estimates of.

[What I'm famous for](#) is the experiment where we put some kids in red shirts others in blue shirts. It doesn't take a lot, but after a few environmental messages, then the blue shirts think they're better than red shirts, and red shirts think they are better than blue shirts—even though they're exactly the same shirt otherwise. Human beings can have a bias: 'Whatever group I'm in is better than yours...'

Thedes are defined by their thede identity, their *thedishness*, and in opposition to *elthedishness*; but these are not two separate phenomena, but one with multiple facets. Brahmins are intellectual—but intellectual *unlike Vaisyas and Dalits*. Vaisyas are hard-working—but hard-working *unlike Brahmins*

*and Dalits*. Dalits are fun-loving—but fun-loving *unlike Brahmins and Vaisyas*.

Thedes are *multiple*: one does not simply affiliate with one thede, but with an overlapping mishmash of thedes of different and shifting priorities—and some thedes are *concentric*. A guy from western Tennessee once said to me that, when he’s in a bar at home, he’ll get along with the guy from western Tennessee and fight the guy from eastern Tennessee; when he’s in a bar in eastern Tennessee, he’ll get along with the guy from Tennessee and fight the guy from Georgia; and when he’s in a bar in Alabama, he’ll get along with the guy from Georgia and fight the guy from Vermont.

Thedes can form along multiple lines: one can simultaneously be thedishly from western Tennessee (and then Tennessee, the South, America...), thedishly an analytic philosopher (and then a philosopher, an academic, a Brahmin...), thedishly a fan of black metal (and then metal, non-mainstream music...), and so on.

Thede identity can be reinforced in many ways: important examples include participating in thedesh activities, bashing elthedes and their members, throwing exosemantic gang signs, and attacking the use of elthedesh exosemantic gang signs. As I said on Twitter long ago:

Feminists are often empirically wrong about the meaning and use of ‘slurs’, but meaning and use aren’t the point of their policing. It’s about exosemantic gang signs. You can’t be One Of Us and call people cunts. Perhaps linguistic taboos can be seen in terms of group dynamics in general.

Exosemantic gang signs? Exosemantic gang signs! We can simplify and call them... I’m not sure what. My first inclination is to say *tokens* and *eltokens*; I hate overloading existing words, but I’ve got nothing better, so I’ll go with it for now. (Does anyone have anything? It looks like all the Germanic roots that could be useful have given existing English words. I could use [mantra](#) and *elmantra*, but that’s even worse. I could try to derive something from δείχνω or σημαδι, but that might not work. [Semn](#) retains the link to ‘semiotics’ at the heavy cost of openness to unfortunate puns and typos. [Semeion](#) is almost as bad, and recalls the Russian name Семён, which USG, in its wisdom, anglicizes to... well, you know. Latin borrowing patterns would give *semium*, which sounds like half of a chemical. *Code* is just bad. Another possibility is [oth](#), which allows for puns on “oath” and the homophone “auth” (as in authentication), but looks weird and requires drawing from a language that doesn’t borrow well into English. Black magic is hard!)

What is a token? A token is, obviously, a *gang sign*, a thedesh unit of communication; but what is this “exosemantic”?

[exosemantic](#) – the part of a word or statement that isn’t its strict entailments, but which are extremely common implicatures—specifically, these shouldn’t be contextual or Gricean implicatures, but socially bound ones, which have been formed by continued use of the word in particular contexts, or by particular speakers. The exosemantics of a word may eventually become

incorporated into the defining entailments.

There should be a correlate, endosemantic, but this would simply be the lexical entailments of a word, so I don't know that we need a new word for that.

It is commonly known that words carry meaning on two levels: *denotation*, or strict, dictionary-level meaning, and *connotation*, or emotional association; but there is a third, *exosemantic* level. The word "eldritch", for example, denotes otherworldliness and connotes a feeling of cosmic horror toward its referent; but it also exosemantically implies that its user has read Lovecraft. The word "liberty" is no different from the word "freedom", The word "praxis" is no different from a certain definition of the word "practice" except in its exosemantic layer: "praxis" is *heavy*; "praxis" implies familiarity with —*association with*—the academic tradition that uses the word "praxis".

Heavy? Heavy. And dense.

[volume](#) – the phonetic, syntactic, and morphological space that a word occupies. A very "long" word is one with a lot of syllables, a very "tall" word is one with a lot of morphemes.

mass – the semantic, pragmatic, and social impact of a word. A very "heavy" word has not only a lot of specific entailments, but may also have a lot of socially linked implicatures that are strongly bound to the word itself or to its use in certain contexts.

density = mass/volume. A very dense word is one with a low volume and a heavy mass. A very non-dense word is one with a high volume but very little mass.

Heavy words are likely tokens, and repeating tokens reinforces the identity. Some tokens are *identifiers*, markers of identity that one can apply to oneself; identifying oneself with these tokens also reinforces the identity. (Tumblr about-mes are the thede-identification equivalent of heroin.) Stating the thedish position on a certain issue also reinforces the identity, and is indistinguishable to *at least* the untrained from rational thought.

It should be obvious from this that [politics is the mind-killer](#). Political ideologies are thedish identifiers; political positions are tokens; political debate is thede conflict and reinforcement. To even answer the question "what are you politically?" is to reinforce a previously determined thedish identity.

Hence anarcho-fascism. (*Update 7/11/13: But of course some idiots had to go off and use that and mean it, so I can't use it anymore.*)

# Material conditions, mass psychology

October 7, 2013

<http://amosandgromar.wordpress.com/2013/10/07/material-conditions-mass-psychology/>

by Amos & Gromar

*Neoreactionary observations – right philosophy, right results*



The material conditions of society are one of the most powerful influences on public opinion, especially if positive material conditions can be linked to the effects of whatever ideology you're hawking. If A -> B; Therefore, A. They're none the wiser, anyway.

A friend of mine recently noted that people tend to radically shift towards fiscal conservatism when they actually have real budgets and don't get to play around frivolously with daddy's credit card. But aside from the flow of cash inward is the flow of cash outward in the form of taxes. There's an underlying truth to the oft-heard claim that conservatism is developmental based on age. And the idea is that an increase in age decreases the probability that you'll be able to sheltered from baseline of reality. At some point, you're pushed out of the nest and have to fly. When you've been sailing on daddy's back, it's easy to play the liberal.

This phenomenon is an excellent indicator of society's preference towards concreteness over abstractness, and indeed, its almost inability to properly deal with abstract concepts—that is, arriving at positions at least semi-independent of material conditions (by definition, complete independence from material conditions is probably impossible). That they need concreteness and personal experience for them to switch views demonstrates their lack of ability for abstract thought.

The masses count on concrete, personal experience. This is the best explanation for why there's zero motivation for revolution when the economic conditions appear to be skyrocketing, leading to pretensions arising about the inevitability of the upward trend of the economy. It's at this point that all other issues are side-lined. Cultural, social, political, spiritual, and psychological . It follows that in order to radically reorganize the fabric of society, it's necessary to ensure that the Volk have bread on their tables. Lots of it. A long enough, albeit temporary, increase in economic conditions functions like wool being pulled over the eyes of the public. Now you see it, now you don't. Likewise, the transposition of this is that if economic conditions are hard, then that constitutes a modification of the concrete, which seems to be a reliable indicator that revolutionary sentiments are ripe for stirring up, to mix metaphors.

If the concrete is modified, then the scales once encrusted on their eyes dry up, crack, and blow away, leading to the unfamiliar and painful effect of bright light—almost like when the light in a room is turned on after a while of being on. There's a split-second where everyone groans, but then their eyes quickly readjust.

A focus on concreteness and abstractness explains the resurgence of forces which constitute real opposition to the previously unchallenged hegemony of the Eurocrats. Failing material conditions has given momentum to the radical right in Europe, especially in Greece, where it's hit the hardest, which is, of course, no coincidence. That connection is intimately established by the literature on the relationship between economic conditions and radical political movements. People can only be reached when the scales fall, even if at the same time they're handed new scales. They mistakenly think they're seeing light for the first time, even if it's just been given a slightly different tinge than the previous scales permitted.

That's right: the political opportunists that take advantage of the situation have often times correctly diagnosed at least part of the problem, even if the solutions peddled are woefully inadequate and ultimately destructive.

But when did correctness matter? Belief matters more.

So the popularity of neoreaction is on an upswing, and it will continue to surge forward, bringing in those whose concreteness dominates abstractness, and vice-versa. The latter make better thinkers. They dominate in meta over mechanics. The 'concreters' change when they're hit personally. Bayesian priors are 'upset' when there's no warrant for them to be modified, but that's just how folks operate, isn't it?

Libertarians are conservatives who were fucked by the state. There's a ring of truth in this one, as well. All it took was one oh-so-personal and oh-so-concrete encounter with the IRS for them to snap out of state worship directed towards a state that is bent on their destruction. Was that sufficient enough evidence to modify their view? No, I've noted this before in my series on rhetoric. It isn't enough at all, but it provides that skepticism, that anger, that motivation, and the crucial fact that offenses to personal property last almost as long—if not longer—than the death of one's parents.

The real test of meta is whether or not the realization and correction of state-worship happened in the absence of a change in material conditions. But it almost always can be brought down and reduced to a single zenith, and this invariably affects the academy, as well. Rather than being less susceptible, it might even be the case that the academy is more susceptible to herd mentality.

Most of them have complexes stemming all the way back to social relations in high school—relations that they've never really fully recovered from. The need to separate oneself from the opinions of one's fellow bone-headed high-school colleagues motivates the acceptance of positions that are radically against common-sense, if only because those same positions are held by the stereotypically dumb.

Dumb people believe X. Smart people believe Y. Really smart people believe X.

Academics, on average, fall either in the first or second category. Consensus whoring is what they're best at; the acceptance of \*new\* and \*radical\* ideas is limited to ideas that operate within the current paradigm. But challenge the paradigm, and you're rendered a pariah: You're religiously motivated. You're politically motivated. You're motivated by money.

Projection? That sounds like a fairly accurate sketch of contemporary leftism. Having abandoned religion, they've—wait—they never actually abandoned religion; they substituted one form for another: Removing the veneer, but maintaining the underlying suppositions of Puritan Christianity—this is clearest, of course, in the U.S.

This piece sounds Marxist. It is, in a sense—not because the Communist Manifesto was correct, but because part of the original analysis was. Analysis is one thing, prescriptions another. That being said,

because Marxism entails both analysis and prescription, it's impossible to say that this piece is either Marxist, or that I'm a Marxist myself. For the fallacy mongers, that's the undistributed middle for you.

Whatever meets the psychological needs of the aggregate *for a particular equilibrium* takes precedence. It's almost unstoppable. When the equilibrium changes, the opportunity is ripe for intra-marginal benefits to be exploited. Naomi Klein is a fraud, a liar, and a cunt, but the term she coined 'Shock Doctrine,' isn't a bad term to describe this.

Democrats produce democrats. Republicans produce republicans. Unless, of course, psychological needs intrinsic to that particular person aren't being met, at which point they'll switch over and rationalize objections away. This is why when individual X converts from position A to position B, all talk about persuading him back to A is actually *physically noxious*. It provokes a physiological response of pain and disgust and negative associations, and so he ridicules, mocks, rages, and in general is very spiteful about it. And he refuses to address any of it properly—that is, unless, fire is combated with fire.

That's why atheists have daddy issues. Most aren't atheists because they're \*such objective wow\* but because they weren't able to fit into their religious peer groups owing to certain personality conflicts, and/or their father was abusive or overbearing in some way.

Dialogue can only take place after the superiority complex is destroyed quickly and efficiently.

This operates on both the aggregate and the individual level. On the individual level, it's usually a function of personality, which is mostly a function of genetics, but is also influenced by the environment, in addition to *economic and ideological environment*. This would almost be self-referentially incoherent if I didn't previously make the distinction between the concrete and the abstract. It's possible to break out and 'go meta,' even if only a small segment of the population can do it, but even that statistically minute population can't extricate itself from its own genetics. Ideology and environment is one thing, genetics another. Epigenetics is a thing, sure, but it's not as flexible as immediate change in ideology and the environment are.

YOU JUST THINK X BECAUSE YOU GREW UP IN CIRCUMSTANCES Y.

Maybe, but that (1) doesn't invalidate X (genetic fallacy, foo), and (2) doesn't necessitate that you think X because of circumstances Y. Projection. Unless the person offering that statement is unusually bright, it's really a matter of them projecting their own lack of agency onto you.

The central reason for constructing the model like so is because of repeated inference to the best explanations for why the aggregate radically switches its ideological commitments with a \*coincidental\* shift in the material conditions of society. The best explanation is that the concrete and the abstract are not distributed uniformly, and that they're only distributed to a minority.

And now you know...the rest of the story.





## How Democracy Fails: Brecht's Solution

July 29, 2013

<http://theden.tv/2013/07/29/how-democracy-fails-brechts-solution/>

by Wesley Morganston

*Thedening the West*

# The Den

It may seem absurd to ask how democracy can fail. As we all know and are constantly reminded, democracy is the best form of government; or at least, in the words of Winston Churchill, the worst except for all the others. The New York Times [tells us](#) that “the more people who have access to the ballot, the better the country will be”, and the Washington Post [says](#) that voting is our “most essential right”. Surely, you may think, only a crackpot would claim that democracy doesn’t work!

But the New York Times has been wrong before. Walter Duranty, one of the most famous foreign affairs reporters in American history, used his post at the Times to [regurgitate Stalinist propaganda](#) and [cover up the Holodomor](#), and thus won not only the Pulitzer Prize but also the Order of Lenin. If the Times could not be trusted about Communism, why should it be trusted about democracy?

Consider also the positions of the Founding Fathers. Not only did they clearly refuse to make America a democracy, they had a low opinion of it in the abstract, for reasons most eloquently stated by John Adams:

Democracy has never been and never can be so durable as aristocracy or monarchy; but while it lasts, it is more bloody than either. ... Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide. It is in vain to say that democracy is less vain, less proud, less selfish, less ambitious, or less avaricious than aristocracy or monarchy. It is not true, in fact, and nowhere appears in history. Those passions are the same in all men, under all forms of simple government, and when unchecked, produce the same effects of fraud, violence, and cruelty.

If only a crackpot would oppose democracy, John Adams is a crackpot. John Adams was not a crackpot. Perhaps the thing needs a closer look.

The word ‘democracy’ as it is understood today refers to the practice of giving citizens—and, in its more advanced stages, [others](#)—the right to vote. It is unique to the democratic form of government that the activist may pursue his agenda by *democratic means* — that is, by increasing the percentage of voters who agree with him. This statement of democratic means conjures up images of the door-to-door campaigner or grassroots protester holding a sign on a street corner; but these are by no means the only possible strategies.

It is an observable fact of American political life that [the Republican Party supports voter ID laws](#) and [the Democratic Party opposes them](#); furthermore, while many Republicans follow the Democrats in believing that the borders ought to be opened, support for a lower immigration rate is far more likely to be found in the former party than the latter. Out of the 235 recent Congressmen who received a [grade](#) above C from the immigration restrictionist group [NumbersUSA](#), only nine—less than four percent—are Democrats. Why is this?

In a word: democracy.

Democratic power is measured in terms of percentages of the voting population. It is often thought that the only way to gain power within a democracy is to win over more voters; but this assumes that the voting population must remain constant—an assumption that the existence of immigration and naturalization policy proves to be false. This is the strategy Bertolt Brecht outlined in his poem [\*The Solution\*](#):

After the uprising of the 17th June  
The Secretary of the Writer's Union  
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee  
Stating that the people  
Had forfeited the confidence of the government  
And could win it back only  
By redoubled efforts. Would it not be easier  
In that case for the government  
To dissolve the people  
And elect another?

There is no Secretary of the Writer's Union dropping leaflets in *Mittelamerika*, but the people have nonetheless forfeited the confidence of the government. [\*What's the matter with White people?\*](#) The “matter with White people”, the ‘problem’ that [Brahmins](#) like Joan Walsh see with Middle America, is that Middle America is irredeemably Middle-American: it votes Republican, opposes open borders, and generally shows no signs of becoming [Montgomery County](#). If there's one thing Montgomery County hates, it's that Whites who do not act like they were born and raised in Montgomery County have even a semblance of political power. Every rear-guard action by Middle America, from the Tea Party movement to a pastor burning a Qur'an, is cause for endless derision from the Brahmin elite. Thus the Solution.

Since the voting population does not remain constant, it can be politically manipulated. On the right, there is the [Sailer Strategy](#). Steve Sailer acknowledged that “you want more of the kind of people likely to vote for your party in the country and fewer of the [kind of people likely to vote for the other party](#)“, and developed a three-point strategy for democratic demographic warfare:

First: the voters most likely to vote Republican are whites who are married with children. So you want your base to thrive.

Second: since the GOP is inevitably the white party, you want marginally white people from places like Latin America and South Asia to identify as white.

Third: you want to import fewer people who are likely to vote against your party.

The left, of course, has a [parallel strategy](#).

The immigration proposal pending in Congress would transform the nation's political landscape for a generation or more — pumping as many as 11 million new Hispanic voters into the electorate a decade from now in ways that, if current trends hold, would produce an electoral bonanza for Democrats and cripple Republican prospects in many states they now win easily.

Beneath the philosophical debates about amnesty and border security, there are brass-tacks partisan calculations driving the thinking of lawmakers in both parties over comprehensive immigration reform, which in its current form offers a pathway to citizenship — and full voting rights — for a group of undocumented residents that roughly equals the population of Ohio, the nation's seventh-largest state.

If these people had been on the voting rolls in 2012 and voted along the same lines as other Hispanic voters did last fall, President Barack Obama's relatively narrow victory last fall would have been considerably wider, a POLITICO analysis showed.

[The bad news about White people](#), according to The Nation, is that they don't vote for people who hate them and want them replaced. A comment there sums up the progressive mentality:

Love to see all the teabaggers still crying. Conservatives have now lost the popular *[sic]* vote 5 out of the last 6 elections. The country is becoming more and more diverse every year. More and more people are leaving the rural areas that are about as meaningless as you can get and moving to liberal cities where the centers of money are located. Add to that, as people become more educated they become more cultural and that's *[sic]* even more reason to move to a cosmopolitan city. Of which there are very few in teabagger states.

Despite their underdog posturing, progressives know they are in power. If the America of 2012 had the demographics of the America of 1980, [Romney would have won](#) in a landslide larger than Reagan's. Alas, it did not. Progressives know: demography is destiny. We who stand in opposition must also accept this—and act accordingly.

# The part is subordinate to the whole: female outliers

September 30, 2013

<http://amosandgromar.wordpress.com/2013/09/30/the-part-is-subordinate-female-outliers/>

by Amos & Gromar

*Neoreactionary observations – right philosophy, right results*



The part is subordinate to the whole. Parts sometimes have to suffer for the sake of the whole. I want to give an example in—surprise—sex realism.

To the extent that attribute X is exhibited far more readily by biological gender M (male), then that's sufficient to term X a masculine attribute.

Notice that this is about statistical regularity. It's entirely possible for there to be outliers—outliers that are subject to gender norms that move against their innate predispositions. Some girls, in other words, are NTJs on the Myers-Briggs scale, a scale that I think is fairly accurate and useful. These girls honestly don't have to 'put anything on'. They just tend—by nature—to be more oriented and directed towards masculine activities. There isn't anything wrong with that at all, since it's certain that the distribution of masculine attributes for women will look very similar to a bell curve, in that those who genuinely exhibit these traits will be in the extreme minority, e.g. girls who like to play hockey. Farm girls. That's the sort of thing I have in mind. They embody masculine attributes more than their counterparts.

Attributes like honor and responsibility are technically capable of being had by women, as well. But those are masculine attributes, and so they're more or less masculine to the extent that they participate or do not participate in them.

If you're a ditzzy man, you're exhibiting feminine attributes. Congruency is key. If it's a put on, you'll be shamed—and rightly so. If it's not a put on, then you'll be shamed—and rightly so. The part is subordinate to the whole. Even if it's genuine, it's important that these norms—on the aggregate—be maintained, and to attempt to inculcate scrutinizing faculties in the masses is a mistake (for them to be able to distinguish between genuine and non-genuine gender norm violation). Nuance is lost on the public. In fact, as I've mentioned previously, one of the crucial distinguishing factors of the herd is that they're incapable of thinking beyond individual concrete examples. They do not and cannot think in terms of statistical distributions, bell curves, or engage in a high level of abstractness.

They're unable to accurately distinguish a proper violation of a norm from an improper violation of a gender norm, so it's better that they err on the side of caution and shame *all* behaviors that fall outside of traditional gender norms, even if there are casualties.

Even if a woman's ambition and work-ethic is far superior to the average man, that serves no justification for the destruction of gender norms that discourage women from advancing and being successful in the workplace by competing with men. On the aggregate, such behaviors are destructive. Those particular females constitute casualties, but should be—for the most part—accepted by neoreactionaries, unless and until they attempt to bring down traditional norms.

We have female outliers in the reactosphere. Does anyone really think Judgy Bitch isn't an oddity, as far as the average female goes? The reason she's able to take an abstract and distanced perspective on female behavior is because she's sitting at a vantage point. She exhibits masculine tendencies of abstractness,

rigor, and straight-forwardness, but also participates in the feminine, and so she's able to deliver particularly insightful analyses of female behavior—analyses that sometimes surpass what other male bloggers are able to provide. This is why IQ distributions between genders itself is really quite irrelevant. It doesn't matter if women tend to match men until the higher standard deviations. If women on average lack all these attributes, then the pairing of one man and one woman with the same IQ will result in the man intellectually winning out. And that's because not only do women lack the attributes of abstractness, truth-seeking, and straight-forwardness, but because female solipsism deadens women to everything that they do not love.

If they don't love it, then they're utterly indifferent to the worst suffering, unless a status game is involved. If they don't love, then the attribute of 'caring' and 'sympathy' that women are very much known for—is completely culled. Solipsism entails that female virtues are conditional and contingent. And since solipsism makes the mind blind, the average woman is unfit to govern, vis-a-vis the average man.

But since the women that tend to govern are statistical outliers anyway, the folly of equality of attributes is embraced. It's not so. It's not at all so.

To the female casualties/outliers: Is societal pressure unfair? I know you whine about it incessantly, since the majority of my female friends are outliers, and they tend to have more male friends than female friends. And that's because female discourse and female behavioral traits of cattiness, backstabbing, and gossip, aren't at all palatable to them. So they prefer males who—on average—tend to be far more honorable and loyal and responsible.

But the societal pressure isn't unfair. Ask yourself the question: is it fair for these traditional norms to be reversed, in order for these outliers to escape criticism and pressure, while the rest of society burns? I'll give you the answer: no. The part is subordinate to the whole. That's the perfect standard of fairness. It's perfectly fair for female outliers to experience hardship, even if it's unfortunate. I acknowledge that. But it's not the case that experiencing something personally unfortunate is identical to that being unfair, unjust, or immoral.

Fin.

# Language is a badge of tribal membership

July 16, 2013

<http://bloodyshovel.wordpress.com/2013/07/16/language-is-a-badge-of-tribal-membership/>

by Spandrell

*We shall drown, and nobody will save us*



I dig linguistics, and I dig HBD, so how do you join them both? I've had this idea for some time now, but I hadn't written about it lest some guy stole it and wrote a book before I did.

It seems I'll have to give up on that, as science is fast catching up with my awesome blog (see, I just pulled a Half Sigma here). Razib Khan [quotes a recent study in Northern Australia](#) that documents how some Abo kids came up with a new language just for the kicks. It fast became cool, and now the young kids of the tribe have a different language from their elders. As it looks it's a fully new language, with some grammar changes too, not just a bunch of jargon to fool their parents so they can [avoid being eaten](#). A smart guy in Razib's Twitter also linked to [an experimental study](#) where they put people to compete in a game, and prompted to develop their own secret speech, which they did.

When you ask a layman they'll tell you that languages are to communicate. But that's patently false, if we wanted to optimize communication we'd all speak the same language. And languages wouldn't change over time. What the common theory is lacking is just a simple modifier. Languages are to communicate **within the group**. In fact this little modifier explains most of the mysteries of human psychology. Happiness correlates with income **within the group**. People are naturally cooperative **within the group**. Take the modifier away and you get the Cathedral.

Many academic theories about language posit that language evolve to aid better coordination, say for hunters. You go left, I go right, I throw the first spear, etc. [Chimps seem to be able](#) to coordinate without speaking, but it sounds reasonable that talking does help coordinate better. But if the idea is to be able to coordinate hunters, then why are men worse at language than women? Women do 70% of the talking, and it's mostly inane gossip. It has extremely little information density. Woman conversation is most of the time a status confirmation task, all they do is say get a group, say something and listen carefully to the tone of voice of all the participants, to check what everyone thinks of each other. If the mother hen suddenly is rude to you, well you know you're in trouble. You better find ways to raise your status or undermine hers. I taught a girlfriend that all her speech was an unconscious status confirmation task, and that she should stop caring as she will always be high status in my eyes. She never nagged me again.

For all I know language did start as a way for men to coordinate hunts better, but over time it's obvious that it evolution found other uses for it. Language itself is a big, a huge shibboleth, a simple way of knowing which tribe people belong to. Babies [stop telling apart sounds](#) not used in their native language by 10 months, before they even start talking themselves. And the ability to properly learn new phonemes dies permanently after age 10. With years of effort you can learn to communicate in a foreign language, but your accent will always give you away. And that's being lucky, most people just don't have the capability. And of those who do, a big majority are women, whose tribal membership is always tenuous. After all they never knew when they would be exchanged to a different tribe, or kidnapped and taken away.

A big puzzle of linguistics has always been the relationship between languages. Why are some language

families so big, and others so small. One big language family extends from Ireland to Bengal. Yet dozens of different languages of 4 unrelated language families linger in close proximity in Southwest China. [Not to mention the Papuans](#), with hundreds of languages of a dozen families. And those in the know say that most family groupings are very suspect.

Why don't the Papuans get their shit together and talk the same language? Because they don't want to. For thousands of years they have had no need of talking with the neighboring tribe. The neighbors were there to raid, kill, and occasional cannibalistic feast. Austronesian languages are famously extensive, from Hawaii to Madagascar. Yet the Philippines or Borneo are a patchwork of small tribal languages which are not intelligible by the nearby villages. It surely has something to do with the fact that every year, the able bodied males of a given village would raid the neighboring tribe, [cut their heads off](#) and bring them home as a trophy.

Farming changed the normal dynamics of tribal speech, with cooperation forced top down to vast masses of people engaged in farming and trading. First you had tens of thousands of people speaking the same language. Then millions. But massive, empire-wide koinés are tied to their empires, and always die and fragment. Ancient Greek died, Latin fragmented, as did Tang Chinese. The Middle Ages brought regional dialects, mostly sharing local market areas, the Enlightenment chose one dialect and artificially transformed it in the national tongue.



The ideology behind national tongues, nationalism, is dead, but national tongues are still around. Of course they are far too useful, and they are too strongly linked to the nation states who created them. But in the same way that the nation state is slowly losing relevance, so national languages are fading too. 50

years ago you would never have listened a regional accent on national TV, today the BBC makes a point of casting Scottish scientists for their documentaries. Italian dialects are making a comeback. Even in Japan a big part of movies are voiced in regional dialects, some quite obscure. All while every country on earth is putting ever more resources into English education.

If languages were to communicate, we would have an English speaking world in no time. Instead what we will have is a global English speaking elite, lording over masses speaking bad English to their masters, and revived regional dialects to themselves. Given Google Translate and PRISM, it wouldn't surprise me if vernacular writing dies out, with most speech being done in untranslatable dialect, and writing done in English. A massive Hong Kong style diglossia. It might be the only feasible resistance against what's coming.



## Three Reasons Diversity Isn't Working

November 22, 2013

<http://theden.tv/2013/11/22/3-reasons-diversity-isnt-working/>

by Wesley Morganston

*Thedening the West*

# The Den

Today in the United States (and all over the West, for that matter), “diversity” is the fashion. Governments and universities promote it as an inherent good; businesses talk incessantly about “diversifying” their workforce. The idea is that putting people of different ethnic groups together will make things better. Since we’re all so different, coming together to solve problems will make them easier to solve, right?

Unfortunately, this fixation on diversity is causing quite a few problems of its own:

### 1. It doesn’t make for cohesive communities.

In 2000, Robert Putnam at Harvard gathered data on different communities in the United States. He wanted to find out about social capital: how people interacted with their neighbors, how they made friends, how much trust they had in local government, and so on. Putnam, being a Harvard man, isn’t exactly the kind of guy who would want to portray diversity in a bad light. But that’s [exactly](#) what his research ended up doing. His findings were so discomfoting that he [spent years trying to find other explanations](#):

After releasing the initial results in 2001, Putnam says he spent time “kicking the tires really hard” to be sure the study had it right. Putnam realized, for instance, that more diverse communities tended to be larger, have greater income ranges, higher crime rates, and more mobility among their residents — all factors that could depress social capital independent of any impact ethnic diversity might have.

“People would say, ‘I bet you forgot about X,’” Putnam says of the string of suggestions from colleagues. “There were 20 or 30 X’s.”

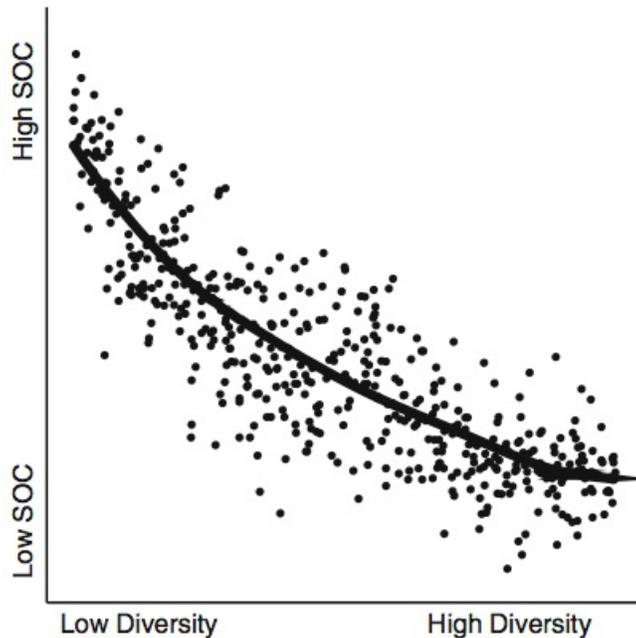
But even after statistically taking them all into account, the connection remained strong: Higher diversity meant lower social capital. In his findings, Putnam writes that those in more diverse communities tend to “distrust their neighbors, regardless of the color of their skin, to withdraw even from close friends, to expect the worst from their community and its leaders, to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less, to agitate for social reform more but have less faith that they can actually make a difference, and to huddle unhappily in front of the television.”

“People living in ethnically diverse settings appear to ‘hunker down’ — that is, to pull in like a turtle,” Putnam writes.

So the general trend seems to be that more diversity means less sense of community. But is this inevitable? How likely is it that we might ever find a *very diverse* community that’s also *very cohesive*? A more recent study gives us an answer. Zachary Neal and Jennifer Watling Neal at Michigan State University simulated 20 million virtual “neighborhoods” made up of two distinct “populations” and

[found the same result that Putnam did.](#)

After 20 million-plus simulations, the authors found that the same basic answer kept coming back: The more diverse or integrated a neighborhood is, the less socially cohesive it becomes, while the more homogenous or segregated it is, the more socially cohesive.



**Fig. 4** Relationship between diversity and SOC when  $\beta_H = 2.5$ ,  $\beta_P = 2.5$

Sense of community (SOC) goes down as diversity goes up.

This is because people like to form [thedes](#). A thede is a social group with its own identity, its own sense of self. Everyone's got a thede or two. Remember how you and your friends in school had your own in-jokes, your own little catchphrases and games and traditions? That was a thede you had going there. Do you identify with your hometown? There's another thede. How about your ethnic heritage? That's a thede too.

When you're dealing with humans, thedes are pretty much unavoidable. And in order to form thedes, people look for two things: people like them, and people nearby. Or as the authors of the study at MSU would put it, a sense of community comes from *homophily* and *proximity*:

These findings are sobering. Because homophily and proximity are so ingrained in the way humans interact, the models demonstrated that it was impossible to simultaneously foster diversity and cohesion "*in all reasonably likely worlds.*" In fact, the trends are so strong that no effective social policy could combat them, according to Neal. As he put it in a statement, "In essence, when it comes to neighborhood desegregation and social cohesion, you can't have your cake and eat it too."

So be it. Let them eat cake and form thedes.

## 2. It distorts our priorities.

For an example of how ethnic diversity messes with our priorities as a society, look no further than the field of “diversity training”. Colleges and businesses pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for “diversity consultants” who—well, what exactly *do* they do? According to the American Conference on Diversity:

Leaders that attend our workshops are more empowered and more informed about personnel needs within a diverse workplace, as well as developmental opportunities.

We design trainings to be meaningful and relevant for increasingly diverse workplaces.

Our sessions are geared to cultivating teamwork and generating measurable outcomes.

Our customized curriculum supports individual learning about inclusion as a gateway towards achieving cultural sensitivity.

Well, that didn't tell us very much. Let's hear from someone who's been to one of these kinds of sessions. Jason Morgan at the University of Wisconsin—Madison was required to undergo “diversity training” as a teaching assistant. [It doesn't sound like](#) it was very “empowering”, or “cultivated teamwork”:

We opened the session with chapter-and-verse quotes from diversity theorists who rehearsed the same tired “power and privilege” cant that so dominates seminar readings and official university hand-wringing over unmet race quotas. Indeed, one mild-mannered Korean woman yesterday felt compelled to insist that she wasn't a racist. I never imagined that she was, but the atmosphere of the meeting had been so poisoned that even we traditional quarries of the diversity Furies were forced to share our collective guilt with those from continents far across the wine-dark sea.

It is hardly surprising that any of us hectorers would feel thusly. For example, in one of the handouts that our facilitator asked us to read (“Detour-Spotting: for white anti-racists,” by joan olsson [sic]), we learned things like, “As white infants we were fed a pabulum of racist propaganda,” “...there was no escaping the daily racist propaganda,” and, perhaps most even-handed of all, “Racism continues in the name of all white people.” Perhaps the Korean woman did not read carefully enough to realize that only white people (all of them, in fact) are racist.

And has any of this actually done any good for UW—Madison? Clearly, there are influential White people who love to push this [“anti-racism” stuff](#) as a way to [assert their superiority over other White people](#), but is there any other reason for it? Is making every White man obsessively self-critical really beneficial to the working environment? If you can find any data to support the claim that “diversity training” has any actual benefit, let me know.

Again, this isn't just in the United States. On the other side of the pond, there are [“equality experts”](#)

calling for children's books to dress witches in pink and fairies in dark colors in order to combat "racism" *in toddlers*—seriously:

From the Wicked Witch of the West in the Wizard of Oz to Meg, the good witch from the Meg and Mog children's books, witches have always dressed in black.

But their traditional attire has now come in for criticism from equality experts who claim it could send a negative message to toddlers in nursery and lead to racism.

Instead, teachers should censor the toy box and replace the pointy black hat with a pink one, while dressing fairies, generally resplendent in pale pastels, in darker shades.

And that's not all—apparently, using white paper is also racist:

Another staple of the classroom – white paper – has also been questioned by Anne O'Connor, an early years consultant who advises local authorities on equality and diversity.

Children should be provided with paper other than white to draw on and paints and crayons should come in "the full range of flesh tones", reflecting the diversity of the human race, according to the former teacher.

Finally, staff should be prepared to be economical with the truth when asked by pupils what their favourite colour is and, in the interests of good race relations, answer "black" or "brown".

If your premises lead you to suggest an anti-racist color of clothing for fictional creatures in children's books, you should check your premises.

But this sort of distortion of what's important and what isn't goes further. In the US, there are published articles demanding to know [why there aren't more Black baseball players](#), or [more Black female scientists](#). The UK's Police Minister wants to use "[positive discrimination](#)" to hire more non-White officers.

Does anyone really expect that the demographics of baseball should be identical to the demographics of the whole United States? Instead of just accepting that Black Americans probably just aren't that into baseball these days, or that women aren't interested in science as often as men are, this "lack of diversity" is seen as a major problem. With trillions of dollars in debt and an eroding social fabric, should we be hiring "diversity consultants"? Is trying to make kids pick brown as their favorite color really where our focus should be?

There are also opportunity costs to all this. If we're paying "diversity consultants" six figures to share their deep wisdom on what is and isn't racist, who are we *not* paying? That money [could be spent](#) on medical research or improving infrastructure. Instead, it's being used up by programs that have no logical end. How much diversity is enough? Any arrangement can be considered too exclusive, too segregated,

too divided. Should Bangladesh be “diversified” with Europeans and Africans? Should Japan become less Japanese? Should Africa be flooded with Italians and Cambodians in order to make it more multicultural?

### 3. It breeds prejudice.

Another drawback to living in an ethnically diverse environment is that it can actually lead us to develop a more biased view of other groups than we’d otherwise have. It’s silly to get upset over a lack of Black American baseball players or a lack of Asian garbage men, but then again, the push for an ethnically diverse society is what makes such things a concern in the first place. If you have to live somewhere your ethnic group is outnumbered, then it’s harder for you to form the *des within* your ethnic group—and perhaps that really does harm your sense of identity. If every clerk you see at the DMV is Black, every gardener you know is Mexican, and every lawyer you meet is Jewish, are you really going to have a well-balanced perspective on the different kinds of people in the world? As John Derbyshire puts it:

I do like to think, though, that the experience of growing up around human nature in all its fullness—the good, the bad, the exemplary and the appalling—all packed into one’s own ethny, forms a better foundation for a mature adult view of human group differences than the coloring-book simplicities of the Diversity cult.

Here we see a contradiction in the logic of “diversity”: either the differences between ethnic groups are so important that we all need to live together, or those differences are so *unimportant* that we all *can* live together. If we really appreciate the diversity of the world’s peoples, why would we want them all in the same society, let alone the same neighborhood? As the old saying of Apuleius goes: *Familiarity breeds contempt, while rarity wins admiration.*

Our planet’s ethnic diversity is best appreciated when we have enough room to grow. Crowding us all into one place just isn’t working.

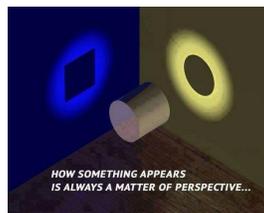
# Post-Modernism's Final Causes and Pyrrhic Victory

December 12, 2013 - December 31, 2013

<http://iparallax.wordpress.com/2013/12/12/post-modernism-understood-through-aristotles-four-causes/>

by iParallax

*Warning: Ideas increasingly published in draft format*



# Part 1: Post-Modernism Understood Through Aristotle's Four Causes

December 12, 2013

*Readers: bear with me on this one. The next several posts will be a gradual fleshing-out of an idea. This post will serve as an outline of sorts for many more to follow.*

To “understand” a thing is much more complicated than it seems. To understand a ball, for instance, entails understanding the materials it is made of, the shape, how it was made into that shape, and what it's used for. Moving onto a more complicated item, like a car, involves the same types of understanding, but with many more components, many of which interact with one another and have their own identities, which is to say they have their own materials, shape, origin, and purpose. Understanding both the car as a whole and its properties, as well as the components and their properties, enables one to do things with and to the car. At a basic, purpose-oriented level, understanding the steering, gas, and brake pedals enables the driver to drive it. Understanding the windshield wipers allows the driver to drive in the rain. On a deeper level of understanding, one begins to understand why the oil must be changed. Deeper still is the knowledge to change the oil. At the deepest level of understanding all the interactions, materials, shapes, and purposes, one can troubleshoot problems and repair defective items.

In a major way, the articulation of neoreaction involves indicting and rejecting post-modernism. Yet, just as the car is much harder to understand, operate, manufacture, and repair than the ball, so are ideologies much, much more complicated than cars. 'Sphere writers frequently reference *The Matrix* as a shorthand for the total shift in worldview entailed by rejecting post-modernism. And the writers address it from all angles. Some point to present unpleasant symptoms. Some extrapolate unsustainable trends. Others point to current or inevitable injustices. Still others speak not of current problems, but future possibilities and what it is we should strive to achieve. These ideas relate in innumerable ways, and it becomes difficult to untangle causes and effects.

This is my attempt to bring order to these discussions. The first step of this attempt is to discuss post-modernism from a high level, broken down as I see it according to [Aristotle's Four Causes](#). Keep in mind, this is an incomplete outline.

## **1) The Material Cause of Post-Modernism**

The material cause of post-modernism is wealth. Specifically, a society wealthy enough to easily provide a basic standard of living to all citizens even at less than full employment. This is the inevitable result of civilization as a conserver of knowledge and culture, embodied in technology, which permits the work of few to easily support many. (ie, cavemen couldn't build bulldozers, but they built the things-that built the things-that built the things-that built bulldozers, and now one guy can do the work of 100's. Yet if the foundries and factories required to build bulldozers were forgotten or destroyed, we'd all be picking up

shovels again, and there wouldn't be enough people to continue construction at the rate currently enabled by bulldozers.) A common theme among the 'sphere is that the beliefs of the world-at-large seem to conflict with basic facts about reality. I believe the root cause is this state of wealth. The realities of budgeting and acknowledging costs and tradeoffs is often summed up by the expression, "you can't have your cake and eat it too." Yet what meaning does this phrase have to someone looking at a cake bigger than he could possibly ever eat? None whatsoever. And if he were to somehow come to the end of that cake, he would soon starve, having no idea how to sustain himself after living a lifetime of being provided endless cake.

## 2) The Formal Causes of Post-Modernism

An Aristotelian Formal Cause is essentially "the shape made of the material." A ball is a sphere made of rubber, a fence is a row of logs or bricks, etc. It is the most nebulous of Aristotle's forms, and a difficult concept to work with. In terms of ideologies, a formal cause (as I will use the concept) is an idea "formed" in light of the material cause. Post-modernism has two.

### 2a) Inability to Understand Cost (And Opportunity Cost)

This is one of two ways in which post-modernism's roots in wealth are formulated. Simply put, this is the state of mind of the man with infinite cake. He eats when he's hungry, and invites everyone else to join him. The idea that this might mean less for him is only an abstract idea that he may **or may not ever** think about. Having never been confronted with the lack of cake, it's possible he may not understand it can run out.

### 2b) Inability to Understand Entropy

This is the second of two ways in which post-modernism's roots in wealth are formulated. (This was, also, the "big realization" that spurred me to begin writing this concept down. It is also the one I will expand upon most later.) This is the second affliction of the infinitely caked man. Not only does he not understand it is limited, but he doesn't understand how it is made. While eating his way across the countryside, he didn't plant wheat for flour and raise chicken for eggs and cocoa beans for chocolate and so on; so far as he knows the cake is infinite, and it just *appears ready-made*. The idea that some amount of energy **input** on his behalf is required to obtain an **output** for his benefit is a concept he has never been forcefully confronted with, and so is unlikely to learn and comprehend.

## 3) The Efficient Causes of Post-Modernism

The efficient causes are the mechanisms by which the formal cause is brought into being. They are the sculptors making the stone (material) into a statue (form). This is where the ideological rubber meets the physical-world road. This is where the inability to understand cost leads to an "Affirmative Care Act" which requires insurance companies to provide more services, yet promises the services will cost less.

This is where inability to understand opportunity cost creates a [generation of highly-educated women with few children who can't find men of higher status to marry up to](#) before encountering fertility problems. This is where we spend money on insanely expensive in-vitro fertilization treatment on these women, as the cost of them putting off having children past their prime. This is where affirmative action places students in colleges over their ability levels, making them *less* likely to succeed, not more.

This is the 'Sphere's bread and butter. This is where all the social commentators point of the symptoms of the disease. This is where the Matrix begins to glitch, indicating that all is not as it seems. This is where the Doublethink is required to square the ideologies, beliefs, opinions, and desires formed by those who know only the wealth they have seen, with the realities of the world we live in. This is where thoughtcrime happens.

#### 4) The Final Causes of Post-Modernism

An Aristotelian Final Cause is better known in English as “purpose.” It is a cause in that the desire to fulfill the purpose is what led to the creation of the outcome. Post-modernism arguably has two – one explicit, one implicit.

##### 4a) Explicit Final Cause

Post-Modernism seeks to, through implementing its efficient causes, create an equalitarian world. It believes that a snapshot of inequalities can be taken at any moment, and a sudden redistribution of wealth and privilege would then set the world right. It believes that, if everyone were to be placed in the same material conditions, they would all be in an equal state of justice. In fact, they might all act the same. And to remain equal, they must remain the same. In the name of such optimizing for the individuals, post-modernism ironically creates *the optimum individual*. It cannot tolerate dissent. It can't tolerate Christians and Jews and Muslims abusing their equal freedom to choose to do different things; everyone **must** respect and celebrate Christma-Hanna-Kwanza-dan. (This is in contrast to structuralists, who believe in an *optimum society*, in which there are roles and places for all sorts of truly different people!)

Yet after everyone is made the same, everyone must also forget about the time period before this redistribution. First, because this concept ignores the fact that the forceful redistribution would have impacts on the people of the world as well; creating or destroying incentives, rewarding or punishing various behaviors, and so on. Second, because the roots of injustice in this worldview are a [form of blood-guilt](#), which can never be properly atoned for or overcome according to post-modern progressivists (barring, of course, this mythical one-time redistribution and memory loss).

##### 4b) Implicit Final Cause

Post-modernists realize that the above scenario is impossible. So they openly advocate Utopia, and

thereby gain support (after all, who doesn't want to be in a place that's sunny and 75 with infinite cake?!) Meanwhile, they attempt to achieve equalitarianism piecemeal. This tends to take the form of assigning a value to the opportunities an individual may have been deprived of through circumstance of birth, and then forcing someone else to pay compensation. It can come in the form of a student rejected from a university to make room for an affirmative action admission. It can come in the form of restriction and ridicule of speech by one party to give another party a larger platform. **It tends to take the form of men subsidizing women's ability to pretend to be men.** In the end, it looks a lot like **Harrison Bergeron**; a lot of work is being done, but it is done with the aim of bringing people down. Nothing is made better, everything is made worse. *Entropy sets in.* The system falls apart.

So, this was very theoretical and heavy. However, I think it was important to start here as a big-picture view because subsequent articles will be filling in details and their significance could easily get lost without a reference point.

Further, the "glitches" are what lead one to suspect an illusion, but the illusion itself is not merely a collection of glitches. Nor is reality merely the removal or repair of those glitches; it is something entirely separate and different from the illusion. It was important to lay out what how the illusion relates to reality before continuing on to discuss individual aspects and problems of the illusion (lest it seem like the end goal was merely to repair the glitch, rather than use it as a handle to tear the whole thing down.)

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Original Article: <http://iparallax.wordpress.com/2013/12/12/post-modernism-understood-through-aristotles-four-causes/>

## Part 2: Post-Modernism, Wealth, and Entropy

December 18, 2013

*Academic writing takes on a back-and-forth nature. Experience and observation leads to understanding, which leads to a theory or thesis. Writers then begin at the end; laying out their thesis and then supporting it. The reader therefore begins a journey where the author ended it. </metawriting>*

[Last week I wrote out how I believe post-modernism is best understood through Aristotle's Forms.](#) It was kind of thick and theoretical. This post will tackle the other approach to this concept; the experiential and observational.

### Wealth

One point I raised was that the Material Cause of post-modernism is a certain degree of societal wealth. This wealth is the result of civilization's "conservation of knowledge and culture." This is worth examining in detail.

I used a fairly simplistic example, saying "cavemen couldn't build bulldozers, but they built the things-that built the things-that built the things-that built bulldozers, and now one guy can do the work of 100's." However, the issue of civilization is more complicated. Specifically, it must be recognized that civilization inherently involves both the **expansion** of a tribe's physical domain and the **centralization** of resources. A tribe of hunter-gatherers has a small camp and hunting/foraging parties enter the wilderness temporarily to secure food and other resources. A tribe transitioning to agriculture will still have a small camp, but now maintains permanent cultivation and stewardship over a certain amount of land. At first the only places worth settling will be fertile farmland. Yet as this tribe discovers stonework, metalwork, and industrialization, the budding civilization will establish quarries, mines, and other facilities even in marginally hospitable places; transporting food to those places to support workers who send resources back to the ever-growing village. Whereas the members of the hunter-gatherer tribe could reasonably expect to participate in all aspects of supporting the tribe's culture/economy (namely, count them slowly...hunting...and...gathering...), the members of the Bronze Age farming village are now depending on resources brought in from ever-more-remote locations that few will see or understand. It is vital to understand this process. It is often referenced with respect to increasing specialization and division of labor, but the point I am driving at is physical separation of producers and consumers, or the ever-lengthening supply chain.

At a certain point, even "human resources" begin to centralize. Local elite centralize at the state level, then the regional level, and finally the national and international level. A form of this is commonly referred to as "Brain Drain," although those who benefit from it would probably call it something positive such as "an intellectual economy of scale," or "Silicon Valley." The book "[Coming Apart](#)," describes this

phenomenon in great detail; I'll save space here by referencing it and one of its conclusions: American culture is produced and controlled by a tiny intellectual elite that centralizes itself in a few major cities.

Combine the ever-lengthening supply chain supporting the culture/economy of major cities with the fact that America's cultural elite (as well as the power of the popular vote) centralize in such cities. The result is that the people with the most power are the least connected with the roots of the system which sustain their lifestyle. The people most heavily dependent on modern electronics are the least likely to have any experience with a rare-metal mine. The large number of people taking a taxi to a local restaurant doesn't viscerally appreciate the necessity of car/truck ownership among the rural farmers supplying that restaurant. [I have written at lengths about the consequences of this gap before.](#)

So I have now laid out the centralizing, expansive nature of civilization and the inherent and ever-growing disconnect between producers and consumers this entails, and have done so using examples from every-day life. From this, we can see how the same conditions which create wealth also create people who don't understand where that wealth comes from. In short, we've re-covered the Material Cause. Now it's time for a science-y detour.

All systems produce waste. Among these is heat. (I imagine most readers will be familiar with the [impending heat death of the universe](#).) Life absorbs energy and uses it to create order. Plants use the energy contained in sunlight to **assemble** (create a state of *high* order) water, carbon dioxide, and nutrients from the soil into various hydrocarbons, and in the process release some waste heat (create a state of *low* order). Similarly, animals eat plants and drink water and convert the energy in them into meat, while releasing energy in various forms, including waste heat. The more links in the food chain, the more energy is wasted in heat on the way to providing one calorie to the apex predator. (This is why, as vegetarians love to point out, eating plants is more efficient than eating meat.)

A human city is the ultimate of apex predators. The process of supporting the city is the process of **centralizing** the resources of land with a sufficient carrying capacity. Not only are enormous quantities of resources consumed in a small area due to population density, but the resources must be transported to the city from miles around. So not only are resources spent in production, but also in transportation. Yet, again, due to the length of the supply chain, the average city-dweller is oblivious to the amount of energy expended to support his lifestyle (and therefore the amount of "waste heat" release on the way.) He purchases chicken already slaughtered, plucked, separated, packaged, and refrigerated. He turns on the lights and instantly benefits from coal that was mined in the next state and burned at the power plant two counties over. He buys a wool coat from the rack having never seen a sheep. In short, he lives in a system that is kept in a state of *high* order, maintained by the constant exertion by those outside the system. [In a way, the city is like an air conditioned room; one space kept cool at the expense of warming the entire system.](#)

**Entropy**

Thus far I have re-examined the connection between wealth and civilization, civilization and supply-chain length, and supply-chain length with efficiency, order, and waste. The point was to fully explore the Material Cause of post-modernism, ie the environment in which such an ideology can arise.

Now it's time to talk about [Entropy](#). As I said last week, this was the "Big Realization" that led me to write this whole thing out. And like I said at the beginning of this post, this was a long chain of observations, experiences, musings, and thoughts which began to crystallize (or maybe coagulate?) into a theory. As I wrapped up talking about wealth, I ended talking about cities being high order. This is the same as being low-entropy.

As I stated last week, I believe one of the Formal Causes of post-modernism is the inability to comprehend entropy due to lack of experience. The air conditioner referenced above cools a room through a process which warms the overall system. The city-dweller who lives an entire life within the confines of a low-entropy system (the city) has no first-hand experience with the amount of entropy created in the process of maintaining that system's low-entropy state. He is like someone who has experienced air conditioning but never felt warm A/C exhaust.

I've used a lot of analogies to this point; now I'll get to a real example of how this plays out in real life. Over the summer I mowed my yard, weeded the garden, and trimmed overgrowing bushes and trees. I didn't just do this once and quit forever; every weekend I had to spend a little bit of time engaged in at least one of those activities. In order to *maintain* my yard in a state of *low entropy*, I had to *continuously* exert effort. Despite my education, training, and qualifications to do many high-minded things, the task of simply maintaining my home requires repetitive, boring, simple work. No further amount of specialization or civilization on my part is going to remove or reduce the requirement to constantly overcome chaos. Despite my white collar job, I am still very in-tune with entropy thanks to this simple connection to reality via my yard.

Now consider the stereotypical young, urban college student living in a dorm, or a young activist living in a city apartment performing some paper-pushing job and spending his free time [raising awareness](#) for organic, pesticide-free farming and against genetically modified organisms. He's never so much as maintained a yard. He has no appreciation for the amount of effort required to keep it looking nice this week, and he certainly has no appreciation for the fact that he'll have to do it again the next week. Instead, his world is a constant treadmill of progress; he takes his 100-level classes, then his 200-level, then 300, 400, and on to a capstone course. Maybe he continued on to grad school, and then wrote a thesis. Then a PhD, and a dissertation. He watched fellow socio-political activists secure hate-speech rules. Then he watched "tolerance" become the law of the land. Then he watched the newly empowered Political Commissars intolerantly silence anyone who disagreed with them. ([After all, democracy is a vector, not merely a system](#)) Never once did anyone repeat anything. Never once did anyone lose ground to chaos. Never once did someone have to exert effort just to maintain the status quo. And so this individual who knows only life inside a low-entropy system tries with the fervor of a [prisoner of Plato's](#)

[cave](#) to impose the rules of his low-entropy world upon the farmer, whose entire job it is to create order in of a high-entropy environment. After a summer of home ownership, this activist would come to appreciate Round-Up and drought-resistance grass, and by analogy would probably support moderate pesticide and GMO usage on the part of the farmers *who feed him*. But his near total-disconnect from nature's high-entropy state, made possible by the ultra-long supply chain of a major city, has rendered him completely ignorant of the issues upon which he speaks.

The realization of a Formal Cause is an Efficient Cause. We have just seen how the Formal Cause “Lacks understanding of entropy” leads to the efficient cause “fanatically opposes modern farming methods.” It was the mental cataloging of these progressive causes and the search for the theoretical/structural underpinnings the united them that led me to the framework I have been articulating. The point I'm trying to make is that just about every political issue or stance is an Efficient Cause of post-modernism; they are the mechanisms by which the Formal Causes (which themselves are born from the Material Cause) are instituted as tangible, meaningful, *enforceable* policy. Before I untangled this, I spent considerable brain power trying to find the first Efficient Cause; did feminism lead to environmentalism, or vice versa? Perhaps socialism led to both? These avenues of thought were fruitless except to the degree I realized that they were all united by higher-order concepts; the Formal and Material causes I have outlined.

Next up will be an examination of the implications of a world-view which categorically ignores entropy as a fact of life. Stay tuned.

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Original Article: <http://iparallax.wordpress.com/2013/12/18/post-modernism-wealth-and-entropy/>

### Part 3: Post-Modernism's Final Causes and Pyrrhic Victory

December 31, 2013

In [Part 1](#), I framed post-modernism according to Aristotle's Four Causes. The main point was to highlight how post-modernism arises from wealth (its "Material Cause.")

In [Part 2](#), I talked about the Formal Causes of post-modernism. Specifically, I focused on the lack of respect for cost and chaos and how these arise in a wealthy society.

I'm going to skip a discussion of post-modernism's Efficient Causes for now. The Efficient Causes are essentially all the current events, issues, and problems we are currently experiencing as a result of our post-modern culture. The internet is already full of current-event commentary, and I'll leave this be for now.

This article is about post-modernism's Final Causes. In modern English this would be most straightforwardly translated as "purpose" or "goal." To use the common analogy, the Final Cause of a sculpture is the completed sculpture itself, composed of stone (material cause), made in the likeness of another item, idea, or inspiration (formal cause), by a sculptor (the efficient cause). The terminology of the Final Cause is important precisely because of its finality. For several cultural reasons that I'll gloss over, but mostly pertaining to disposable consumerism, a Westerner might view an individual sculpture as part of the artist's process; one of many works, part of this-or-that period of his career, etc. It is the difference between seeing the art as a mere *result* of the artist's endeavors and seeing that particular piece of art as the *purpose* of his endeavor and the reason he picked up a chisel at all.

What does this mean in terms of post-modernism? It means the first question to be asked is whether it is merely a process defined by rules or if it has an ultimate goal; a *telos*.

There is a strong case to be made that post-modernism has no meaningfully definable *telos*. The very inspiration for my blog was highlighting the highly contradictory and incompatible worldviews cobbled together to form the American Left. (For brevity, I'll only mention my analysis that the victories of same-sex marriage advocates in the US have simultaneously [signed the death warrant](#) for radical feminism and its dependence upon blank-slateism/ gender-as-a-social-construct.) Instead of striving for a defined end-state, it seems to pursue policies on a case-by-case basis, securing special rights and privileges for special interest groups. Conflicts are resolved not on the merits of the issues themselves, but according to the hierarchy of protected classes whom the Left represents. Viewed this way, it is a politic of appetite and avarice, no more sophisticated than a child demanding enough candy to eat himself sick, then crying about an upset stomach and demanding medicine.

Yet there is also a case to be made that post-modernism does have a vaguely defined *telos*, or at least it thinks it does. It envisions a world where everyone *is provided with* the same opportunities. Such a

world is to be created through a [Harrison Bergeron](#)-type leviathan state, which redistributes any and all resources required to make things ostensibly equal. But this is only vaguely defined, because it doesn't work. As RoK pointed out, "[Society Can't Afford the Educated Woman.](#)" This article highlights how policies to create equality will always boil down to redistribution, in this case from men to women. Affirmative action's problems are well documented as well: Students are set up for failure in more competitive schools when they would have succeeded in less competitive schools. The "Affirmative Action Vulture" casts doubt on the true qualifications on minorities. And finally, in order to attain the "equal" environment, people are deliberately helped or hindered by the very traits we pride ourselves on not discriminating by! Perhaps the failure of post-modernism's *telos* can be summed up in this [Forbes article](#); no one can un-do or prevent "cosmic unfairness," so progressive post-modernists simply shift it around from people they like to people they dislike. Which ultimately brings us back to the previous paragraph about why post-modernism has no actual *telos*.

For the sake of conversation, let's accept that post-modernism has no *telos*: no definable, attainable goal or end-state. Rather it seems to exist and guide our culture as a collection of short-sighted and contradictory rules and policies. With no destination in mind, we're going to end up wherever those rules tend to take us. A ship adrift will end up wherever the currents and winds take it, and its destination can be predicted not by asking the crew where it wants to go, but by studying said currents and winds. Similarly, we need to re-examine the currents and winds of post-modernism, the basis upon which its rules are formed and the Efficient Causes based: its Formal Causes.

As a refresher, I identified these as an ignorance or disregard for both cost and entropy. Harrison Bergeron demonstrates these both very well. The dancers are all made equal with heavy weights, but at the *cost* of all of them being terrible. Extra effort is exerted by the dancers to even move, and the bureaucrats expend energy to hand out and enforce the handicaps. Entropy isn't directly addressed, but one can easily imagine that a society full of farmers and other basic-goods producers who have been handicapped to the lowest common denominator would quickly starve to death.

Without a respect for entropy, post-modernism gleefully dismantles society's self-repair mechanisms which fight cultural, social, spiritual, and physical decay under the banner of unshackled freedom. Post-modernists tear down the very institutions which create the wealth upon which their ideology depends and squander the wealth already attained. A short list of examples includes:

- The nuclear family is replaced by [Heroic Single Mothers](#)<sup>™</sup> and the associated government assistance. (That progressives merely replaced women's husbands with government agencies is an idea that has been discussed extensively. One such article [linked here.](#))
- The education system has been re-tooled from an *education* system making reasonable investments to train qualified students into a grossly expensive, government-subsidized certification mill. While inflation of all sorts is a fact of life, the phenomenon of employers requiring degrees for jobs which don't require degrees is the result of post-modernists who confused cause and effect: "if people with

good jobs have degrees, than surely providing more people with more degrees will give them all better jobs!” The American obsession with sending every single child to college and gearing our K-12 education system accordingly (to the exclusion of vocational education) has been failing spectacularly recently, and America’s response has been to double-down on college-prep!

- Birth rates among the educated upper classes are falling below replacement levels. With this demographic putting off marriage and children later and later, the demographic shrinks more and more.
- Large-scale immigration combined with multi-culturalism attitudes in Western nations is resulting in large populations of non-assimilating immigrants who *do not share the progressive values of their new home countries’ political elite* . The American discussion on immigration is such a mess it’s not worth untangling here, but the Far Right in Europe is currently resurgent as the locals realize they losing control of their own countries from underneath their feet. The Arab nations have learned this lesson as well and are beginning to expel hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers.

Entities which ignore entropy decay. Houses which aren’t cleaned get dirty. Human bodies which don’t replace individual lost or dead cells die as a whole. Species which don’t reproduce go extinct with the death of their last members. If post-modernism refuses to recognize this reality, then it condemns itself to extinction as well. And all of this brings me to the point I’m really trying to make tonight:

**Can a culture incapable of sustaining itself be considered moral?**

I think this is the unstated question that many alt-right/neoreactionary writers are grappling with these days. The recent political history of the West has largely consisted of the expansion of *legal* freedom and opportunity and diminishing *social* structures to guide (both in the form of helping and hindering) the exercise of those freedoms. Post-modern culture, as I have defined it above, consists largely of expanding these freedoms with no sense of *telos*. It has defined “freedom” as a moral good to be maximized. Yet in the course of maximizing these freedoms, the same freedoms begin to disappear, or are rendered useless by the practical impossibility of exercising them. It is a snake which has swallowed its own tail to sate its hunger; it is a ship crew in mid-voyage that has set their vessel on fire to stay warm: in the process of securing a short-term good they inherently have ensured their own demise. While hunger is to be sated, swallowing one’s own tail is unwise and counterproductive. While warmth is required for life, burning the ship one is on is unwise and counterproductive.

Similarly, I question whether progressive post-modernism is a self-consuming ideology incapable of winning anything other than a Pyrrhic Victory over its ideological opponents.

Further Reading on Post-Modernism’s *telos* or lack thereof:

[How to Look at the World Like a Neoreactionary: Part 3](#) - Raises the question of “How far are you willing to go?” to achieve post-modernism’s goals (and concludes that post-modernists actually have none. They

just like the appearance of having them.)

[How to Look at the World Like a Neoreactionart: Part 7](#) – Addresses the moral issue of a culture's survival

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Original Article: <http://iparallax.wordpress.com/2013/12/31/post-modernisms-final-causes-and-pyrrhic-victory/>

# Making Neoreaction Simple

November 15, 2013

<http://amosandgromar.wordpress.com/2013/11/05/making-neoreaction-simple/>

by Amos & Gromar

*Neoreactionary observations – right philosophy, right results*



Neoreaction is highly abstract and highly nuanced, and so is highly self-selecting, in terms of the sort of folks drawn towards it. I've also noticed that the vast number of neoreactionaries are post-libertarians—that is, they've all gone through their OMG MISES days, and for whatever reason, have been a little thrown off by the simplicity of that sort of principled system, where simplicity in this case is not a virtue. Simplicity is to be opted for only in the case that it has good explanatory and predictive power, in relation to its alternatives.

Trying to explain neoreaction to the average libertarian is like climbing a progressively crumbling Jacob's Ladder and trying to extend a hand down to the bottom to help the poor souls up. It's hard to express mental states in language. Once you accept the paradigm, it's easy to forget those at the bottom. What seems obvious and intuitive to you is utterly foreign to them. Not only can they not climb the rungs, *but they've never even conceived of those rungs in the first place*. This is why I commonly say: "Gee, I wish I could just hook up our two brains with a data transfer cord, because I just can't adequately express it efficiently in verbal language."

Now, it's obviously the case that the ladder can't be a Meta Ladder for the ordinary folk on the ground, but for those capable of meta, the prospect of the climb is still daunting and not at all motivating. They've already made the transition to the top, they think. That's what libertarianism is about, after all. They already made the crucial switches from liberalism or conservatism. This is the final stop on the train.

In short, most libertarians are going to need some real good initial reasons, in order to encourage/shock them into investing meta resources, so that they can reconstruct the ladder, rung by rung, until they reach post-libertarian neoreaction. That's mostly because the top of Jacob's Ladder isn't pretty by any stretch of the word. Not only that, but neoreaction is still a brand-spanking new ideology, but it's the first modern political philosophy to seriously take genetics into account in a framework-wide sense. This is a remarkable innovation, insofar as political theory goes. In other words, you don't have neoreaction without human biodiversity. You just don't.

So neoreaction, in order to draw more meta folks into the flock, needs to be broken down into 'cheat sheets'—rhetorically efficient documents which explain 'What is it, and why does it matter?' but I don't know if it's ready for that yet. There's so much work left to be done, but I'm going to try and make an effort. Going meta for an extended period of time on each and every issue on a case-by-case basis isn't effective, and it isn't efficient. We need to communicate and defend the framework as a whole, so that it can be picked up and applied by the recipient.

Nick Steves has done some [great work here](#), as have several others, but it's not complete, and it isn't intended to be. Bryce has written a short book called 'What is Neoreaction?' but it's also highly meta, and it isn't fully accessible to run-of-the-mill libertarians, which I want to market neoreaction to. Why libertarians?

1. As I said previously, post-libertarians are the most likely to become neoreactionaries.

2. Libertarianism and neoreaction share an obsession with microeconomics, albeit ours uses the same tools to come to different conclusions. But it also modifies those tools, slightly.
3. Libertarians are already used to being ostracized by the mainstream, so it'll be easier to find common cause on those grounds and to call them on any Cathedral-like responses.
4. Libertarians already accept inequality on at least some grounds, such as income inequality, without the need for the state to jump in redistribute things.
5. Libertarians understand the importance of polycentric legal orders, and the de jure/de facto distinction, at least in principle.
6. Libertarians understand the importance of frameworks.

I'm sure I could come up with more reasons, but I think that list helps to establish why they're the most natural targets for neoreaction indoctrination, but indoctrination occurs through short and concrete 'cheat' sheets, or political tracts. I can't just rehearse one of my meta posts on the application of the NR framework to some obscure issue. That just doesn't convince anyone. What does work is when a concrete topic comes up, say open immigration, and succinct neoreactionary talking points are used to help those in the dialogue move from the concrete issue to the abstract principles of the NR framework.

So where and when is it? Well shucks, I don't have it. Not yet anyway, but I'm hoping at least to outline some of the sections here to then be fleshed out further in the future.

1. The neoreactionary response to public choice theory and the comparative institutions approach
2. The neoreactionary response to the non-aggression axiom and property rights-theory: why property rights are great, but why property rights can and should be limited beyond the initiation of aggression. This is perhaps the most essential point. Let 'justice' in the form of 'muh property rights' be done though the heavens fall. This must go.
3. The neoreactionary defense of the state
4. The neoreactionary response to microeconomic foundations: where the logic of basic principles needs to be tuned up a bit
5. The neoreactionary response to a denial/sweeping under the table of market failure
6. The neoreactionary response to a denial of paternalism
7. The neoreactionary response to apriori, 'fungibilist' psychology, which has (1) a muddled up conception of free will, and which (2) fails to take seriously the role of genetics (this point might be better suited as a sub-point of #4, but #7 also covers the failure of libertarianism to incorporate an understanding of demographics into its framework)
8. The neoreactionary response to autistic epistemology (See: [The Zip Code Problem](#))
9. The neoreactionary response to free-trade, in addition to a take-down of the 'I have faith in the free

market' view. Yes, this is an actual quote from a friend who works for the Kochs. #9 is best achieved, again, through an exposition of #4

I get that there's resistance to looking down Jacob's Ladder. Anytime there's a major framework transition, from X to Y, as a Y-ist, there's a tendency to never really look at X charitably again, or to even tolerate discussion of it. *You're so over it*, but in our case, it's a bit premature for that. It's amusing, isn't it? You see this phenomenon, for instance, in converts to protestantism from Catholicism, and vice-versa, as well as 'converts' to neoreaction from libertarianism.

We don't really need to talk about democracy for this part. Not many libertarians disagree on our points there, but they need to be convinced that public choice theory is limited in its application to certain political structures, like democracy, for example.

Neoreaction will be very much stunted in its growth if that's the predominant attitude. Neoreaction needs to take libertarianism seriously—dead seriously—and to 'stoop' back down and help rebuild the rungs on Jacob's Ladder. Each one of these sections (and I suspect more will be added later, and I encourage my readers to post submissions in the comments) will be defended through the use of bullet-point-arguments and stats. Not too heavy on the meta, short, sweet, hard-hitting, straight to the point, memorable, easily memorizable, and finally, a good dose of quant/empirical work.

All of these help to answer the question: what's the framework switch, why does it matter, what are the implications, and what does it all mean?

It helps them get to the top of Jacob's Ladder, and it helps you remember *how you got there*.



## The Cathedral and the Bizarre: Benjamin Crump's Manufactured Consent

July 29, 2013

<http://theden.tv/2013/07/29/the-cathedral-and-the-bizarre-benjamin-crumps-manufactured-consent/>

by Wesley Morganston

*The Denning the West*

# The Den

The bizarre saga of Trayvon Martin has ended. The legal system demonstrated its independence from the court of public opinion, much to the chagrin of those who manipulate it. Even [NPR](#) has admitted the prosecution was weak.

We are now exhorted to [begin conversations](#) on progressives' pet issues of race and guns, to [ask questions](#) about our country's handling of these issues. But there is a more important conversation that no one thinks or dares to have, a question that no one asks: *how did this become a story?*

The death of Trayvon Martin, we are told, is merely an example of a consistent pattern of 'institutional racism' in America, a pattern of the unjustified murder of Blacks by the enforcers of a prejudiced law. But if this is true, why did *this* death become the example? Why did this incident, not another, become an international story reported on continuously for over a year? Every development has demonstrated that the prosecution never had a case. So the question must be asked: why, out of as many cases as the narrative claims exists, did the media pick such a weak one as this?

The answer is: because Trayvon's parents' lawyer told them to.



Meet Benjamin Crump: the lawyer, and one of the shrewdest manipulators of the media in America, as detailed in [his bio](#).

In 2001, the firm represented Zaniyah Hinson. As discussed on the Oprah Winfrey Show, the two year old died after being left in a Daycare van for four hours in 104 degree temperatures. ESPN Sports Center broadcast another case the firm handled involving Leeronnie Ogletree, a 39 year old former ball boy for the Boston Red Sox, who was sexually molested by the teams clubhouse manager from the age of 8 to 17. ... Also there is the matter of the "Bay Street Nine," featured on ABC Nightly News.

It is well documented that in January 2006 Mr. Crump relentlessly pursued justice on behalf of the parents of Martin Lee Anderson, the 14 year- old boy who died the day after he was restrained, beaten and suffocated at a Bay County juvenile boot camp. The camp's security cameras captured the incident on videotape. The case has been the feature of television shows like NBC's Today Show, ABC's 20/20 and CNN's Anderson Cooper 360 and continues to grab almost daily headlines in newspapers all over the nation as well as being chronicled in Essence, Jet, and Newsweek Magazines.

[This Reuters article](#) covers the press conference that Crump held after Trayvon's death and quoting his statement at length. (Yes, you read that right: *press conference*. Attended by a reporter from Reuters.) It reads as if it could have been written a month ago: every element of the narrative is in place.

“He was a good kid,” Crump said in an interview, adding that the family would issue a call for the Watch captain's arrest at a news conference on Thursday. “On his way home, a Neighborhood Watch loose cannon shot and killed him.” ...

“What do the police find in his pocket? Skittles,” Crump said. “A can of Arizona ice tea in his jacket pocket and Skittles in his front pocket for his brother Chad.” ...

“He (Zimmerman) didn't have to get out of his car,” said Crump, who has prepared a public records lawsuit to file on Thursday if the family doesn't get the 911 tape. “If he never gets out of his car, there is no reason for self-defense. Trayvon only has skittles. He has the gun.”

Since Trayvon, a high school junior who wanted to be a pilot, was black and Zimmerman is white, Crump said race is “the 600 pound elephant in the room.”

“Why is this kid suspicious in the first place? I think a stereotype must have been placed on the kid,” Crump said.

It could have been written a month ago, but it was actually published on March 7—2012. This is the first reference to the case in the media, and yet the narrative is already written. Who wrote it? Benjamin Crump.



The case of Trayvon Martin proves nothing about America other than how easy it is to manipulate public opinion. All it takes to turn a minor non-case into an international story mentioned in multiple presidential speeches is a lawyer savvy enough to tell the media what it wants to hear.

What does the media want to hear? This is easily determined: what has the media emphasized? Race. Zimmerman, we are told, was white, or at least a “white Hispanic”; Trayvon was black; and the case is important because it shows America's supposed racism.

The mass media can be divided into two parts: progressive and useless. Inner Party and Outer Party. Fox News is the most prominent outlet in the latter wing, which positions itself as the reasonable, conservative opponent to the progressive media juggernaut. But the most it has said on Benjamin Crump's role in the creation of the Trayvon saga is this one paragraph, buried in [a trial report](#) in its Latino section:

The shooting received little initial attention, but that changed after Martin's parents hired Benjamin Crump, a prominent civil rights attorney. He began complaining to the news media, accusing the police and prosecutors of letting the murderer of a black child go free, and contacting other civil rights leaders, including the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, to get their support.

Why?

Perhaps it is only that Fox News is part of the media. A very powerful part it is: [ninth in the world](#), and sixth if you ignore Google News, Reddit, and the Weather Channel. It has staked out its demographic well—but not, one must hope, well enough; for if the only major national news outlet that attempts not to align itself with progressivism still has economic reason to let progressives [set the frame](#), all hope is lost. Progressives asks the questions—what should happen to Zimmerman? what does he signify about American race relations? and so on—and conservatives answer them, disagreeing on the answers but agreeing on the questions to be asked.

It's frame first, frame now, frame forever. You lose the frame, and you are perpetually crouched in the defensive posture, playing by the girl's rules, dancing to her beat, singing her tune, spasmodically twitching on her puppeteer strings...

As it is in the media, so it is in American history. Progress has progressed for several hundred years now. Even the progression of progress has progressed; who would have guessed fifty years ago that gay marriage would become a national issue? Support for legal recognition of gay marriage [doubled](#) since 1996—and for that matter, Gallup only started polling it then!

*Pas d'ennemis à gauche, pas d'amis à droite.* [O'Sullivan's Law](#) has no exception. (Yes, that includes the [Daily Mail](#).) What is conservatism but the liberalism of thirty years ago? Progressivism is the ultimate alpha of American politics: it sets the frame for [every 'respectable' institution](#), and thus does it rule America.

In the modern democracy, public opinion is not the unmoved mover it is frequently claimed to be. [Brahmins](#), the caste of Americans which now proclaims democracy's virtues louder than anyone, used to hate it. H.L. Mencken, who attacked it for holding "the civilized minority ... at the mercy of the mob", was by no means out of the caste's mainstream. The conversion of Brahmins to the democratic faith was brought about by Walter Lippmann and Edward Bernays, who taught them to manage public opinion—to *manufacture consent*.

Lippmann proposed that the problem of democracy could be solved by the creation of a specialized class of information analysts presenting information to media figures tasked with the persuasion of the masses and politicians tasked with implementing it. This solution is what we see today, albeit in a slightly modified form: there is no bright dividing line between the analysts and the media. There are, after all, such creatures as investigative journalists and pundits.

In Mencius Moldbug's terminology, the information-persuasion complex is called the [Cathedral](#) (so named because [it's not the Bazaar](#)) and the implementers are the [Polygon](#).

The great power center of 2008 is the Cathedral. The Cathedral has two parts: the accredited universities and the established press. The universities formulate public policy. The press guides public opinion. In other words, the universities make decisions, for which the press manufactures consent. It's as simple as a punch in the mouth.

The Cathedral operates as the brain of a broader power structure, the Polygon or Apparat – the permanent civil service. The Apparat is the [civil service](#) proper (all nonmilitary officials whose positions are immune to partisan politics, also known as “democracy”), plus all those formally outside government whose goal is to influence or implement public policy – ie, [NGOs](#). (There's a reason NGOs have to remind themselves that they're “non-governmental.”)

The universities make decisions, but nobody makes decisions for the universities. The Cathedral is decentralized: it produces a party line without a Party, and certainly without a Party Secretary.

Today's Cathedral is not a personality cult. It is not a political party. It is something far more elegant and evolved. It is not even an organization in the conventional, hierarchical sense of the word – it has no Leader, no Central Committee, no nothing. It is a true peer-to-peer network, which makes it extraordinarily resilient. To even understand why it is so unanimous, why Harvard always agrees with Yale which is always on the same page as Berkeley which never picks any sort of a fight with the New York Times, except of course to argue that it is not progressive enough, takes quite a bit of thinking.

Needless to say, the Cathedral is progressive. It is progressive the way the [Papal States](#) were Catholic: churchmen always hold the dominant governmental offices. As Moldbug says:

If you were advising a young, amoral, ambitious and talented person to choose a political persuasion solely on the probability of personal success, you would certainly advise her to become a progressive. She should probably be as radical as possible, hopefully without acquiring any sort of a criminal record. But as the case of Bill Ayers shows, even straight-out terrorism is not necessarily a bar to the circles of power (especially if, like [Ayers](#), you started there in the first place).

The wise reader must here object: America looks nothing like the Papal States! Well, of course not. It

wouldn't. As a model of governance, the Papal States leave much to be desired, especially for America, whose geography, alas, prohibits the importation of high-quality Swiss troops. [\(But not all importation!\)](#) A stable hyperpower simply would not have *carbonari*, so neither would it have a political structure that requires them. Just as consent is manufactured, [dissent is managed](#).

To the extent that democratic politics still exists in the Western world, it exists in the form of the two-party system. The parties have various names, which they have inherited from history. But there are only two parties: the Inner Party, and the Outer Party. It is never hard to tell which is which.

The function of the Inner Party is to delegate all policies and decisions to the Cathedral. The function of the Outer Party is to pretend to oppose the Inner Party, while in fact posing no danger at all to it. Sometimes Outer Party functionaries are even elected, and they may even succeed in pursuing a few of their deviant policies. The entire Polygon will unite in ensuring that these policies either fail, or are perceived by the public to fail. Since the official press is part of the Polygon and has a more or less direct line into everyone's brain, this is not difficult.

The Outer Party has never even come close to damaging any part of the Polygon or Cathedral. Even McCarthy was not a real threat. He got a few people fired, most temporarily. Most of them were actually Soviet agents of one sort or another. They became martyrs and have been celebrated ever since.

So Fox News' failure to raise the strongest possible opposition to the progressives' Trayvon narrative is not bizarre at all; it is exactly what is expected. The conservative media pretends to provide opposition, while letting progressives set the frame. As John Derbyshire and Jason Richwine discovered, it is much easier to be fired from the conservative establishment for being too conservative than for being too progressive. Maybe Fox decided not to give more coverage to the fact that Trayvon's family lawyer wrote the entire narrative because they thought it sounded too 'fringe', or maybe they just thought it wasn't a story. It doesn't matter; they failed either way.

And where they fail, we at Theden intend to succeed.

# A Decent Life For Decent People

November 22, 2013

<http://handleshaus.wordpress.com/2013/11/22/a-decent-life-for-decent-people/>

by Handle's Haus

*Alle meine freunde in meinem haus willkommen*



(HT: [EducationRealist](#))

ER's got some interesting thoughts on 'school choice', charters, vouchers, 'accountability', teachers unions, pensions, etc. with the bottom line that what is going left unsaid and unargued (because taboo) is what's really driving this train.

Charles Murray has a little post, "[A case study in the government as the enemy](#)" which, in a way, gives the flip-side of the argument, but I think the particular charter school he's talking about, and the motivations of those involved with it, present a kind of ideal and outlier case (and even then the County is 'openly hostile').

But most of the time the facts and motivations are not that pretty. ER [points us to some comments](#) from a previous post which I believe should be reproduced in full:

"ME":

The reason 48% of whites (who send their children to school elsewhere) supported the teachers was because they need the "bad" kids babysat most of the day. From early morning (free breakfast) to early evening (after school care) the "bad" kids are cajoled into wreaking havoc and violence only on each other, in one building, away from productive citizens – kind of like preschool for juvenile detention centers or daycare until they are eligible for actual prison.

The strike meant the libraries, parks, etc. were unusable for any non-gang members because the CPS kids were flooding them. Sit and sip a coffee as a Chicago public school lets out one weekday – for example a much lauded charter school in Bucktown [[sic](#)] (a nice area so of course some fun and excitement had to be imported). Watch the entire surrounding area batten down the hatches before the kids are pardoned for the evening. It looks just like an old western where the Moms rush children inside, windows close, people pull their cars into the garage, wagons, strollers, and bikes get locked to porch rails...and then all hell breaks loose for about a half hour while the parents blast crude music and scream profanity at each other, clog the small residential streets with maniacal driving, and the kids stream out damaging parkway gardens, throwing junk food wrappers all over the place and "play" fighting. Anything not secured is stolen, anything that can be quickly and needlessly vandalized is just for giggles.

That is why Rham [[sic](#)] lost his power play. **No one really thinks their tax dollars are spent on education – the bar has been lowered so low that taxpayers are THRILLED when someone just keeps the chaos controlled long enough to enjoy a tiny sliver of a decent life** in Chicago. The raccoon eyed moron tasked with stealing everything Jr. left is either frighteningly out of touch with the city (almost definitely) or so dangerously stupid it is high comedy (also likely). [The crazy fat far left of center lady](#) who kicked his ass without breaking a sweat is not dangerously out of touch or (as) stupid.

ER:

Conservatives often talk about how schools are too lenient, that education should be a privilege that can be taken away. If bad kids were expelled, schools could focus on the kids who want to be there.

I tell them great. Have they consulted the cops on this plan? **Because the cops know better than anyone that much of school in certain areas is little more than babysitting potential delinquents.** Are they prepared for the increased costs of jail?

You've given me an idea for another post. Thanks!

However, I had never really considered the logistics of what the chaos looked like until your post. That's really sad.

It is sad, isn't it? Very, very sad. Both the facts themselves (the natural tragedy of the human condition via HBD, and the man-made social tragedy of encouraging a subculture of celebrated barbarism amongst one of those varieties) and the meta-fact that we can't discuss the facts in public using our real names (the man-made tragedy of PC).

There are certain kinds of realism that America is not allowed to admit and which can be incorporated into people's attempts to achieve their legitimate goals only covertly, *sub silentio*, and through [various kinds of costly geographic segregation](#). Most people don't really care *too* much about most of the actual content taught in school (though they should). They don't need it to be some ultra-elite genius-camp. They just want a good place for their kids to grow up into young adults and reach their potential.

When policy-types debate the efficacy (or, more commonly, [lack thereof](#)) of various educational strategies and intervention, it is like debating which shade of red is most perfect for the skin of a rotten apple. No one wants to talk about the rot (actually, no one dares) and so we talk about proxies with just-barely-plausible alternative justifications, as cover for the real agenda.

I'm sure there's a great Russian word for this, probably a few. Maybe you want a little more private property, but since you can't admit that, you come up with a socially acceptable way to advocate a 'more perfect Marxism' reform that has the effect of getting you what you really want.

And what is the agenda? Simple. Decent people want to be able to afford to raise their decent kids and send them to school where they'll be encouraged to follow beneficial norms by their peers, and where they will be safe around these other decent kids and away from the bad apples. To ordinary decent people without ideological obsessions, this is the political and economic issue of our age, and no one is helping them. That's what it seems like to me and all my other friends with kids, and of all political stripes.

No one is quite sure what to do about the bad apples, except to keep them away and, somehow, *contained de facto*. If this can only be accomplished via impersonal economic forces in the real estate market, well,

so be it, but it's awfully unfair to the poor good apples who must bear the burden of the unmentionable passive policy.

Except it's getting harder and harder to not be a 'poor good apple', and so you'll find yourself bearing a burden one way or another, either financially, or through bad-apple-proximity.

My vision of neoreaction is in fact a very modest one; perhaps even minimalist. I would prefer to live in a society that effectively solves this major social problem, and I would be willing to give up a lot for it. I do, in fact, presently give up a lot for my attempt to achieve my own equivalent of it, and so does every ordinary decent person I know.

But here's the problem. It seems that giving us what we want simply cannot be done through ordinary reforms and mild adjustments in the present political system. In fact, any policy with half a chance of actually working and having a positive effect is defined, in the present political lexicon, as radical extremist racist fascism. Definitely 'unconstitutional' too.

It says a lot about our times that I, and a few of my friends, and perhaps the growing numbers of readers that hand around these DE parts, feel that we have to flee brain-dead, reality-denying, pseudo-'conservatism' (and all its relatives) as failed-bulwarks against progressivism, and find an altogether different political theory in a desperate search to find a way to achieve this most basic of bourgeois desires.

What a strange feeling. The thing we want seems so reasonable and so obviously important. A decent life for decent people. And yet we are denied and thwarted and paralyzed and if we express these legitimate frustrations we are simply insulted and defamed to boot.

We are not always told that the mere *wanting* is itself immoral (though I'm sure that's on its way), but we *are* told that anything that can deliver our wants to us is *definitely immoral* and *simply not allowed anymore*. And that it will *never* be allowed. Because democracy and equality and social justice and 'rights'.

Everybody else has been given every other kind of right and it's all seemed to crowd out the core experience of modern life – the fundamental hope and expectation of governance: Order for the Orderly. This, we are told, is called 'progress', but it sure doesn't feel like it.

Many of us were born and raised and taught, over and over, to believe that these are sacred words with special powers over us; the power to trump all our desires and objections and even neutralize logical arguments. If you are dissatisfied without remedy then you are expected to buck up and take it.

But at some point, my dear novice reader, you will wake up and realize all these sacred words have been hijacked and commandeered in the service of your adversary. You will wake up and say, "If that's what 'social justice' means, then to hell with it. To hell with all these made-up nonsensical 'rights'. It's nothing

but lies.”

“This is a fraud; the greatest sham on earth. But I’m done with this nonsense. F\* that noise! If I can’t get what I need from you bastards, I’ll find it somewhere else.”

And we will be waiting for you, and we will say, ‘Willkommen’.

# Conservatism and the Cognitive Miser

September 4, 2012

<http://socialpathology.blogspot.com/2013/09/conservatism-and-cognitive-miser.html>

by The Social Pathologist

*The diseases of modern life as seen through the secular confessional*



Back to regular programming.

One of the concepts I've been trying to get across to my readership over the last few posts is that of the "[cognitive miser](#)" or mass man. I really can't emphasize enough just how important this concept is, since in my opinion, the phenomenon of the cognitive miser goes a long way to explaining the societal uptake of ideologies which are ultimately destructive.

Indeed, one of the great omissions with regard to sociological analysis of the 20th Century has been the failure to recognise the cognitive limitations of the average man and the subsequent consequence of this fact on sociological events. One of the reasons why Fascism, Socialism and modern Materialism have been so triumphant is because the ideas they espouse are so easily grasped by the weak mind, and in an age of "democracy", it's no surprise that these stupid ideologies would find such fertile ground amongst "the people".

The point I'm trying to make is that the trajectory of the 20th Century makes a lot of sense when you look at it from the perspective of the cognitive miser. Simply by weight of numbers, it is he who determined the course of 20th Century history and has been its motor. Nazism, Socialism and Liberalism were harmless ideologies as long as they were confined to the parlor discussions of the philosophers. Cultured people saw the ideas for what they were and rejected them, their fertile ground, however, was amongst the cognitive misers, i.e. the people.

Historians still wonder, how a civilised and advanced nation such as Germany could fall under the spell of the Nazis. [William Shirer](#), writing in the Rise and Fall of the Third Reich wondered how could the people that produced Beethoven, Goethe and Planck embrace Hitler? It's a difficult fact to reconcile until you realise that in the age of Beethoven the average German had no say in public affairs, but in the age of "democracy" stewardship of the nation was passed to the cognitive misers of Germany. Hitler would have been impossible in the Kaiser's Germany, but he is possible in a [modern Democracy](#). I think it is the neglect of this fact that has seriously hampered historical understanding of the rise of such poisonous ideologies. Societies change not only through the uptake of new ideas, but also upon the mob's perverted understanding of them. Note, I'm not having a swipe at the Germans here. I imagine that under different circumstances Americans and Australians would have behaved in the same manner.

Historians tend to think that the average man is swayed by ideas when in reality he is swayed by emotion. Fascism and Socialism appealed less to the mind than to the blood. Ideas which resonated with an individual's disposition and prejudices are far more powerful to the mob than reasoned discussion and factual evidence. Less taxes (no matter how inappropriate) initiate just as Pavlovian a response amongst the unthinking right as do calls for "social justice" on the Left. The point is that democracy elevates the unthinking man into a position of power. It is therefore no surprise that when the wise and considered are pushed aside, governance ceases to be a considered subject but becomes an exercise in mob power in pursuit of the satiation of its hindbrain appetites.

In a democracy, the intellectual "center of gravity" drifts from a society's best and brightest and, instead, finds its home amongst in the mind of the cognitive miser, who forms the bulk of humanity. The net effect is that there is an inevitable "prole drift", not only of political debate, but of culture and morals, *everything* eventually gets vetted by the people (within their cognitive limitations) But there is another factor that needs to be considered here, namely economic democracy, i.e the free market. In a free democracy, cognitive misers do not just exert their malign effect through political power, but through economic power as well. Elitist activities--activities which represent the high point of civilisation-- such as opera, classical music and and art, esoteric academic disciplines, and libraries struggle to survive economically in a market where the proles do not appreciate their intrinsic worth. The is not an argument against the free market, but an argument against the notion that everything has to pay for itself, it's this latter notion that ensures that prole economies of scale overwhelm everything which eludes their comprehension.

[The Victorian critics of democracy](#) were acutely cognisant of the incompatibility between universal democracy and the notions of virtue, good governance and liberty. They also recognized the the notion of universal democracy itself was profoundly anti-conservative. They based their criticism on the observed fact that the *average man's mind is incapable of the complex cognition necessary for good governance*. I think one of the reasons why mainstream western conservatism (particularly its American variant) has been so completely sideswiped by the left is that it has lost sight of this fact. Instead, modern political conservatism has internalised one of liberalism's enabling principles and proclaimed it as a core value. Modern conservatism is, in effect, sawing away at the branch it is sitting on by supporting one of the enabling principles of liberalism. The liberal infection is deeply seated.

# The Biological Vote: It's Implications for Conservatism

August 23, 2012

<http://socialpathology.blogspot.ca/2013/08/the-biological-vote-its-implications-for.html>

by The Social Pathologist

*The diseases of modern life as seen through the secular confessional*



As mentioned in previous posts, the cognitive miser operates on intuition and feeling. Their opinions on matters can be considered as more akin to higher order reflexes responding to complex stimuli. However, there does appear to be a wide variability in the nature of the response, with people responding differently to the same stimulus, and what interests me is the origin of the variability.

It's been long known that temperament can be bred in dogs. It's also been known that certain mood [disorders can run through family lines](#). So it is not unreasonable to assume that personality may have a strong genetic component. [Ed: For the spergs, environment also has an influence] Personality needs to be understood as not only how we respond to the world but also how we interpret it. The emotional responses generated novel environmental stimuli seem to be both hard wired (genetics) and learned.

The reason why some people like authority and others don't may not have any rational basis whatsoever, rather their inherited genetic encoded operating system may pre-dispose them to their respective responses. i.e. the feelings generated are involuntary. Science has not yet worked out how we generate the emotional responses we do to certain situations. I suspect that the answer will lay in all that [junk DNA](#) that is currently being re-evaluated [Ed: Astute observers will note that the term "junk" has been dropped. Dumb Scientists]. But what's becoming increasingly evident is that Conservatives and Liberals seem to differ, to a degree, in biology. [Anonymous Conservative](#) (Hat tip, Matt Forney) has a [good paper here listing some of the cerebral and genetic differences between Conservatives and Liberals](#). Now, I'm not a big believer in his r/K selection theory but I do think his comments on the differences between groups two have significant implications in reality.

As has been shown by neuroscience, the cognitive miser is strongly influenced by his emotional state, and given that most men are cognitive misers, it follows that their politics will be strongly influenced by their emotions. The non-intuitive thinker, will look at facts and issues and will try to weigh them objectively, being able to "decouple" from his emotions. The problem is that this type of man is an exception and in a democracy the intuitive mob rules.

The take home message here is that we seem to be dispositionally orientated to conservatism or liberalism as a result of our genetics, and as politics has become more dumbed down, we're seeing and more of the influence of this genetic component on voting results. In a democracy, where the cognitive miser is king, the absence of an overwhelming idea means that people will vote upon intuitive lines. The reason why we can't reach consensus is because the underlying biology is in opposition. It's almost as if voting is decided by bloodlines.

My concern, however, is with the conservative cognitive miser, the man who votes for the Right. Whilst most political psychological studies are liberal biased, nearly all of them demonstrate a continual aversion to novelty, individuality and cognitive flexibility amongst conservatives. This does not mean that conservatives are incapable of taking on new ideas, rather, they're slower on the uptake. However, if they can become accustomed to an idea, over time, they will adopt them. These intuitive conservatives, are

thus agents of cultural inertia. Note, they're not concerned about the content as much as the novelty of the idea. Go it slow is their motto. The thing about these conservatives is that their conservatism is "content lite" and is situational more than principled. There is no political ideology intrinsic to conservatism of the cognitive miser, because it is all about the rate of change and how the ideologies are [superficially packaged](#).

Now you can see how Burkean Conservatism appeals to these types, for Burke echos their intuitions. I've got to admit, I've never been a fan of Burke's thinking. He reminds me of an old grandfather driving a well maintained old Ford. He travels a bit under the speed limit, "just in case" and sticks to well worn routes. He keeps talking about the kids killing themselves driving those fast foreign cars.

The thing is, once a liberal idea does take hold amongst these intuitive conservatives they're just as likely to hold on it. If we were to survey the current political landscape, which conservative party is seriously trying to **push back** on ideas such as pre-marital sex, divorce, moral relativism, multiculturalism and more recently gay marriage? The stuff that is the real social rot of our society. These things are now taken as a given by the mainstream right. The modern Right in the U.S. looks a lot like the Carter Left in the 70's, though Carter did not support gay marriage.....maybe.

Old style conservatism was heavily based on religion, and hence was propositional. The content of religion flavoured the conservatism and *set limits to its malleability*. The new style "inclusive" conservatism is situational and content "flexible", it is endlessly malleable provided it is done slowly. This is why the religious collapse in the West in the 1960's was so destructive to *political* conservatism as well. Religion buttressed political conservatism in a mass democracy and its removal ensured the slow drift to the Left.

Conservatism needs to be framed as a propositional ideology. Principally, it is an ideology which first and foremost believes in the truth and reality. The problem with such a conservatism though is that it is inaccessible to the cognitive miser, who votes with his gut instead of his head. Therefore the only way I can see that meaningful conservatism will reassert itself in the West will be either through;

1. An evangelisation of the democratic nations. In my opinion, unlikely.
2. The collapse of democracy and the reassertion of Conservatism by a cognitive/religious elite.

The way things are going, the second option seems the most probable.

# Clausewitz, Lenin, Robin Dunbar

August 18, 2013

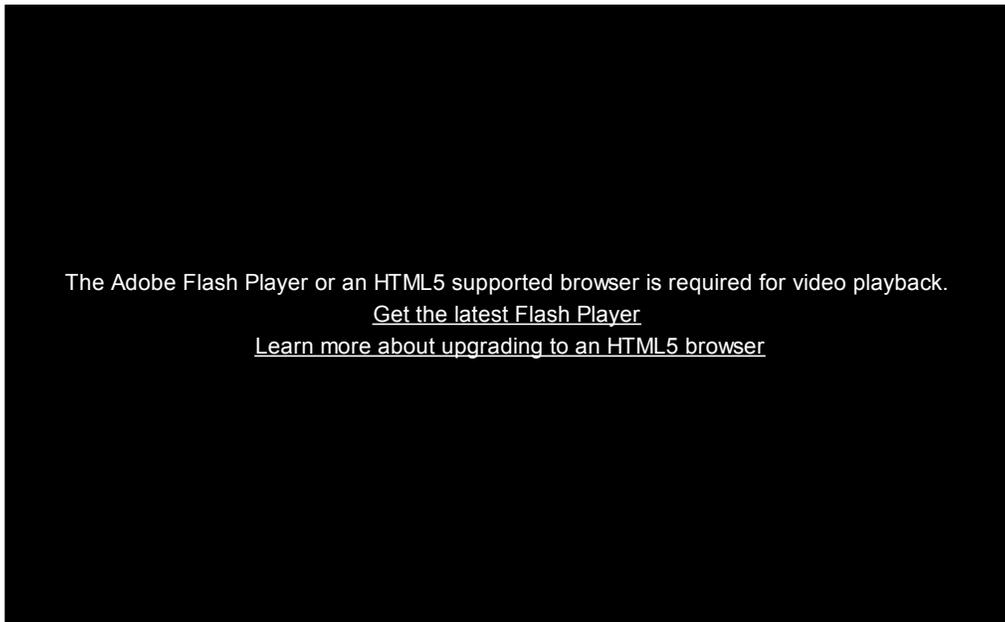
<http://bloodyshovel.wordpress.com/2013/08/18/clausewitz-lenin-robin-dunbar/>

by Spandrell

*We shall drown, and nobody will save us*



Power is fascinating. It shouldn't be though. Nothing good comes from the fascination towards power, especially for those who don't have it. But we can't help it. We are a political animal. Which means we share a common descent with these fellas down here:



["NATURE | What Females Want and Males Will Do | Chewbacca"](#)

We being monkeys, we aren't really fascinated with power, in abstract. After all it's quite hard to even define what 'power' is. What does it really mean to have power? What does power do? How does it work? One of the first signs a word/concept is too vague is that it doesn't translate well. In Chinese 'power' generally translates as 力量, but political power is translated as 權力. It doesn't help that 權 generally translates as 'right'. As in 人權, human rights. And that's a recent coining, borrowed from Western political science jargon. You'd think Chinese would have their own ideas about power after 2300 years of centralized empire, but they don't have a clue.

So most people don't have a good understanding of what power is. What we do know is powerful people. Those are everywhere, and God are we obsessed with them. Fascinated. They're everywhere, and everybody's talking about them. We are fascinated with the powerful. How did they get it? What do they want it for? And how do they use it?

And oftentimes, rather than fascination, we are more like mystified. Bemused. Stupefied. What the hell are they doing? I guess that is the common feeling on the reactosphere. All politically aware people have fantasies of what they would do if they had power. And theories of what power is for and why people seek it. But then you look around. And you see Jeff Bezos giving money to a [sodomy promotion group](#). You see Finland's government paying to have Somalis living the 60th parallel. You see George Soros [buying shares of Herbalife](#).



I have gay friends

And then it strikes you. When you, politically awakened man, think about power, you have an abstract framework of what power does, and what it should do. You have your ideas on how society should be organized, and think that politics is about applying those ideas in absolute terms. But on closer inspection, it doesn't work like that. George Soros didn't buy shares of Herbalife because he has abstract beliefs on how the economy works and believes Herbalife is great value. Or he has abstract mathematical models that say that Herbalife will make him a lot of money. He has enough money anyway. Soros is probably buying Herbalife shares to fuck with Bill Ackman, another disagreeable Jewish banksta who seems to have very few friends.



I have few friends

Come on, no way billions are being moved around just for this petty high school-ish emotional shit, you might say. But that's how it works. The closer you look at the circles of power, you see that in the end, they're just people. And people like soap operas. Oh yeah they do. If the world gets to evolve out of the quagmire we are suffering today, and the study of human nature progresses in a wiser future, what the future humans will remember won't be Hayek or Dawkins, or Pinker. The saint patron of the new political science will be [Robin Dunbar](#). He showed us that people just can't possibly care about more than a bunch of people. Which means that all the people that you don't know are by definition not people. [Alrenous](#), which is not precisely the most neurotypical of the reactosphere, was superb in expressing this

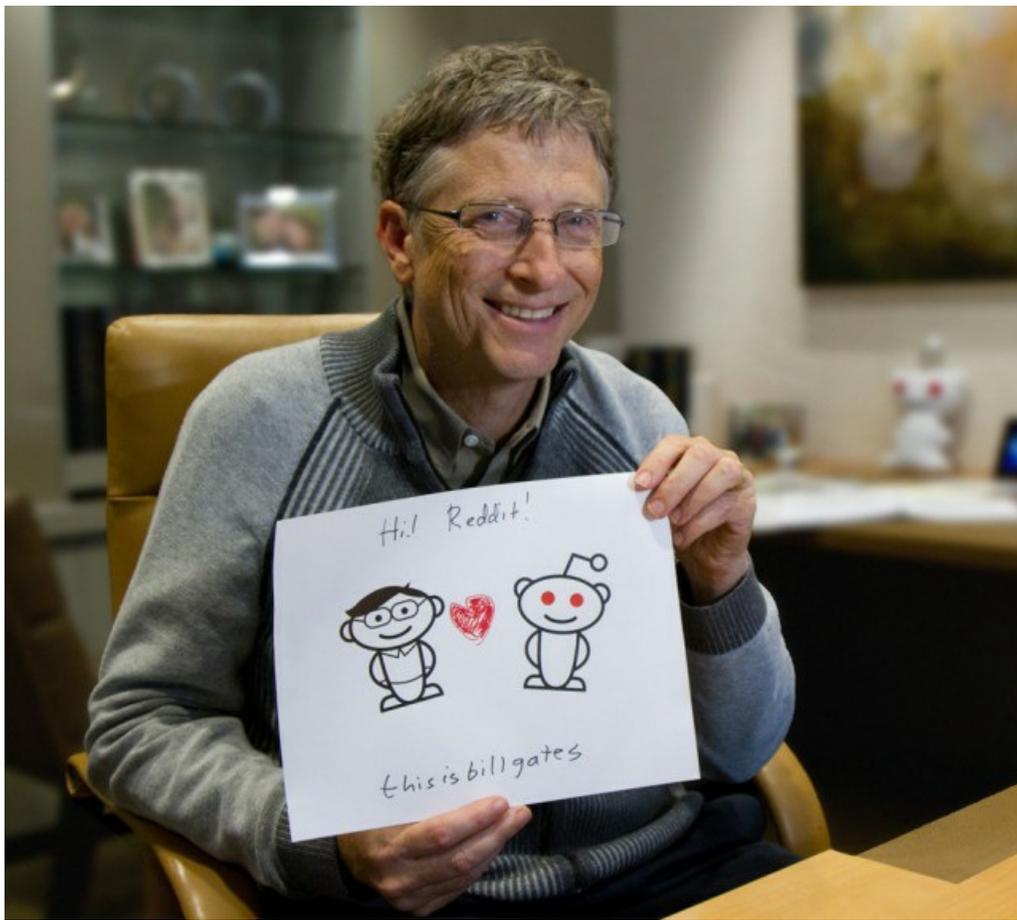
idea in [a comment at Foseti's](#) some months ago:

Bernanke doesn't care if the peasants are getting into bitcoin. He won't care until someone he knows personally wants to go all-in. That is, until someone his monkeybrain identifies as a human and not an abstraction. Equivalently, someone who can legitimately threaten his portfolio by buying into bitcoin and out of whatever he'd prefer.

That's exactly right. The billions of people who are affected by the global elite's decisions aren't real for them. They're just an abstraction, a bunch of numbers that their advisors (who aren't really human either) cook up for them once a week. George Soros doesn't care what Herbalife does, if it's a real business or yet another financial Ponzi. All his brain can register is that this Bill Ackman prick, this son of a bitch who occupies 1/150 of Soros's social brain, he has to be taught a lesson. Don't get me wrong, I'm not defending the guy. All evidence says he is quite the [insufferable prick](#). But I think it's interesting that most of the stuff that goes on in the upper spheres of society is just the result of the [most basic friend/foe calculations](#).

I mean, why would Al Gore whore his WASP aristocratic self to [get 30 million from Apple](#)? The soulless freak of Al Gore already got 100 million bucks from selling to Al Jazeera his expertise [in extorting cable companies](#). 100 million bucks. How much more money does he want? Does he really need that much? The guy is into raping menopausal masseuses, he doesn't need much money for that. Bill Gates, who has some money, famously said that he will [give his children 10 million each](#), and spend the rest in whatever. And that makes a lot of sense. 10 million bucks is a lot of money. You can live a very comfortable life, not needing to work at all for your entire life. As long as you refrain from conspicuous consumption, of course.

Which is exactly what Bill Gates is doing with his Foundation, where he solves™ world problems because *he cares*. Yes, he cares about all those poor people. That's why he declared [that Mexico is much better off with Carlos Slim](#), and that's why he's still [filing patents for the patent trolls](#) at Intellectual Ventures.



### I have rich friends

Hey, he's inconsistent! He's a goddamn hypocrite!, you say. Oh but he's not. He is consistent in the only way that's important: he's accurately following his brain's friend/foe circuit. He has many liberal friends, so he starts a charity foundation to impress them. He's friends with Carlos Slim, so he compliments him in his blog. And he's friends with the slimy rat [Nathan Myhrvold](#), so he helps him with his business. When any of us imagine what we would do with 50 billion, we all envision this grand, coherent schemes where we try to attain our desires and help shape the world in an absolute way. But that's not how it works. All politics are local. All people are tribal. All lives are soap operas. All it ever counts is who are your friends. And who are your foes. Who-whom.

Somebody (I think it was Vladimir) posted [this link to a paper by David Friedman](#), where he argues that all political arrangements evolve from the tiny Schelling points which arise in small-scale interactions between individuals, which are then memorized, ritualized in tradition, and then grow to apply to bigger groups of people. Apply some historical quirks to it, such as class dynamics (the lower classes always ape higher-class mores), and you get that all beliefs are just the application of the random Schelling points which have arisen to regulate the interaction between elites. Two rich fuckers meet at a club in London in 1750. One gives to charity, the other doesn't. The less charitable guy is impressed by the charitable one, so defers to his superior status. The idea spreads that being charitable gives you better status, so it starts to become an integral part of elite status jockeying. Fast forward 250 years and you have the NYT shaming all those who don't accept transexuals being able to choose their sex at will.



I have no male friends

And that's all there is to it. The only reality is the social circle. And what we call society is just an aggregation of overlapping social circles. As it happens in most social circles, extroverted sociopaths tend to gain power. Scale that up onto society at large and you get a [club of vapid shallow extrovert sociopaths](#) who have stumbled into power and simply use it influence their friends and screw with their foes. And the rest of us are just an abstraction.

# The Monkey Trap

August 31, 2013

<http://www.xenosystems.net/the-monkey-trap/>

by Nick Land

*Involvements with reality*

*How did we get into this mess?* When neoreaction slips into contemplative mode, it soon arrives a question roughly like this. Something evidently went very wrong, and most probably a considerable number of things.

The preferred focus of concern decides the particular species of doomsterism, within an already luxuriant taxonomy of social criticism. What common ground exists on the new ultra-right is cast like a shadow by the Cathedral — which no neoreactionary can interpret as anything other than a radical historical calamity. This recognition (or ‘Dark Enlightenment’) is a coalescence, and for that very reason a fissile agglomeration, as even the most perfunctory tour across the ‘reactosphere’ makes clear. (The *Outside in* blogroll already represents a specific distribution of attention, but within three clicks it will take you everywhere from disillusioned libertarians to throne-and altar traditionalists, or from hedonistic gender biorealists to neo-nazi conspiracies.)

Really though, how *did* we get into this mess? A dizzying variety of more-or-less convincing, more-or-less distant historical way-stations can be proposed, and have been. Explanatory regression carries the discussion ever further out — at least in principle — until eventually the buck stops with Gnon, who dropped us in it somewhere murkily remote. It’s a situation highly conducive to story-telling, so here’s a story. It’s a mid-scale tale, intermediate between — say — the inauguration of the Federal Reserve and structural personality disorder of the Godhead.

As a preliminary warning, this is an account that only works — insofar as it does at all — for those who find negative intelligence crisis at the root of the problem. Those neoreactionaries, doubtlessly existing among us, who tend to see intelligence augmentation as a fast-track to hell, might nevertheless find this narrative suggestive, in other ways.

Short version: the monkeys did it.

Longer version: there’s a tempting cosmic formula for the biological basis of technological civilizations, which cetaceans undermine. I encountered the exception before the formula (roughly 40 years ago), in a short story by Larry Niven called *The Handicapped*. This story — dredged now from distant memory — is about dolphins, and their role in a future trans-species and inter-planetary civilization. The central point is that (unlike monkeys), such animals require the external donation of prostheses before they can become technological, and thus apply their intelligence within the Oecumenon. Their ‘handicap’ is a remarkable evolution of cognitive capability beyond manipulative competence. Those natural trends that generated intelligence continue to work through them, uninterrupted by techno-historical interference.

The (flawed) thesis that the cetaceans disrupt has yet to be settled into an entirely satisfactory formula, but it goes something like this: every species entering into the process of techno-historical development is as *unintelligent* as it can possibly be. In other words, as soon as intelligence barely suffices to ‘make’ history, history begins, so that the inhabitants of (pre-singularity) historical societies — wherever they may be found — will be no more than *minimally* intelligent. This level of *threshold intelligence* is a

cosmic constant, rather than a peculiarity of terrestrial conditions. Man was smart enough to ignite recorded history, but — necessarily — *no smarter*. This thesis strikes me as important, and substantially informative, even though it is wrong. (I am not pretending that it is new.)

The idea of threshold intelligence is designed for monkeys, or other — ‘non-handicapped’ — species, which introduces another ingredient to this discussion. It explains why articulate neoreaction can never be popular, because it recalls the Old Law of Gnon, whose harshness is such that the human mind recoils from it in horrified revulsion. Only odd people can even tentatively entertain it. *The penalty for stupidity is death.*

Gregory Clark is among those few to have grasped it clearly. *Any eugenic trend within history is expressed by continuous downward mobility.* For any given level of intelligence, a steady deterioration in life-prospects lies ahead, culling the least able, and replacing them with the more able, who inherit their wretched socio-economic situation, until they too are pushed off the Malthusian cliff. Relative comfort belongs only to the sports and freaks of cognitive advance. For everyone else, history slopes downwards into impoverishment, hopelessness, and eventual genetic extinction. That is how intelligence is made. Short of Technological Singularity, it is the only way. Who wants a piece of that?

No one does, or almost no one. The ‘handicapped’ would no doubt revolt against it if they could, but they are unable to do so, so their cognitive advance continues. Monkeys, on the other hand, are able to revolt, once they finesse their nasty little opposable thumbs. They don’t like the Old Law, which has crafted them through countless aeons of ruthless culling, so they make history instead. If they get everything ‘right’, they even sleaze their way into epochs of upward social mobility, and with this great innovation, semi-sustainable dysgenics gets started. In its fundamentals it is hideously simple: social progress destroys the brain.

Cyclic stability, or negative feedback, structures history to hold intelligence down to the dim limit (as the intelligence threshold is seen — or more typically missed — from the other side). The deviation into technological performance chokes off the trend to bio-cognitive improvement, and reverses it, hunting homeostasis with a minimal-intelligence target. Progress and degenerate, or regress and improve. That’s the yet-to-be-eradicated Old Law, generating cyclical history as a side-effect.

The monkeys became *able* to pursue happiness, and the deep ruin began.

If the terrestrial biosphere had held back for a few million years, let the primates get annihilated by a comet, and found a way to provide the cetaceans with prehensile organs somewhere up the road — after socio-linguistic sex-selection and relentless Malthusian butchery had fine-tuned their brains — then techno-history might have had another 50 points of average IQ to play with in its host population. It didn’t, and here we are. (Never bet against the ugly.)

ADDED: Dysgenic doom from [Jim](#) and [Nydwracu](#).





## Screwed Since 1913

July 29, 2013

<http://theden.tv/2013/07/29/screwed-since-1913/>

by Wesley Morganston

*Thedening the West*

# The Den

The First World War is a good deal more important to America's history than most of us now realise. Given what it led to, it's perhaps the most crucially destructive blow our national spirit has ever taken. Today we take for granted that the government at Washington is a global empire. But back when it wasn't, when WWI was still an aberration from the [normalcy](#) we tried so hard to return to in the 1920s, shock and disillusionment led many intellectuals to reveal their striking contempt for the majority of the American people. Unable to coöpt the common citizen, they stopped advocating reforms to uplift him and began cruelly mocking him. From *The LIFE History of the United States*, Volume 10 (1964):

The "pointless slaughter" of the war, and a feeling that Wilsonian ideals and the progressive spirit had failed, made the postwar decade a period of revolt, alienation and exile for American intellectuals. Impassioned reformers who had sought to correct economic and social abuses gave way to hostile critics who assailed the manners, mores and institutions of the American majority. With the publication of Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* in 1920 and *Babbitt* two years later, the empty materialism, corruption and dogmatism of small-town life in mid-America received a savage portrayal.

Sound familiar? Hatred of America's ethnic and cultural majority is nothing unusual today—it's what holds the Democratic Party together, after all. Those intellectuals, the [Brahmin](#) caste of yesteryear, are the forefathers of today's assailants of "White privilege". The LIFE volume continues:

The "civilized" few launched a massive assault upon the philistines, "boobs" and boosters of the new prosperity. To this group politics was vulgar, religion a refuge for the unenlightened, business boorish, and culture nonexistent beyond the Eastern seaboard. *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, and H.L. Mencken's *American Mercury* provided the intellectuals with platforms from which the "booboisie" could be berated in its money-lined wilderness. Many of the intelligentsia agreed with Mencken that if democracy possessed any merit, "it is the merit . . . of being continuously amusing, of offering the plain people a ribald and endless show." Although the dissenters won few of their day-to-day skirmishes with society, the cumulative effect of their criticism produced lasting changes.

Those lasting changes, unfortunately, did not include the expulsion of said intellectuals from the country by a mass of angry [Vaisyas](#)—in part because their criticisms of democracy as ineffectual and vulgar were quite correct. But they did not contrast democracy with a nondemocratic republicanism, as the Founders did. Instead of taking on the noble role of an aristocracy dedicated to its people, they opted to attack and ridicule them.

It took a [sly takeover](#) of the Democratic Party and [another few million dead](#) to get "progress" back at the helm. Even then, the common American was too shrewd, too reactionary, to fall in line with what the progressive Brahmins wanted. So began the process of electing a new people—and now, nearly half a century after Ted Kennedy lied to us about the 1965 Immigration Act and what it would do, White Americans are looking at the possibility of becoming a minority within two generations. The Left have

always hated America's majority—so do the businessmen who pull the GOP's strings, by the way—and now they've got a ragtag coalition of Third-World imports who hate them just as much. And though the native non-White minorities of the United States are divided between the two camps, progressives have brought most of them to their side—and if that side are to be believed, the dispossession of America's core population is inevitable, a matter of numbers. It isn't inevitable at all, of course—it'll simply require more than sweet words and handshakes to avert it. The sooner Vaisyas realise this, the less of a mess midcentury will be.

# Creeping Horror

October 1, 2014

<http://freenortherner.wordpress.com/2014/01/10/creeping-horror/>

by Free Northerner

*Iron sharpens iron*



Here's a [fun little test](#) to either help internalize the [creeping horror](#) or introduce someone new to the mind virus.

The first step is to find a moderately obscure topic you would know far more about than your average English grad would. It can be anything: something related to your career, a hobby you're deep into, your religion, an academic area you've studied extensively, or even [pastel ponies](#). Choose something of which you have a deep knowledge.

You must avoid anything your average SWPL "knowledge-worker" would know; so avoid things related to coffee, indie music, HBO, pretentious literature, etc. (Alright, pastel ponies might not work). Also make sure to avoid anything overly subjective or too mainstream.

Having chosen your topic, look for articles in the mainstream news on the topic. Try the big ones: CNN, the NYT, the Washington Post, or, in Canada, the CBC. Having found a few articles from a few different sources read them.

Notice every time they are inaccurate, make a factual mistake, leave out something important, make a logical fallacy, write something that doesn't make sense, or otherwise distort reality.

Having done this, think on the fact that every other topic covered by the media has errors to the same extent, except you don't notice because you don't know more about that topic than your average J-school graduate.

Then consider how you, and most everybody else, becomes informed about things they don't know of.

This is where the horror sets in.

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To let the horror creep in more, look to your career. Remember that obscure regulation nobody outside your particular occupation or industry would know of, the one that: made society worse, was borderline insane, the government had no business being in, allowed a person/company to rob the taxpayer, made your job more miserable than it should be, and/or was just pointless busywork to employ bureaucrats?

You probably never talked of it to anyone other than possibly the occasional rant to a friend or two or some co-workers.

Now think on the fact that there are thousands of other occupations and industries you are not employed in and where you would not be able to know that obscure regulation.

Give it a few minutes for the horror to dawn.

# Whipping Up a Society from Scratch

# Myth, Rhetoric, and the Dark Enlightenment

May 21, 2013

<http://habitableworlds.wordpress.com/2013/05/21/myth-rhetoric-and-the-dark-enlightenment/>

by Habitable Worlds



Over at Foseti's, Handle [makes the following observation](#)

You can't make a "less-wrong" "everybody's a disciplined Bayesian ultra-rationalist" society. You need a substitute or alternative religion-ish thing to put in there that gets you what you want to achieve socially. A set of irrational unfalsifiable beliefs. A structure of taboos. Constant Reinforcement through social pressures and all the opinion-making institutions. And, if you're really confident you're doing it right – a heresy mechanism that deters people from openly questioning the system and undermining all the hard work it took to decrease social-entropy and build social-capital. A set of Platonic-Straussian noble lies (and maybe your next generation of elites will even forget that they *are* lies) to keep the harmony going. A line of thinking that goes back thousands of years.

Why is this the Darkest Enlightenment? Because it's exactly what the DE Community ("The DEC"?) is complaining about with the Cathedral, and what the Cathedral was complaining about with the Church, and the Church was probably complaining about with something else, etc. Celsus lost to Origen, after all.

If the Dark Enlightenment aspires to extra-digital heights, then Handle is correct to remind us that no social or political philosophy normalizes itself in a culture without a veneer of religiosity or a certain degree of myth. 1 in 1000 Americans has read the Constitution, but that doesn't matter because most Americans believe in the Constitution.

By anchoring itself to the brute facts of existence and rejecting utopian attempts to immanentize the eschaton, the Right has never felt comfortable with myth making because most myths fail to take into account the brute facts of existence and most religions admonish their adherents to bring heaven to earth at all costs. (The Right and Christianity became synonymous simply because, once upon a time, Christians believed in a Last Day of Judgment, not theirs to initiate, that would once and for all perfect man's fallen nature—a feat only a supernatural power could accomplish.) However, as Handle rightly points out, the vast majority of Western citizens won't ever steer their lives according to the brute facts of existence for the simple reason that most citizens do not pass their Friday nights with Steven Pinker, their Saturday nights with Moldbug, their Sunday mornings with crime statistics and evo-psych textbooks. As a pure description of mankind, the Dark Enlightenment will have minimal influence on human affairs, just as Darwin's description of evolution has had only minimal influence on human affairs (*no influence post-1945*).

The Left, on the other hand, feels absolutely at home with *the social construction of mythology*. The Leftist project is to reshape the world according to what the Left believes the world should be, which means rejecting the world as it is, the brute facts of existence—they are not 'facts' but adaptable constructions or contingencies—in order to bring heaven to earth at all costs. With such a project before them, no wonder Cathedral clerics are adept at co-opting discourse and shoe-horning their neopuritan vision into society's words, values, myths, religion, art, discourses, thought-patterns. To them, all such

words and values are open to jerry-rigging, and, indeed, demanding of change for the sake of social justice. *Reality? Psh. Sounds like white privilege and social construction to me.*

Appreciate, for a moment, the sheer audacity of the Leftist project. It must deconstruct the discourses, values, myths, and religion of traditional Western society while simultaneously constructing new discourses, values, myths, religions. The oft-cited hypocrisy of Cathedral clerics is an inevitable byproduct of a worldview that must **at once deconstruct and reconstruct morality and myth** (Spivak Gayatri has given this serpentine practice the name “strategic essentialism.”) Even as a former nominal Leftist, I don’t fully comprehend Left mythology, which sanctions abortion but penalizes freedom of association. However, I can at least appreciate the general project of Leftism: to erect a new moral/mythological order using pieces of the old but distorting those pieces beyond recognition, adding novel elements, and recombining it all in an orgy of fanatical vivisection. Vivisection! What other term can we use to describe a morality that tells us gender is socially constructed but sexuality is biologically determined?

Composers of the new morality must be in love with the free play of signifiers. They must know how to persuade with words and emotions and words and emotions alone. No wonder, then, that the Left has always won the ‘hearts and minds’ game, has always controlled the means of rhetorical propagation, has convinced generation after generation to move ever Leftward despite clear signs of impending entropy and chaos: the Left has rhetoric and myth-making on its side in a world that responds to rhetoric and myth-making, while the Right points ineffectually at reality and Detroit.

In terms supplied by [Richard Weaver’s reading of the \*Phaedrus\*](#), the Right plays the part of dialectician seeking Truth while the Left plays the part of rhetorician constructing his own truth and persuading others to believe in it. The dialectician speaks a neutered language. He may possess dialectically-secured Truth but his dialectic lacks impulse, so he is destined to be ignored while the crowds flock to the sophists. “The pure dialectician,” Weaver writes, “cannot add impulse to truth . . . the soul is impulse, not simply cognition” (23).

The key, Weaver argues, is to add rhetoric to dialectic. Whatever is secured dialectically is not, in and of itself, persuasive to most souls, so it is the job of the dialectician—the Right, in this comparison—to add persuasion to the Truths reached through his detached and analytical methods (or through his trust in the workings of tradition). In the *Phaedrus*, Plato explains it thusly:

First, you must know the truth concerning everything you are speaking or writing about; you must learn how to define each thing in itself . . . Second, you must understand the nature of the soul, along the same lines; you must determine which kind of speech is appropriate to each kind of soul, prepare and arrange your speech accordingly, and offer a complex and elaborate speech to a complex soul and a simple speech to a simple one . . . (277c)

. . . The dialectician chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by

knowledge—discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others. (277a)

The difference between the rhetoric of the dialectician and the rhetoric of the sophist is that the former's is based in real knowledge, not artful construction.

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Says Handle: it's time to give up our quaint belief in rational humanity and join the rhetorical wrangle. It's disateful but necessary. If we don't do it, the Left will continue to do it at our expense.

So what is the rhetoric of the Dark Enlightenment? What myths can we construct from our collection of harsh facts about man, intelligence, social cohesion and entropy, and the rest of it? What do our pretty lies sound like?

I have no idea. But I can offer this consolation: **they won't be pretty lies**. In its denial of nature and reality, the Cathedral mythology intersects with reality only at the best of times; the rest of the time, its myths are pure sophistry. However, given its commitment to accepting the harshest facts of existence, the Dark Enlightenment is in a less tyrannical position. Its lies will not be lies so much as sugary additives to make the bitter medicine go down easier.

We will, in essence, be rhetoricians and myth-makers whose myths are secured to the results of dialectical inquiry. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato recognizes that truths need to be made palatable to those not willing or able to comprehend truth in its rawest form ("simple souls"). But he sees nothing problematic or immoral about adapting dialectical knowledge to the needs or abilities of different audiences. Indeed, if the truths of reality are to influence human affairs, they must not only be the truth—they must be persuasive.

And Truth + Persuasion > Persuasion Alone.

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And how could any discussion about neoreactionary myth-making be complete without [Radish Magazine](#), the only outlet among us actually crafting some propaganda:

[The opposite of quality is equality](#)

[Liberals/Conservatives . . . Reactionaries](#)

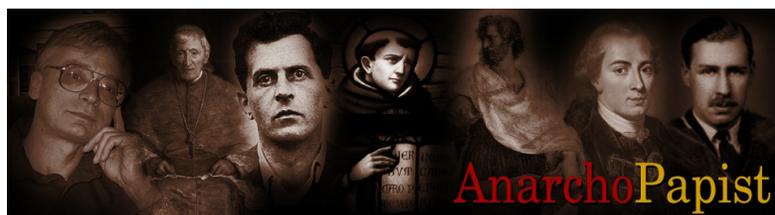
# Stability as Virtue of Civilization

November 4, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/11/04/stability-as-virtue-of-civilization/>

by Bryce Laliberte

*The high theory of neoreaction*



The benefit of civilization is that it “smooths out” the relentlessly capricious intervention of nature in man’s organization. Man trades some privileges he is otherwise allowed to keep in the state of nature in order to take on some other privileges which benefit him in the longer run. This is the basic insight of the social contract, which if you excise the tendentious political prescriptions it is supposed to bear, gets you at a relatively straightforward analysis of what civilization is, why it works, and how it could be improved. Civilization affords greater overall stability to its members; the division of labor increases prosperity which grounds the possibility for savings in order that one might invest in more civilization. In order for civilization to ascend to higher levels, one must invest greater and greater amounts of civilization into the project; this is dictated by the law of diminishing returns (a move from 1% to 2% of “net civilization” foment a greater increase in social outcomes than would a move from 5% to 6%). Like any business, if a society fails to invest the same amount of capital, social and material, into the project of keeping civilization going, stagnation comes as institutions and organizations fall into disrepair and go unrepaired. (This is your basic model for the ongoing collapse. Things fall apart and aren’t put back together again.)

Greater power entails greater privilege, but it also bestows greater responsibility. If a generation of a family spend down the estate, leaving little material wealth to the family name, we would see that generation as the weak link who don’t deserve their name and have failed to live up to the legacy inherited from their forebears. Such is the same as happens for society; if we as a society do not seek to continue lowering our time preferences, and instead relish the exquisite banquets which selling off the estate can buy, this leaves little to no social capital for one’s descendants. It impoverishes one’s own children, quite practically enslaving them if they are left to bear not merely a lessened wealth but a vast debt.

The concept of social stability is tricky to explain. The oh-so-clever autists will of course point out that society and stability are antithetical; society is always in flux, and flux is the very opposite of stability. To this we can only say it misses the forest for the trees. Stability is not the same as “perfect lack of change.” Social stability is a description of the change which does occur and whether that change threatens the vitality of the organism. Analogy to health of the body is most helpful here. Clearly, healthy biology is not merely not antithetical to ongoing change, but requires that change. The question is whether the change is of a type that lends itself to the integration of the organism or whether that change lends itself to disintegration of the organism. How we understand the health of a body is how we understand the health of a society. One must examine the whole body, not merely its parts, and one must examine its parts, not only the whole body.

Let us distinguish between the aforementioned changing of parts as “mereological change” and the latter changing of the organism as “organizational change.” Mereological change involves merely the replacing of parts in the organism; the body is as healthy now as it was before so long as its dying cells are being replaced and re-integrated to the same roles previously served by its ancestors. Unlike the body, society as a kind of organism can also change, so that the analogy to the body would be if the body could go

through a great degree of morphological augmentation. Strictly speaking, the body does not have hands, and could potentially be benefited were its hands replaced with enhanced prosthetics. Society can experience a greater degree of organizational change than the biological body can (for now, at least).

Put in these terms we can derive some principles.

The first of these is that stability is the first priority of civilization. If something is valued above stability, then this leaves the possibility open that the path of death is chosen; if we suppose progressivists are motivated by the fanatical desire to equalize everything, then if it came to a choice between the very survival of civilization at all and pursuing egalitarianism, that would be the end for humankind. Any value placed above that of stability and order makes a political philosophy accidentally nihilist. While there is nothing essential about the position which is nihilist, as it trades existence for its ideal, it is nihilist in practice. Any ideal greater than stability produces [thanaticism](#).

Stability doesn't happen by accident. What with the realization by some that many norms are constructs, and that constructs can be destroyed, a fury of social vandalism is taking place witnessed only very rarely in society. Gender queerists (as opposed to gender normativism, i.e. my position on the matter) fail to realize, among other things, that it may be their own conflicted feelings about gender and sexuality which have to be sacrificed to society, rather than society being sacrificed to their conflicted feelings. Generally, we treat kleptomaniacs so that, even if it comes at a great psychological cost, they are not allowed to impose those costs on society. Group goods vs individual goods. Progressivists, who so frequently insist on sacrificing other people's peace of mind, do so out of a miserable narcissism. There is nothing in the world that guarantees your peace of mind and the peace of society are compatible, so suck it up. Utility is fungible.

The second of these is that stability can be better or worse served by particular kinds of mereological change. Mereological change, insofar as it influences organizational change (e.g. changing technology, changing demographics), does not necessarily decrease stability, though insofar as that organizational change combined with available social material is concerned, it may involve lots of instability on the mereological side. A strong superstructure is necessary for riding out high degrees of mereological change; in other words, social capital (like I was talking about above) funds your organizational changes. Deplete the superstructure and times of rapid mereological change become more likely to threaten stability. A superstructure which seeks not to stabilize, but to exploit destruction (e.g. the Cathedral) is suicidal, as it chooses a fast, bright burn of resources as ever more of society's accrued social capital is spent to achieve its utopian visions. [Each act of destruction justifies its next action, locking society in a feedback loop.](#)

All superstructures form because there is some feedback loop. If the effects of the superstructure didn't in some way lend themselves to *its own stability*, the superstructure just wouldn't exist. The problem is not that change lends itself to more change, the question is what kind of change that is. If that change

seems to be accelerating, you're more likely to be accelerating because you're pushing down a slippery slope. [Progress ought to be difficult, and if it's easy, you might just be pushing with gravity.](#)

But since the only superstructures which exist are those which create the conditions of their own stability, this puts credence to the threat that the superstructure will drive society off a cliff. Only a fool would deny that, from within the paradigm, the rebuttal of "More needs to be done!" follows from the paradigm's own logic, and if that paradigm is what floors the accelerator right off the cliff, the paradigm's participants will gladly run it right off the cliff, only wondering why the progress didn't come shortly before being smashed to bits on the ground. Failure to treat that possibility as a live option speaks only of bluster, not wisdom. Surely if modernism is so great, it can be explained in detail why this doesn't lead to destruction. You can't just assume that, because society has managed to make it work in the past, society will continue to do so, especially if you keep changing more and more of the features which composed those previous societies. If you start replacing parts of your car willy-nilly, it shouldn't be a surprise if it stops running.

# Reconciling Transhumanism and Neoreaction

May 23, 2013

<http://www.moreright.net/reconciling-transhumanism-and-neoreaction/>

by Michael Anissimov

*Questioning Modernity*



## Intro

On both sides of the aisle, people ask me, “how do you reconcile your beliefs on transhumanism with your reactionary views?” This is a great question, so I’ll explain here. Caution: this explanation is long and complicated, which is why I’ve put it off until now.

The first point is that Transhumanism is inevitable. Which is to say, widespread human enhancement is going to occur, unless a global totalitarian Luddite regime or total thermonuclear war stops it. This means that any philosophy that plans to have an impact on the future must implicitly acknowledge Transhumanism, or become irrelevant. People can put on a frowny face about it if they like, but in the end they’ll be steamrolled by it.

I could spend 300 pages arguing this point and still not satisfy skeptics, but I want to say at least something. Over the long run, cultures with superior military technology, reproduction, and economic growth tend to replace other cultures. (Neanderthals, anyone?) Transhumanist technologies such as soldier enhancement technologies, artificial wombs, and molecular manufacturing have the potential to supercharge all these metrics by orders of magnitude. Very large power gaps could potentially be produced on historically minute timescales.

Molecular manufacturing means 3D printers that [construct things atom by atom](#), with quintillions of tiny molecular assemblers. There are three main reasons this is a big deal. The first is that atomic precision would allow the mass production of ultra-strong and ultra-light materials such as fullerenes. Think mansions made out of pure diamond. It would also allow the production of motors and batteries with extremely high energy densities. For this, imagine a tank with motors as powerful as an aircraft carrier. The last reason it matters is because of scaling laws — many tiny assemblers means a large percentage of the total mass of the nanofactory is devoted to manufacturing the product. Preliminary estimates suggest a nanofactory would be able to output its own weight in product [as few as 15 hours](#). Imagine buildings that grow faster than bamboo, something like ten feet per day.

If a nation with nanofactory capabilities engaged in a military conflict with a nation without them, there would be no contest. Any nation that does not adopt this technology will not have the tools to be a player on the global stage.

Molecular manufacturing is intimately connected to Transhumanism because only this technology would be able to produce artifacts of sufficient performance that people would want to enhance themselves with them. More primitive technologies would not produce prosthetics advanced enough to justify replacing our flesh with cybernetic parts. With molecular manufacturing, however, many amazing forms of enhancement would become possible, and desirable. Running at 60 mph, breathing underwater, stopping bullets with our teeth, scaling walls, living on grass — the works.

It’s highly uncertain when molecular manufacturing will be developed, but there are very strong

arguments for its general feasibility. The most obvious is that life itself does molecular manufacturing all the time, in the form of protein synthesis. You yourself are made up of complex molecular machinery. The estimates for when it will be developed are all over the board, from Ray Kurzweil's wildly optimistic estimate of the 2020s, to Ramez Naam's conservative estimate of post-2100. As for myself, I'll pick a probability distribution arbitrarily centered around 2060, with a standard deviation of 15 years.

### **Molecular Manufacturing Will Be Necessary for Nations to Compete, and Necessarily Leads to Transhumanism**

I mentioned that any nation that does not embrace this technology will be doomed to irrelevance. Any nation that *does* embrace this technology gets on the fast track to widespread human enhancement. It is possible to imagine a country that restricts enhancement for the use of soldiers alone, but I doubt this restriction would hold unless they were able to conquer the planet and put down economic threats. Otherwise, some other country would develop the technology and pump out enhanced civilians who are hundreds of times more economically productive than unenhanced civilians, quickly providing them with a huge advantage.

To give a taste of what I mean, imagine people with brain-computer interfaces that allow them to mentally control thousands of machines at once, people who never need to sleep, people who have enough mental energy to perform difficult tasks 24/7/365, and so on. All of this would become possible with the advanced products of molecular manufacturing.

Those fearful of the new technology can make compelling ethical arguments to restrict it if they like, but if a nation chooses not to adopt these technologies, while others do, they will be defeated economically and militarily. A worldwide consensus banning human enhancement seems possible in the short run, but in the longer run, it would be like a worldwide ban on electricity — not really enforceable. We are seeing the first stirrings of this dynamic by witnessing 3D printers that print guns and the feeble attempts of the State Department to restrict them.

My point is that Transhumanism is not a choice. It's inevitable. Molecular assemblers will be built, and human enhancement will flow directly from them. For any philosophy to survive in the long run, Reaction included, it must take into account these realities.

### **Neoreaction and Molecular Manufacturing**

Long and hard thought about the consequences of Transhumanism, combined with gentle reactionary nudging by [Mencius Moldbug](#), are what finally caused me to whole heartedly embrace Neoreaction. Neoreaction is essentially an endorsement of Traditional principles, and a rejection of Progressive principles. Considering the likely long-run consequences of unrestrained, worldwide molecular manufacturing, I was horrified by how many ways this story could go wrong. Untraceable killer

cybernetic mosquitoes for anonymous assassinations. Mobsters with fullerene muscles a hundred times stronger than steel. Nuclear enrichment centrifuges you can build in your basement. Combined with a largely unrestrained, laissez-faire anarcho-capitalist or simply neoliberal capitalist system, we have a recipe for disaster. Only through embracing Traditional structures and patterns did I see a way out of this conundrum.

The reason that more Transhumanists are not Reactionaries, in my view, is that they haven't done their [reading](#) on molecular manufacturing, or they mistakenly think that Friendly AI or a Kurzweilian Singularity will come around in time to save the day. The writings describing the full picture of molecular manufacturing are rather long and technical, and most people — even Harvard graduates with beefy IQs — simply don't have the time or inclination to read them. The standards of Transhumanism have fallen in the last decade as well. In the late 90s and the early 00s, when the primary transhumanist venues were the Extropians and SL4 mailing lists, the technical understanding of the average transhumanist was excellent. Today, it is quite poor. There's an emergent brilliance produced when you put Spike Jones, Robin Hanson, Anders Sandberg, Chris Phoenix, Eliezer Yudkowsky, and Robert Bradbury on the same mailing list, which simply has no modern-day analogue. This environment was the forge that crafted the most capable Transhumanist leaders of today. Second-generation students of transhumanism are simply not the same.

When people understand the true extent of the feasibility and power of molecular manufacturing, a grim attitude tends to set in due to all the palpable risks. I'm pleased that the 3D-printed gun exists, because this is the first visceral, public example of the phenomenon I've been writing about and fearing since 2001. Unrestrained technological power in the hands of the masses. It's nearly impossible to grasp the full picture until you understand the likely production capabilities and relative technological feasibility of molecular manufacturing. Many of the original visionaries are beginning to get quite old, and are falling silent without passing on their knowledge *in detail* to many students, so I fear that the baton is not being handed off properly, and will be dropped along the way. Those who have the responsibility to pass off this knowledge know who they are.

### **Hierarchy as a Buffer Against Hyper-Empowered Masses**

My concern are individuals and small groups that asymmetrically empower themselves through emerging technologies and don't have the public good in mind. Given the current predominant political sympathies, which are ultra-egalitarian, there would be few restrictions on the routes to this power. Adopting Traditional principles, however, which are strictly hierarchical, would restrict the power in the hands of a few, providing fewer points of failure. Would you rather take the risk of a thousand elite leaders exploiting powerful manufacturing technologies to do damage, or the guarantee that if the technologies are available to a billion, many of them will certainly do damage?

The benefit of conferring responsibility on a comparatively small set of elite individuals is that these

individuals can be educated for their responsibilities far in advance, groomed and cultivated for their important roles. They can be instilled with good morals, broad understanding, supportive familial and organizational structures, and mutual expectations worthy of their station. Common people tend to think only for themselves, and have trouble seeing personal responsibility for affairs of the state. Handing someone a nanofactory automatically gives them the power to influence affairs on a worldwide scale. Is this a power we really want being handed to those educated by reality television?

Students of political correctness will cringe at the thought of conferring superlative powers on an elite, but the long-term survival of the human species is more important than historically contingent factors that are based on nothing more than the preoccupations of an unexpectedly influential cadre of Berkeley students in the 1960s. Prior to the 1960s, high-level political thought was still based heavily on traditional principles of sacred responsibility among a few men of power. The notion that true power and control should be shattered into 300 million little pieces and distributed evenly among the populace is a very recent idea, one we would do well without. If UC Berkeley never existed, progressivism may have never even manifested in its current form and risen to become the dominant ideology of the nation's elite.

The key concept is that molecular manufacturing and transhumanism are guaranteed to highly empower *someone*. Some set of people will be highly empowered; preventing this isn't an option. Fewer people, with a deeper sense of responsibility, coupled with moral and spiritual values, is a superior option to the alternative.

Speaking for myself personally, my key motivation is not having to witness or experience [global nanowar](#). For a grasp of the capabilities that could be invoked during such a war, I recommend the obscure volume [Military Nanotechnology: Potential Applications and Preventive Arms Control](#). I consider this slim treatise to be among the five most important books ever published, but it's completely unknown outside a minuscule circle of academics. There are promising experts in emerging technologies, such as my colleague [Patrick Lin](#) at Cal Poly, or Brian Wang of the leading futurist blog [Next Big Future](#), who I believe are aware of it, so it isn't totally unknown.

An interesting theme of the book is how many aggressive arms control measures it proposes. A key proposal is restriction on combat robots smaller than 0.2 – 0.5 meters (approximately 8-20 inches) in size. Molecular manufacturing would enable combat robots the size of bacteria, but this author proposes a lower size limit of 20 inches? For such a treaty to be effectively enforced would require considerably more surveillance and top-down structure to exist in society than it does today. Sacrificing some degree of privacy to ban these robots would be well worth it; the combat capabilities of swarms of small robots would be so immense that they would nearly guarantee severe geopolitical instability.

It's laborious for me to explain why small robots would be a major risk, because it should be self-evident. Very small robots could be made exceedingly stealthy, they could provide comprehensive surveillance of

enemy activities, and could inject lethal payloads of just a few microliters. Moreover, they could self-detonate after carrying out their mission, making them untraceable. Imagine the leadership of North Korea having possession of fly-sized robots providing surveillance of the military headquarters of every nation on the planet. They could sell this information to the highest bidder, completely destroying military information security. The detailed blueprints for the most advanced nuclear weapons could be made common knowledge. Clearly something we want to avoid. Most proposed countermeasures, such as hermetically sealing off every important facility, are not practical. Only through restricting the “means of production” in the hands of a responsible few can we avoid the worst scenarios.

### **Personal Responsibility**

The appeal of essentially reinstating an aristocracy to cope with the challenges of emerging technologies is that would confer *personal responsibility* onto individuals for state actions. Not the sad facsimile of personal responsibility we see among elected officials today, who transfer or retire after a four or eight-year term, but the genuine responsibility that comes with having your name attached to something for the long haul. When someone messes up in democratic governments, faceless bureaucrats all point their fingers at one another and an “investigation” is formed, the purpose of which is to find nothing. When someone messes up in a monarchical government, responsibility ultimately rests with either an official with a long tenure, who may be dismissed, or the monarch him or herself.

When someone’s personal reputation, their personal life, is threatened by the misconduct of their subordinates, and the whole system is designed for long-term stability, they tend to think twice before bending the rules. Even more effective is the system similar to monarchical Europe, where the elites were related by blood and more related to one another than to their subjects. This builds a sense of mutual respect, understanding, and camaraderie that today’s politicians can only blink in confusion about. Elites managing a government for the long term are incentivized to care about far futures, not just the next election cycle. Unencumbered by the frivolous winds of public opinion, they are free to consult advisors for the most intelligent decision, not necessarily the most popular one.

Another stability-inducing effect produced by putting responsibility in the hands of an elite is that wars are less likely to be fought for highly abstract, nationalistic reasons such as “promoting democracy in the world.” Rather, leaders have an incentive to fight wars over tangible assets, which tend to be limited, or not fight them at all. Total war tends not to occur among monarchies unless the conflict is based in religion, because elites are less susceptible to getting caught up in a blind nationalistic fervor that upholds the slogan, “fight to the death.” Nationalistic wars are a unique product of groupthink among masses of people. Even the notion of having a large, permanent standing army is a relatively recent idea.

### **Conclusion**

I hope I’ve made a respectable attempt at conveying some of the forces that attracted me to reactionary

thought in the context of highly advanced emerging technologies. I've only scratched the surface in this essay, but I think I've pointed in the direction of what I mean. If you're interested in providing a response (on your own blog, of course, as comments are closed), I encourage you to discuss your ideas with me personally before responding, rather than jumping to conclusions about what I believe and responding based on emotion. Thank you for your time.

# Inaccessible Is Ungovernable

October 17, 2013

<http://handleshaus.wordpress.com/2013/10/17/inaccessible-is-ungovernable/>

by Handle's Haus

*Alle meine freunde in meinem haus willkommen*



I sometimes use the term ‘accessible’ in [the Microsoft sense](#).

The mouthful version of ‘accessible’ is something like this: To abstractly describe the character of a human interactive or processed experience when it is tailored to not exceed the limitations of the particular human being to which it is being presented.

So, if you are blind or paralyzed, your disability prevents you from using a computer terminal in the normal way without some assistive technology. If you are confined to a wheelchair, you cannot easily enter a building without a sloped ramp.

And everyone is ‘disabled’ in terms of not having infinitely capable brains or strengths of will. We can only absorb so much information so fast, and we all have limited cognitive potential and capacity to resist detrimental impulse.

The ‘accessible society’ is an ideal where we cease to propagate the common legal fiction of ‘choice, agreement, and contract by notice and informed consent’ and are honest with people that they will only be given the choices that they have the potential to make responsibly for themselves. This is the same kind of custodianship / guardianship relationship we insist upon for the legally incompetent, like children or the senile, and when we admit that all adults are in reality ‘disabled’ and ‘incompetent’ below the libertarian ideal to some degree or another, then it is just enlightened paternalism.

Even if you are smart, but you are not an expert in a complex licensed profession (say, the law), or practiced in some skilled trade (say, auto repair) then sometimes that ‘assistive technology’ is another person, perhaps an agent or ombudsman, who can ‘boil it all down for you’, and ‘bring it down to your level’ as a layman. He presents simple questions to you to establish your preferences and priorities, and then he uses his skills to take care of the rest. It’s a black box to you, and a form of specialization for which we are usually willing to pay. Gains from trade and all that.

The theory of general suffrage in a republic also uses this justification to rationalize how individuals who are incompetent to govern can nevertheless express their preferences and have fiduciary-like representatives of their interests govern on their behalf. Obviously, it doesn’t work this way. Because it can’t.

Part of the problem is presented by the question, “What if you can’t ‘black box’ the mess away?” The principal is required to make certain difficult decisions, but the complexity involved in making a *genuine individual choice* is irreducible. And what if, furthermore, something is so complicated that there simply *are no human agents* actually able to navigate the confusing maze?

So, in this sense of ‘accessible’, I mean something like ‘comprehensible’, ‘digestible’, ‘fathomable’, ‘intelligible’, etc.

So, while it might be possible to build manned fighter jets capable of taking turns at 20g, it would be

pointless for us to do so because it would turn the pilot's brains into pulp. In general, nothing should be built that exceeds the potential of the individuals who must wield it. This category includes the governance of organizations.

Perhaps one need not place too much respect in the Democratic ideal that the ordinary citizen should be able, with only a reasonable amount study and research, to understand the nature of his government's operation. But one should insist that the *actual* managers of the enterprise be able to understand it.

One would think that such a principle would provide a kind of human-capacity upper-bound on the scope of any collective endeavor. Not every decision is delegable or process scalable. Indeed such limitations have diminished the perceived attractiveness of the integrated corporate conglomerate model after some enthusiasm in the 60's and 70's.

In addition, Luttwak has noted that the leadership of large nations are often distracted by time-consuming requirements to personally respond to categories of events perceived by their populations (and media) as rising to the national level of significance. The larger the nation, the more of these types of events, the greater the distraction.

These are all good reasons to favor focus and brevity. Yet USG's operations has become so plenary and its rules so extensively written by expert bureaucrats that the systemic, big-picture view, indispensable for intelligent management, is often inaccessible even to them.

And so, in what will probably evolve eventually into that hallmark of the blogosphere, the 'watch', as in 'Inaccessible Government Watch', I present to you some of the latest examples:

[Administration didn't know the date of the Obamacare Tax Penalty deadline.](#)

[Obamacare regulations are up to 12 Million words.](#)

[Dodd-Frank is in the same ballpark.](#)

More to follow, we can be sure.

UPDATE:

How can we make things more accessible? Here's one clever way from the pre-financial crisis, pre-CFPB real world. Too lazy to google the source at the moment, but I was taught about a regulation concerning a certain key part of Credit Card contracts. The idea was that the agency involved would take the language directly from a bank's advertised agreement and would then form a kind of focus group which would be a, ahem, 'cognitively-representative' sample of the, ahem, 'most vulnerable' set of target consumers.

The agency would have these poor, nearly-but-not-quite-incompetent-to-contract individuals read the language of the offer (as if anyone, even smart people, actually did that), and they would then give them

a very simple, true-false quiz about the key elements of the offer – the interest rate, delinquency penalty, etc. If the tender minds didn't do at least a little better than random guessing on the quiz, then the agency wouldn't permit the bank to advertise the offer in that form. Back to the drawing board!

Of course, this lowest-common denominator approach to accessibility will certainly overprotect more competent and sophisticated adults from entering into higher-risk-higher-reward agreements. Instead of presuming maturity and competence, government can discriminate and only license the most savvy individuals (or some proxy for astuteness, like wealth) to participate in such ventures, much as the SEC already does with its rules governing [Accredited Investors](#).

But in general, the lesson is that when the government really cares about the capacity for something to be understood, it tests for that comprehension and nothing gets past the post without such verification of accessibility.

UPDATE:

James Madison on Inaccessibility, [Federalist #62](#):

It will be of little avail to the people, that the laws are made by men of their own choice, if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood; if they be repealed or revised before they are promulgated, or undergo such incessant changes that no man, who knows what the law is to-day, can guess what it will be to-morrow. Law is defined to be a rule of action; but how can that be a rule, which is little known, and less fixed?

And people, he's talking about an era with quills, primitive printing presses, and delivery of correspondence by horse. It didn't get better with modern IT.

UPDATE 2 (HT: [Moonbattery](#)) A single year of the [Federal Register](#):





## Chinese Eugenics and Why Losers Don't Win

August 4, 2013

<http://theden.tv/2013/08/04/chinese-eugenics-and-why-losers-dont-win/>

by Wesley Morganston

*Thedening the West*

# The Den

In China, they do work that's crimethink here. Wired, in [an article](#) about intelligence researcher Zhao Bowen, makes this clear:

Some people are smarter than others. It seems like a straightforward truth, and one that should lend itself to scientific investigation. But those who try to study intelligence, at least in the West, find themselves lost in a political minefield. To be sure, not all intelligence research is controversial: If you study cognitive development in toddlers, or the mental decline associated with Alzheimer's disease, "that's treated as just normal science," says Douglas Detterman, founding editor of *Intelligence*, a leading journal in the field. The trouble starts whenever the heritability of intelligence is discussed, or when intelligence is compared between genders, socioeconomic classes, or—most explosively—racial groupings.

Since the 1990s, when a book called *The Bell Curve* (coauthored by a psychologist and a political scientist) waded into this last morass, attempts to quantify or even study intelligence have become deeply unfashionable. Dozens of popular books by nonexperts have filled the void, many claiming that IQ—which after more than a century remains the dominant metric for intelligence—predicts nothing important or that intelligence is simply too complex and subtle to be measured. ...

And given the fallout that sometimes results when academics talk about intelligence as a quantifiable concept—such as the case of Harvard president Lawrence Summers, who in 2006 resigned after suggesting that science is male-dominated due not to discrimination but to a shortage of high-IQ women—it's no surprise that IQ research is not a popular subject these days at Western universities.

But in his lab at BGI, 21-year-old Zhao has no such squeamishness. He waves it away as "irrational," making a comparison with height: "Some people are tall and some are short," he says.

Some people are tall and some are short; some people are smart and some are dumb. A Communist country that successfully rules a major center of international finance cannot be a stranger to pragmatism—a word that America has [ruined](#).

The Wired article starts off as follows: "Zhao Bowen is late for a Satanic heavy metal concert." The symbolism is clear: an aversion to studying intelligence is part of the catechism of America's current state religion, [progressivism](#). There seems to be a sense among American true believers that something isn't right about all this, that their creed might end up doing us all in: [Vice asks](#) whether China's "creepy-ass" intelligence research program means "global domination" is in the cards, and [the Globe and Mail notes](#) Washington's "outright fear" that a Chinese industry would be the world leader in a field progressive dogma has rendered taboo. Meanwhile, [Infowars](#) shifts as usual into full paranoid mode, resonating far more with the American popular spirit than it ought to.

Contrasting US attitudes to such eugenic interventions to Chinese ones, Miller asserts:

“We have ideological biases that say, “Well, this could be troubling, we shouldn’t be meddling with nature, we shouldn’t be meddling with God.” I just attended a debate in New York a few weeks ago about whether or not we should outlaw genetic engineering in babies and the audience was pretty split. In China, 95 percent of an audience would say, “Obviously you should make babies genetically healthier, happier, and brighter!” There’s a big cultural difference.”

These words are from the mouth of an academic, deemed by Chinese eugenicists to be a genius. If this man is a precursor to the envisioned “ubermensch”, then God help all of mankind. If you figure the breeding program to be unethical but safely far away, figure again. The Chinese genetic breeding programs have now been expanded to the United States. Just two days ago, [BGI Shenzhen announced](#) having completed the takeover of the US-based Genome research institute “Complete Genomics”. According to the press release, the takeover was “the first time a Chinese company has successfully acquired a US public company”.

Chinese state-sponsored genetic engineers are now expanding their operations to the US. [On its own website](#), Complete Genomics boasts that “Our human genome sequencing technology, which is based on our proprietary DNA nanoarrays and ligation-based read technology, is superior to existing commercially available whole human genome sequencing methods in terms of quality, cost and scale.”

Wonderful, isn’t it? This superior technology is now in the hands of a professed eugenic institution from China, dead set on creating “enhanced” people.

No reason is given for why these programs of study are bad; Infowars simply assumes that the word ‘eugenic’ does all the necessary work. But it doesn’t even come close. We shouldn’t worry that China is doing this, as [Geoffrey Miller suggests](#); we should worry that America isn’t. We should worry that half of the people attending a debate in New York—surely a demographic closer to Wired than Infowars!—thought that babies should not be made healthier, happier, and brighter. We should worry that the spirit of pragmatism—the spirit of *winning*, of *doing what wins*—is gone, replaced with the slavish adherence to a creed that has empirically provided little but [decay](#); for [history tells us](#) that those who prioritize keeping the faith of the state over winning lose. We should also worry that there are people who think it’s unethical to *make an entire generation of people healthier, happier, and brighter* because science is involved and science scares them and reminds them of Hitler.

Losers don’t win. He who becomes a loser will lose. China knows this. They never had Whig history; nobody ever [convinced them that](#) “God, whose ways are mysterious but whose arms are invincible, is on the side of the just—therefore it is futile to attempt to overcome a just cause”. There are merely winning causes and losing ones. If our morality would land us with al-Ghazali’s Arabs in the dustbin of history, then it’s time to get a better one; if there’s one lesson in common between post-disaster looters and the [Yanomamö tribe](#), it’s that there’s not much room for morality when civilization breaks.

Like most sizable enterprises in China, state-owned and private, BGI has a Communist Party committee. A banner in the sequencing lab reads: “Only with data can you find truth, and only with truth can you serve the country.”

It says something about the state of the States that the Communists beat us to getting those banners.

# Monarchy

October 18, 2013

<http://bloodyshovel.wordpress.com/2013/10/18/monarchy/>

by Spandrell

*We shall drown, and nobody will save us*



After refusing for years, I finally yielded to a friends's insistence that I watch Game of Thrones. And it's actually pretty good. Quite oversexed, you might say, but not comically so, as the infamous Rome series, which had Augustus fucking his elder sister, out of the blue. I have no trouble believing that a quarter or so of the medieval elite were oversexed whoremongers. We do have an unrealistic image of the Middle Ages as a time of piety and boredom and sheer peasant stagnation. Then again it does nag me to read that the author of the series, George R. R. Martin is an Obama supporter, and a Carter worshiper. Of all people. I wonder what Jimmy Carter would think if he watched the series, with all those naked women and guts spilling out of soldiers.

The fun point of the series is to see how power is grabbed, lost, used and fought about. It's mostly about petty disputes, personal dislikes and other middle-schoolish personal relations. Revenge as the ultimate human emotion. And if you know something about how Feudalism worked, it all does ring a bell somehow. You read in a book how this lord had this lover, or killed this man or whatever, and well that's just something you read. Seeing it on a movie though, and quite vividly, gives another impression. Which makes it all so much real. I've said before I am a great believer in the dictum that all politics are local. But local not as in town, but as in house. Or castle, or palace, or whatever it is. Politics is about the monkeysphere, or perhaps only the innermost circle of it.

When you think about it, monarchy is a pretty strange system. Why should one guy hold power over vast amounts of people he doesn't even know? And get to rule for life? And he gets to do what he pleases, which is generally a bad thing for your character. In fact many kings suffered of severe bad character. Many even sunk whole kingdoms, with millions of people, just by being stupid, or greedy, or just an ass. Whatever you say about monarchy, it's pretty bad risk management.

Which is the economist way of thinking. Thankfully I don't think like that, I have the habit of thinking like a historian. A good one, that is. So I think of how a system such as monarchy might have come to be. And it's not that hard really. Lands are conquered through war. Armies need a commander, so when an army conquers a piece of land, the commander becomes king. He rules and collects taxes which he funnels to his war brothers, who become noblemen.

Then the king dies. What happens? Well different peoples had different systems to arrange for succession for a ruler. What would happen in most armies when the commander dies, is that the generals will get together and choose one of them as the successor, if the king didn't arrange for it himself. And that evolved into [elective monarchy](#). Problem is it's hard to get people to agree to choose one king. The stakes are too damn high. So what you got was all the contenders gathering their armies in anticipation of the king's death, and total war among the elite every 10 years or so.

The solution which was most widely adopted was that of hereditary succession. The metaphor for the kingship changed, from that of commander of an army, to that of owner of property. Since time immemorial property of all kind has been inherited in the family; in patriarchal societies it would be

inherited by the sons. And so most kingdoms eventually adopted the system of hereditary succession. The king dies, the son takes over.

What if there's more than one son? Well, the inheritance of property itself has two sorts of arrangements. To this day, some people divide their inheritance more or less equally onto their sons. And some give the whole estate to the eldest son, and screw the others. There are pros and cons to both approaches. Partible inheritance tends to break up the estates, which become ever smaller and smaller, and eventually not very profitable, which is bad for the family name, and makes them prone to be bought up or taken by richer, stronger people with bigger estates. Primogeniture ensures the estate doesn't shrink, and with it the family honor. But it creates a huge incentive for the younger brothers to kill the eldest.

Partible inheritance was popular in medieval Europe. But it eventually disappeared, for obvious reasons. If there's only one guy who doesn't do it, and keeps his big estate, he'll be able to field a larger army and take the small estates that your oh so egalitarian father left you. And so we see that on most of the world, primogeniture monarchy ended being the most widely adopted system.

But forget all I said. Imagine you don't have a historical mind, you don't track things to the beginning to see how they happened. No, you just see things as they are, and you ask yourself: why? Why is that guy over there the king? Because his father was king? How fair is that? His father was a good man, while he is an evil bastard. Why should he rule? It's not fair.

Of course it's not fair, but that's not how human societies are arranged. Human societies are organized over Schelling points. Primogeniture is a Schelling point. Monarchy is a Schelling point. And primogeniture monarchy is another Schelling point. Schelling points happen through trial and error. Lots of error really. And they don't assure there won't be any more error. But given the huge and numerous constraints which exist, this was the best arrangement possible.

Schelling points are fixed in place not because of an explicit understanding of their origin and importance. They just stumble upon existence, after which the people involved come up with some bullshit that sounds right. Or may I rephrase, people see Schelling points and come up with elaborated post-rationalizations to justify them. How do you justify that some kid, who has done nothing of merit in his life, who is ugly, dumb, clumsy and of bad character, becomes king just because his father was? Well I don't know. But it's always been like that, so if sons have a right to the kingship... well, it must be about blood. Yes, the bloodline. That's it. It is of utmost importance that all the kings must be of the same blood as the previous king, as this is the blood of the founder, which was awesome. We can't afford losing this awesome blood. It doesn't matter that the lawful heir of this bloodline is ugly, dumb, clumsy and of bad character. That's... uh... the fault of his teachers. Yes, bad teachers. The kid shares the bloodline so he must be king.

On the face of it the theory is quite stupid. Let's assume blood alone makes you awesome. Even if you

keep the father's line, sons have mothers too, so the 'bloodline' gets diluted each time. By the 5th generation the new king shares very few genes with the great founder. And that's if you are lucky and you don't have a slutty queen who fucks someone else and fathers his children. Surely someone must have noticed this fact, but of course the solution to it is even worse. You keep using women from inside the family to avoid diluting the precious bloodline, and what you get is a monster. So you gotta worship the bloodline while doing all you can to dilute it. Hypocrisy is by no means an innovation of our times.

Dynasties in most of the world changed quite often, especially in Europe. So the common rationalization for the legitimacy of kings was not so much the bloodline, as simply the law. There are inheritance laws that say who has titles, and sometimes kings agree to leave the crown to some guy. And law is sacred. Most of the time anyway, European history is full of succession wars where people didn't quite agree on the sacredness of laws, and everybody with a big army always found a plausible legal claim to the throne they wanted. But the emphasis was still in the law, which is a funny thing to take as sacred. Surely there are more important things that some agreement reached at some point of time, in some state of mind, by some old guy who didn't really know what he was doing. But hey, another Schelling point, can't touch that. Perhaps the famous legalism of Europeans, which is quite distinct to other civilizations, comes from the fact that we had no other concept in which to base our politics.

Other places took monarchy more seriously. See for example Japan. The Japanese imperial family has officially ruled Japan for 125 generations. The first emperor was the grandson of the Sun goddess, came to Japan in 660 BC, and ever since, the same bloodline has ruled the Japanese islands. Of course the date, and the number of emperor don't make any sense; archeology tells us that in 660 BC the Japanese didn't even have agriculture. Not much is known of the early stages of the Japanese monarchy, but there is reliable historical evidence of a Yamato clan around the 6th century AD. And again all evidence says that the patrilineal succession has continued, uninterrupted, to this day. That's still very impressive, and if you count from then, you still get around 100 emperors. From the same family.

How did that happen? How does a family get to rule for 100 generations? That's some rock-solid Schelling point there. Except it isn't. The Japanese imperial family didn't actually rule for that long. Actually it didn't rule for very long at all. From a very early stage, the big clans of Japan, the Soga, the Fujiwara, etc. fought for influence over the imperial house, and they settled on a very straightforward system. You marry the emperor's heir to a high rank girl from your clan. Then you get the emperor to appoint you Supreme General in Charge of Everything. If the Emperor disagreed, you kill or exile the bastard, and appoint yourself Regent until his son, i.e. your grandson comes of age. Still the patrilineal line continued, even if actual power was transmitted through the maternal line. Hey, it's still blood.

Eventually, around the 12th century the centralized state based on the imperial house collapsed, and Japan fell into Samurai feudalism. Still there was no Odoacer who killed the emperor and took his place. The empire had collapsed, feudal lords were taking land for themselves and fighting each other without regard to imperial edicts, but the emperor was left in his palace, pretty much undisturbed. They even

stopped calling him Emperor. He became the “Mikado”, i.e. the holy gate. The gate of the imperial palace, that is. So while a new military based polity grew out of Samurai bands 500 kilometers in the East, the old majestic Emperor was just “that guy in the palace”. Still the Shogun did get out of his way to get the emperor to name him “Great Shogun”.

The old Schelling point that said: “the king must rule because he has royal blood” lost effective power, but not so much that you could go and kill the emperor and take his place. Not like the emperor didn’t ask for it, as he more than once raise an army to battle the Samurais, only to be defeated. But he was never harmed, at worst he was forced to surrender his place to a brother. The imperial blood was still holy, and was the source of legal sovereignty. He had lost power, but he was kept in his place. The Schelling point stood. Quite similar to the way that the Abbasid caliphs were kept in their Baghdad palaces while his Empire fell to every kind of Turk. Or the way European constitutional monarchies left the Kings as sovereignty symbols while stripping them of any legal power. Eventually Hulagu Khan killed the last caliph, and republicans keep trying to abolish the ceremonial monarchies of Europe.

Nothing like that happened in Japan though. The imperial palace in Kyoto kept this sort of august aura, this Schelling charm that made every power holder wanted to be close to it. Of course it has to do with the fact that Japan wasn’t invaded by Hulagu Khan, or Wilsonian State Department apparatchiks. The Schelling point had evolved into saying: whoever gets appointed by the guy in the palace as Great Shogun, wins. And so we get the Ōnin war, and the subsequent Warring States period, where all the warlords in Japan go in a fighting spree to see who’s first to invade Kyoto and force the emperor to say he’s the awesomest Samurai in the world. Kinda ridiculous in the face of it, and it was. Getting to Kyoto didn’t stop Oda Nobunaga from getting killed. And in the end the big winner of the Warring States period, and final reunifier were the Tokugawa, based in the eastern plains where Tokyo is today. He overturned the Schelling point through the old trick of having the biggest army.

Still even the great Tokugawa didn’t go as far as getting rid of the guy in the palace. Again he kept him there, well fed, tightly controlled through a bureaucratic agency setup for the purpose. Tokugawa even went as far as make himself called 大御所 “big holy palace”, which is obviously bigger than the name for the emperor, 御所 “holy palace”. So it’s not like he was full of reverence towards the holy blood of the imperial family. For the most part the Tokugawa’s didn’t give a shit about the emperors, and didn’t even bother to force the emperors to marry their daughters (they tried once at the beginning, didn’t work out).

In doing so the Tokugawa shoguns made a big mistake. You can respect a Schelling point, or you can break a Schelling point, trying to bring a new one into place. But you don’t ignore a Schelling point. You don’t just close your eyes and wait for it to disappear. For chances are it won’t.

The Tokugawa inaugurated the rebirth of the Japanese nation. It reunified the state, closed the borders, promoting native industry and agriculture, and the suppression of Buddhist sects created a new secular popular culture which evolved into most of what we recognize as Japanese today. The Tokugawa

shogunate was a strong state, but it wasn't without enemies. The shogunate run a very peculiar form of territorial control, a sort of finely bureaucratized feudalism. Most of the old Samurai bands of the warring states period were granted a fief, to be ruled at their pleasure. Lords who had been friendly to the Tokugawa during the war, were given big fiefs, hostile lords were given smaller fiefs, far from the center. Taxes were paid according to the rice production of the fiefs, and lords were to spend every other year in the capital, where their wives and children were held hostage permanently.

The big fiefs themselves contained smaller fiefs for junior lords. And this patchwork of feudal fiefdoms was controlled by a central bureaucracy, who could anytime they wanted strip a lord of his title, take away his land or move him to somewhere else. All in all it was a very smart, surprisingly modern system, and clearly the reason why it lasted so long. But while it kept the Samurais peaceful, it didn't make them happy. In made a lot of them real pissed with the government. With war being out of the question, the opposition started looking for some good rationalization for their hating the government. They needed something to converge upon, a rallying point. Or should I say, a Schelling point. Conveniently there was a guy in a palace in Kyoto who was the perfect candidate. The imperial house had been suffering decline for several centuries already, but something was about to change.

The Tokugawa era, the Great Peace as it was called back then, had produced this very funny society, in which all Samurais, friendly or hostile, had nothing to do. They had their legal status as 武士, warriors, and they could, actually had to carry their fine katanas all the time with them. But there was no war to be fought. Yes there was a lord to defend, but nothing to defend him from. Still they couldn't just grab a piece of land and grow food, or start a shop in the nearest town; even if they could go stand the thought of downward mobility, there were laws against that. There were 4 castes, warrior, artisan, peasant and merchant, and they had to respect their jobs. So what's a warrior, millions of them, to do when there's no war? They did like any other politically-connected class do. They manned the civil service. Oh, and the schools. Sounds familiar? Yes, the Samurais had their own mini Cathedral going on back then. They became a clerk-class, which means literate, and when a lot of people became highly literate, interesting ideas are bound to come out.

The Edo period saw the birth of the [Kokugaku](#), the national studies, which saw many breakthroughs in philology, history and political theory. They deciphered the old classical texts, started to read them, and found that the imperial family actually was pretty damn awesome. Hey, did you know they descend from the Sun Goddess? That's what this book commissioned by the imperial house in the 8th century says anyway. The knowledge of the ancient past of the country spread quickly, even to the imperial palace, who had forgotten itself. The Kokaku emperor in the 1800s found out that he wasn't just the Guy in the Palace. He was the Emperor, or in the original Japanese, 天皇 the Heavenly Sovereign. That has a different ring to it. So he restored the title, mostly unused for a whopping 900 years.

The reappraisal of the awesomeness of the Unbroken Imperial Line was of course a loaded weapon in the hands of hostile Samurai fiefs, which found it made a good rallying point for opposition to those perfid

Tokugawas in the capital. We should overthrow those bastards, not because they took away half our land in the 1600s. No, it has nothing to do with that. They must be overthrown because they are not nice to the great Emperor in Kyoto, the real sovereign. How's that for a Schelling point? Suddenly all opposition to the government had a very strong rationale. It didn't help that the Tokugawas had adopted [Neoconfucianism](#), of the [Zhu Xi](#) variety, as their official ideology, taught in the official schools. Confucianism teaching basically tell you to obey to the real King, and it happens that the Tokugawas were nominally just a military commander appointed by the King, and in reality they were just a bunch of stationary bandits which had seized the capital centuries before.

So it's not surprise that that guy in Kyoto, who had no army, little land, and had wielded no real power for almost a millennium, suddenly found himself being held as the greatest King of all time. The only unbroken line of kings in the world. "Japan is the real Middle Kingdom", said [some overenthusiastic scholar](#). If legitimacy is about blood, the Japanese Emperor is the most legitimate ruler there has ever been. The Tokugawa regime stood fast, but when the going went tough, after the American pirate [Matthew Perry](#) forced the Shogun to open the countries ports to American ships, the opposition very soon started rallying around the emperor and overthrew the shogunate in 1868. The [Meiji Restoration](#).

Suddenly that poor old family that lived off the ancient capital accumulated by their ancestors in the form of a small, tiny, yet firm Schelling point, was now the effective ruler of the country. Or was he? The [Meiji Constitution](#) sure put him as the Lord of the country, commander of the armed forces, son of the Goddess and source of everything fine and nice. Yet we know that the Meiji Emperor, despite [his very kingly looks](#), didn't have much input at all in the real works of government. And he certainly didn't lead his army in the wars against China and Russia. Nor he decided to go to war. The actual power dynamics were controlled by the old Samurais from Satsuma and Choshu, who manned the armies which overthrew the Shogunate. It was their armies who put the Emperor in his new Tokyo throne. Sure, the Emperor made a fine Schelling point for the Samurais to rally upon. Much better to say "we are joining this war to restore the Sacred Monarchy" than to say "we are joining this war led by these two peripheral fiefdoms who have held a grudge against the Shogun for 270 years". But there's a long way from saying "Hail our King, descendant of the Goddess", to actually giving command of your armies and your money to that guy from the palace.

I remember reading about an English advisor, or perhaps it was the ambassador of the time, who told the Meiji government people to tone down with the deification of the emperor, that it was a bunch of crap and they know it. And the Japanese minister answered saying basically that oh they know it's crap, but it gives strength to the masses, and what's wrong with that? I'd give a leg to find the quote, but I read that before Google, and I just can't remember the names.

There's this quote in Game of Thrones, "power resides where people believe it does". I'm sure the author took it from somewhere else, and there's quite a point to it. It doesn't matter if the king is naked if everybody believes he is finely clothed. Mao Zedong had a better quote: power resides in the bottom of a

gun barrel. But there's lots of guns out there, and power resides in the ability to make them do your bid. So in the battle between the pen and the sword? Who wins? Surely it is neither. It is not faith where power resides, but loyalty. And loyalty is much harder to earn than faith. It takes a whole lot of Schelling points to get large scale loyalty. And it takes massive resources to force it into the populace. Faith is orders of magnitude easier to achieve. Christians were many in the 5th century. People loyal to the Roman Emperor... not so many.

In the end yes, Monarchy was restored in Japan. Except that it wasn't. A broad oligarchy ruled the place, then the military, then the bureaucrats, then McArthur, then the bureaucrats again. The King didn't do shit, his descendants didn't do shit, and even though he was a very strong spiritual symbol (the Japanese troops in WW2 are famous for running to their deaths at the shout of "Long Live the Emperor"), His Majesty never had much input in the actual works of government, besides what his advisors found convenient to tell him, which wasn't much. In the end it was a good thing, for he could avoid taking responsibility for starting WW2, and so USG did not depose the Unbroken Imperial Line, which would have been tragic for the cultural continuity of the country. The Emperor was left where it is, and the new constitution, in a quite unprecedented bout of honesty, names him the "Symbol of the nation". Not head of state, mind you. Symbol of the nation. Might as well called him Schelling point.

There is an old division in linguistics, older than the field really, between the prescriptivists, who focus on deciding what is correct language, and fix the standard, and the descriptivists, who analyze language as it is actually spoken by the often not very correct speakers. You probably can guess that in the old days prescriptivists were multitude, while today the majority are descriptivists who deride the very concept of 'correct'. Humans are moral, moreso in the old days, so it's not surprise that people were more preoccupied with what is *right*, instead of what is *real*.

Ironically our political science is still stuck in the old prescriptivist paradigm, where all we care about is what are the right policies, what is good government, what should we do to have better rulers. Compared to that, very little attention is put to describing how power really works, how the powerful get where they are, and what are the mechanisms that make the whole thing work. The prescriptivists are legion, and they disagree with our ideas. It is perhaps the better strategy to go descriptivist for a while. [James Goulding](#) promised to do so months ago (never to be seen again). [Nydwracu](#) is toying with the idea lately. I shall strive to do my best too.

# Burnout

August 31, 2013

<http://nydwracu.wordpress.com/2013/08/31/burnout/>

by nydwracu niþgrim, nihtbealwa mæst

*reactionary futurism, critical legalism*

To conquer the stars, mankind must become a race of conquerors.

We who have for sixty years been threatened with the technological future stand at the dawn of history; more precisely, we stand at a *fork*, between the future of humanity and the eternal present of the human, an eternal present that leads inevitably backwards. The world-stage victory of liberalism has turned us toward the latter. The time-preference curve cuts off to zero. Historical stillbirth.

There is no longer a positive vision of the future; there is only eternal masturbation in the Garden of Eden, under the shade of the ever-static civilization tree. Measures to secure the future against the orcish hordes of the present are deemed intrinsically vile. Utilitarianism is protected against the eugenic conclusion only by the cutoff of the time-preference curve: zero care for the yet unborn. The rot has set in so deeply that antinatalism is no longer taken as a *reductio ad absurdum*: there are people who really believe that there are logical arguments against reproducing and that they ought to be spread, and somehow these people have not all been silenced or shot. Antinatalism without active, forceful pressure toward human extinction can never succeed, for the simple reason that some people are either too stupid to follow logical arguments or too impulsive to care; but for the same reason, if it is not *completely and utterly* ineffective, it is necessarily dysgenic.

The death of history is not a *leftist* conclusion. [It is strictly a liberal one.](#)

The reason for that east-western difference is the fact that the GDR had an “educated mother scheme” and actively tried to encourage first births among the more educated. It did so by propagandizing the opinion that every educated woman should “present at least one child to socialism” and also by financially rewarding its more educated citizen to become parents. The government especially tried to persuade students to become parents while still in college and it was quite successful in doing so. In 1986 38% of all women, who were about to graduate from college, were mothers of at least one child and additional 14% were pregnant and 43% of all men, who were about to graduate from college, were fathers of at least one child. There was a sharp decline in the birth rate and especially in the birth rate of the educated after the fall of the Berlin wall. Nowadays only 5% of those about to graduate from college are parents. ...

A study done in the western German State of [Nordrhein-Westfalen](#) by the HDZ revealed that childlessness was especially widespread among scientists. It showed that 78% of the female scientists and 71% of the male scientists working in that State were childless.

Intelligence, like most things, is about 50% heritable. If education correlates to *any* non-negligible degree with intelligence, the GDR was completely right. To value the future, as communism apparently did and as liberalism emphatically does not, leads *necessarily* to the eugenic conclusion.

Intelligence forms and is amplified by the [Old Law of Gnon](#):

*The penalty for stupidity is death.*

Gregory Clark is among those few to have grasped [this law] clearly. *Any eugenic trend within history is expressed by continuous downward mobility.* For any given level of intelligence, a steady deterioration in life-prospects lies ahead, culling the least able, and replacing them with the more able, who inherit their wretched socio-economic situation, until they too are pushed off the Malthusian cliff. Relative comfort belongs only to the sports and freaks of cognitive advance. For everyone else, history slopes downwards into impoverishment, hopelessness, and eventual genetic extinction. That is how intelligence is made. Short of Technological Singularity, it is the only way. Who wants a piece of that?

No one does, or almost no one. ... Monkeys ... are able to revolt, once they finesse their nasty little opposable thumbs. They don't like the Old Law, which has crafted them through countless aeons of ruthless culling, so they make history instead. If they get everything 'right', they even sleaze their way into epochs of upward social mobility, and with this great innovation, semi-sustainable dysgenics gets started. In its fundamentals it is hideously simple: social progress destroys the brain.

Liberalism is thus quite literally a *cancer*: a memeplex that, on entering metastasis, threatens *civilization itself*. Civilization is taken for granted; it is believed to grow on trees; no measures for preserving it are necessary, and measures for *enhancing* it are reminiscent of the high modernism, the biological Nietzscheanism, that led man to believe that he could conquer first his own condition and then his living-conditions, and that was defeated in the war that ended the West.

The Second World War, in the American mythological reading, was a war between the rights of the present and the promises of the future. This reading is not entirely accurate, since, as we have seen, the Soviets opted to search for a balance between the two rather than adopt the liberal solution of utterly abandoning the latter and accelerating the former into dysgenic burnout leading inexorably to a collapse that is no longer taken to matter. But the American mythological reading is more relevant than the historical fact of the matter, since it is the founding myth of the postmodern liberal religion, and the postmodern liberal religion is preached today from [San Francisco to Samarkand](#).

Our popular culture reflects the liberal view of history: the technological future is dystopian, evil and oppressive, reminiscent of the Nazis or the hyper-Reaganism of Snow Crash. If the future has any merit, any promise, it is fundamentally *moral* in nature: civilization will remain at its current technological level, not moving an inch in either direction, but its *ethics* will advance, advance toward the singularity of total dissolution, total atomization, every thede dissolved into its component parts, united only by the no-thede, the all-thede, the recognition of the simple and objective moral truth that has gone unrecognized by *literally every other civilization on the planet* only because they were on the wrong side of history. If technology is to advance at all, it must be solely for the purpose of solving [the inherent immorality of the human condition](#).

While popular culture looks forward to a more moral future, aesthetically it can only look *backward*. Folk music and Whole Foods. Craft beer and organic artisanal soap. Technology must stop looking *technological*: it has to be friendly, it has to look like a kitchen appliance or a bar of soap, made of soft curves and pastel-colored plastic. No wires, no rectangles, no beige. IBM is right out.

Marinetti's call to flood the cellars of the museums has been reversed. Science fiction gives way to fantasy; space programs give way to social justice. There is no longer a USSR for the liberal regime to assert itself against in the propaganda of technological achievement. Oh well, the space program was undemocratic anyway.

The single most important error of liberalism is that it either has forgotten or actively desires to avoid knowing that there are prerequisites to civilization, and that these prerequisites, like most traits, are most likely about 50% genetic.

If there is room within liberalism for the other 50% to be worked on, it must be worked on. If there is a non-negligible gap between potential and actual intelligence, due to childhood malnutrition or lead poisoning or whatever, this gap must be closed. But it is of paramount importance that the cancer be treated. It took untold hundreds of years for the West to develop civilization and the prerequisites thereof; if these things are lost, with them goes one path toward the future, one bridge between ape and overman.

[Get married and have children, all of you.](#)

# The Path to Legionnaire: The Power of Myth

January 21, 2014

<http://iamlegionnaire.wordpress.com/2014/01/21/the-path-to-legionnaire-the-power-of-myth/>

by The Legionnaire

*Fighting for a forgotten glory*



Around some circles, you often hear the importance of having a “mission” in life. I’ve always been skeptical of the dramatic emphasis on that sort of thing, but I do agree that people need to have some sort of impetus driving them on, helping them to persist and carry on when others give up and fail.

Think of a fire, burning within the soul. The bigger and more intense the fire, the more strength one has to plug onwards in pursuit of an end. Call it [Thumos](#) if that helps you conceptualize it better. The right impetus serves as fuel to this fire, enabling to burn ever brighter.

You know what serves as a great impetus? Myth and narrative. Ever read a really good book and felt inspired? Perhaps you saw a kung-fu movie and decided to take up martial arts. Don’t try to tell me you’ve never imagined yourself as modern heroes of popular culture like Batman, James Bond, or Sherlock Holmes. Stories and tales are perhaps the most powerful force motivating human action, a fact that offers up a wealth of possibility.

Don’t believe me? Consider this story:

We are all bound by Fate. When Fate calls on us, we do not have a choice in the matter. Our burden is to obey. All things in life must be viewed through the lenses of Fate. Did Fate call on us to be reactionaries at a time when our civilization needs it most? At a time when the Modern World fully embraces the *zeitgeist* of the Kali Yuga, are we the chosen few, the warriors of Fate destined to pull civilization back from the brink of destruction?

A gripping narrative? If you invest yourself in it, you might find it highly compelling. Yet I only thought it up just now. Those words should carry no weight, yet if you find yourself assigning them any meaning, you might find yourself unable to escape the idea. Even if you didn’t enjoy that little myth, you still (more likely than not) compared it to your personal story of why you became a reactionary, further cementing *that* specific narrative in your mind. Either way, at least one story has just strengthened its hold on your mind, even if you don’t realize it quite yet.

That is the power of myth.

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To paraphrase something they say over at [The Right Stuff](#): “Belief, not reason, builds civilizations”. They’re damn right. Reason is an important tool, but even more important for the proper flourishing of a civilization is a founding myth. America had the idea of the American Experiment in self-government, and later, the idea of [Manifest Destiny](#) and the pioneer spirit. One of the reasons Hitler was able to rise to power was because he offered the German people a narrative and a myth that was sufficiently compelling to garner the support of enough of the populace.

Now, as reactionaries and neoreactionaries, we all tend to be fairly logical, rather intelligent people. We place a very high premium on logical reasoning and intellectual capacity, and our favorite place to hang out is on the extreme right of the bell curve. Reason sways us. Strong arguments influence us. This is a

very good thing. In fact, it's downright essential for the [Elite members of a successful Reaction](#).

Group One is only half of the equation here, though. You still need mass numbers of individuals to comprise Group Two. As Anissimov points out, popular support is accrued through slogans, soundbites, and superficial overviews, not detailed and intricate arguments that have intentionally been hidden behind the veil of [arcane language and complicated prose](#).

Anti-populist as we are, a successful reaction of any kind will probably depend on some measure of popular support. Sure, the [elites come first](#), but there are only so many elites, and having some popular support opens up doors that remain closed to a solely elitist movement. And how do we plant the seed of Neoreactionary thought in the minds of the average?

We give them a story. We give them a narrative, and make it one they can understand. Take the Neoreactionary meme of "The Cathedral", for instance. There's no such thing as a succinct explanation of "The Cathedral". Is there any way to give an explanation simple enough so that even the people who write hit pieces on Neoreaction can understand it? Maybe not, but allow me to take shot.

This is how I would explain "The Cathedral" to someone with an IQ of 100 or so: "Most people in the media, which gives us our news, are liberal. Most people who enter Academia, which gives us our educations, are liberal. Most people who enter government service and bureaucracy, which runs the majority of government affairs, are liberal. They may not be actively co-ordinating with each other, but they are generally working towards the same ends. What do you think this does to society over time?"

Does it work? I don't know. I've never discussed Neoreaction with someone of normal intellect. But that's the story I'd give them. That's the narrative I'd try to implant in their minds.

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Few people will follow a convincing argument to unknown lands or uncertain circumstances. Give them a good story though, and they'll follow it to the ends of the earth, against all logic or reason. When Ernest Shackleton needed volunteers for his Antarctic expedition, he didn't make a rational argument. He promised a chance for glory and fame if they succeeded in surviving a dangerous journey.



There is no logical reason to do this.

Give someone a compelling and inspiring narrative, and they might literally follow it to the ends of the Earth. Hell, just look at how pernicious the meme of “equality” has become. People will do and say almost anything in service to that myth, which is why we now have people who think that only white people can be racist and all “penis-in-vagina” sex is rape.

But story and narrative is important for more than just motivating people. Culture, community, and society all grow out of the core narrative of any movement. Little in Neoreaction makes sense unless one accepts the presence of the central myth, “The Cathedral”. It’s a damn good story in its own right, and it has a solid grounding in fact, making it even more powerful, but is it enough?

That depends. If all one wants to do is to critique the modern iteration of Western Civilization, than The Cathedral Narrative is all you need. If you wish to transition from mere deconstruction to bold reconstruction though, you’ll probably need something more. Neoreaction might be able to get away with just critiquing democracy, but Reaction cannot just be about deconstructing a rival myth. There needs to be a better alternative to be offered up.

Going forward, what will be the central myth of the reaction?

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The use of myth is, like most everything else, a tool to be used in pursuit of some end. Playing with narratives can be great fun, but it is also a potentially more dangerous endeavor than playing around with logical narratives. You can get people to believe almost anything, especially if it’s in story form. Scientology exists, after all. Stories should not be treated lightly. You never know what might become of them...

And that’s just pathos on its own! You know what happens when you mix it with logos and ethos? You can make some potent brews indeed....

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In summary:

- Myths and stories drive one to great things
- Reactionary narratives are going to be of great necessity in the future
- The right narrative can do things a fine argument cannot
- Stories are a particularly pernicious type of idea
- Much boils down to the power of narrative
- You need narrative that will serve your ends
- People will believe almost anything if it’s a good story

I realize that this has had quite a bit less personal focus than the preceding steps on the [Path](#). That was intentional. Stories tend to have a less personal element to them because the characters are only parts in a much wider work, not the central focus, like your workout plan or your reading list. That in mind, I will take some time here to give some personal advice. Find stories that inspire you personally. Explore tales of the noble and the heroic. Research the myths of your ancestors and try to connect with them. Make the fire that burns within you as powerful as you can. You're going to need it.

I can't tell you your personal story. I can't lay out the great narrative of your life. Only you can do that. So I ask you this, now that you've finished "The Path to Legionnaire", what story are you going to bring to life?

**DE NOBIS FABULA NARRATUR**

# The Cult of Neoreaction

November 28, 2013

<http://www.moreright.net/the-cult-of-neoreaction/>

by Samo Burja

*Questioning Modernity*



Well, whom do you want to have reading your blog and commenting on it? People able and willing to discuss seriously the topics that you write about, or people for whom it's an image-building exercise that strokes their maladjusted sense of self-importance? Wherever these two kinds co-exist for a while, the latter will always eventually drown out the former.

-Vladimir, [here](#)

Did I [promise](#) blasphemous drums and the heart of ultimate chaos? It seems I lied and any [moral progress](#) I make will have to wait. This is because my attention was consumed by a thread on one of our [Blogs of Interest](#), Foseti's, where [notables were grappling](#) with the consequences of the [Cambrian Explosion](#) of the Dark Enlightenment. Specifically, [a trading card game](#).

[Vladimir considers](#) it an example of a worrying trend. He sees the community becoming powered more and more by local status spirals, a fandom of itself. This will make it generally too nerdy for serious thinkers with the inside knowledge or familiarity with musty old tomes that are needed for real intellectual progress. And thus, any interesting answers to the questions reaction has spawned will be buried under the rubble of low quality discourse driven by group coordination and status signalling. [Foseti](#) and [Spandrell](#), among others, disagree.

A new blogger at [Banner of The Cosmos](#) has written a usable [compression](#) of the discussion. Some within reaction wish to focus on popularizing existing insights combined with object level politics. Others see this focus on popularization as as standing in the way of intellectual productivity.

On More Right we had to face the same choice at launch: should we focus on popularization or eschew the limelight in favor of rigorous intellectual progress? It was not a difficult choice. We resolved to try to make intellectual progress even at the cost of inclusiveness. "If you build it, they will come." And come they did, this blog has been rewarded with numerous interesting emails and articles from competent people willing to investigate and learn together. And our weekly Skype meetings alone have paid back all I have invested several fold.

But I didn't much think about the wider ecosystem. Is our small study group [free riding](#) off the popularity generated by others? To allay my concern that we are, I will try in my small way to give back to the wider blogosphere.

Leaving online communities you don't like has low costs. Unlike, say, leaving the United States, an online community won't tax you for years after you renounce membership. They have easy Exit. It is also very easy to give your opinion on such communities and persuade others to change the direction of the community. Some are even formally regulated by voting of their members as say in the karma system found on reddit. This feature is called Voice. Nick Land and others have claimed that Exit is much preferable to Voice for making good states and organizations.

Splitting will happen. People will disagree, and they will leave. This is fine. Unless your community has filled all its members' [Dunbar spots](#) with invested community members, you can't try to manage a community as you would a tribe. And if you try make it a tribe, people will fall into tribal identities, and the most enthusiastic will be those who have least to contribute. "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity." Needless to say, this is the opposite of how one goes about building a working group seeking to achieve real intellectual progress.

For example, the reactionary blogger [Frost](#) wrote in favor of specialization. Hard to object, no? Specialization is how humans do anything noteworthy, and when we each pursue our comparative advantage we all win. I can hardly object to hierarchy and a need for humility; a norm of bending the knee to arbitrary Schelling points cuts down on politicking and improves productivity. But it is hard to avoid the conclusion that that post was primarily written to solidify in-group feeling rather than a *working* proposal for division of labor in service of achieving goals.

As we see so often, [every cause wants to be a cult](#). Reaction is no different. If we hope to manage this community towards any other end, it will require purposeful modification of our intuitive tribe-building strategies. This is no small feat; it's a hard problem identical to the problem of institution design. (Of course, we must solve institution design anyway, since all our programs for reforming modern civilization propose massive changes to its constituent institutions.) So instead of a Cult or a tribe, it is essential for us, while the institutions of reaction are still nascent, to build a well designed institution for figuring out how to design complicated institutions.

We have our problem. Let us begin.

Part of **Towards An Institution Building Institution**

# Neoreaction, liberalism, conservatism: reject the isms

December 6, 2013

<http://amosandgromar.wordpress.com/2013/12/06/neoreaction-liberalism-conservatism-reject-the-isms/>

by Amos & Gromar

*Neoreactionary observations – right philosophy, right results*



I take the difference between neoreaction and conservatism to be this: the left is correct with their obsessions regarding power dynamics. Neoreaction, as opposed to conservatism, has the flexibility to appropriate that language. Conservatism can't deal with 'patriarchy'. It has to either ignore it or deny it as a concept. Why? They fail to distinguish between the formalistic principle and the substantive framework. Here's how I see it:

Progressivism: right concepts or principles, wrong background facts

Conservatism: some right concepts or principles, but most of the time they're just flat-out ignored and neglected, and some wrong background facts, although conservatives tend to be better than liberals in this area.

Neoreaction: right concepts, right background facts.

Conservatives tend to be cretins, however, as Moldbug notes. And that's a significant problem, since a complete dearth of an intellectual framework leads them to adopt the most banal and blandly conservative positions, in order to beg for a seat at the table of mainstream discourse. Buckleyian conservatism. National Review. As progressivism slowly applies more and more pressure to conservatism, a reaction occurs. Neoreaction occurs. It had to occur as a response. As conservatism contracts, it sheds itself of the mediocre, and it regains energy. It's somewhat like a fledgling religion. At its inception, the religion experiences something I call New Religious Energy. It begins fervently, it's committed, it's passionate, but as it slowly expands, that core softens and it becomes complacent, placid, stagnant, and overly universalistic, which in turn results in a slow and steady decline again. Expansion and contraction. Expansion and contraction. We're on the ending phase of the contraction. This is neoreaction.

For neoreaction, patriarchy exists. Power dynamics exist. Class systems exist. But what follows? Progressivism doesn't just automatically follow, whatsoever. That requires something more than just admitting the existence of patriarchy, unless the concept itself is poisoned through a by definition move which renders it intrinsically immoral. For neoreaction, patriarchy exists. And it's good. It's a necessary pre-requisite to civilization. It engenders stability and order and the flourishing of the household, which is essentially a factory for producing well-adjusted citizens, an operation that can't be adequately handled by any other social institution, at least not as we've seen so far, and there's no real reason to experiment. Patriarchy has positive externalities. Some women won't like it, but the part is subordinate to the well-being of the whole.

Neoreaction is about coming to terms with the full and wholesale rejection of every progressive formalistic principle + substantive framework *pairing*. Neoreaction is about rejecting the harm principle.

“But how does it hurt you?” First, it might not hurt me in a way which gives me redress under Mill's principle, but that's irrelevant. Mill was wrong. It isn't about harm; it's about the common good. Wicked

men have need of masters because wicked men produce significant negative externalities, and it's somewhat facile to see society crumbling around you, while you search vainly for individual instances of harm. Individual actions might not harm any particular person individually, but when they produce negative externalities on the aggregate, it behooves you to invent a moral device, in order to cope with that development. The part is subordinate to the whole, so it makes little sense to wring one's hands and let justice be done though the heavens fall. If your idea of justice is that the heavens fall and fall often, then perhaps it's time to revisit the theory itself. None of this, however, implies that consequences are all that matter.

For neoreaction, justice means keeping the sky up in the air—where it belongs, and if property rights need to be abrogated to achieve this goal, then so be it. Neoreaction is pragmatic, then, but it's a moral sort of pragmatism. It's neither amoral, nor immoral. Neoreaction brings the chasm between the actual and the ideal very close together. What's pragmatically achievable in public policy is never divorced from the normative. What's normative is in part what works—otherwise there exists a prima facie obligation to avoid messy interference with natural processes, with spontaneous order.

Most political philosophies posit a large gap between the actual and the ideal. Neoreaction narrows that gap significantly.

# ur-Malthusianism

November 20, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/11/20/ur-malthusianism/>

by Bryce Laliberte

*The high theory of neoreaction*



It is very peculiar to me, completely unexpected to be frank, that I have come around to [adopting a view which is remarkably... Malthusian](#). There are some who object to my proposition that medical innovation would not decline given a lack of subsidization, and I will get around to that shortly, but before I do so, I'd like to stake out more of the territory. What do I mean by Malthusian?

To be Malthusian seems to me to be that there is a real threat of Malthusian stagnation in the case that technology does not accelerate apace with population. This we want to avoid, so we should choose models of society which allow enough room for innovation and development of new technologies. On the other hand, a society which starts expending more resources on increasing lifespans than would end up being allocated in a market free of state intervention meets another problem: the eugenic mechanisms which otherwise operate on a society with downward mobility are thwarted, and a generation ill-prepared to handle the responsibility of freedom from hand to mouth living will be ruined in an orgiastic hyperventilation of consumption, e.g. what happened in the 1950's that brings us to today.

But inevitably there will be a state, and the democratic state will inevitably allocate more resources to the innovation of life saving and extending technologies, since nothing buys more votes securely like promising to help a class of people live longer. So you get Social Security, Medicare, and numerous other implicit benefits with the upshot of making radical lifesaving technologies at the disposal of a populace that never would've sought them out were they left to allocate resources for themselves. That's the rub. Society must be guided between the twin threats of under-technologization and over-technologization, as both constitute setbacks to the development of civilization.

A technology afforded to a people who didn't achieve that level for themselves will be placed under a greater evolutionary pressure to adapt than is usually faced by society. The relaxing of downward mobilizing pressures, even assuming an increase in median income due to technological development, precipitates an explosion of growth, and the proliferation of dysgenic traits, which will snap back into place once Death comes knocking to collect on all its late payments.

I think the Pill may count as the first instance of widely adapted transhuman phenomenon. Social equilibrium in a society where the Pill is readily available is clearly quite distinct from a society in which the Pill is not, as the Pill acts as its own method of self-selection. Take a Pill in order to become an evolutionary dead end! Like a fly to fire, the allure and delusion of inconsequential sex is a temptation which none have yet been evolutionarily adapted to overcome. The desire to seek out sex outside the confines of marriage has always been there, but never before have the negative consequences seemed so mitigated. But then again, to the antinatalist, the Pill is not poison, but antidote. Sex was only ever a ruse to get people to have children, a pleasurable trick which saddles the autonomous individual with duties he did not agree to.

But such a view is ultimately incoherent and short-sighted. Evolution did not select for humans to find happiness in material possessions. An abundance of material possessions may be correlated to

procreative fitness, but this was only ever a means. In order to avoid the evolutionary logic of why we have any desire to accumulate material wealth, one must positively drown oneself in the consumption about narratives which justify a demographically destructive narcissism. All is consumed: news, personalities, philosophy, stories, these are all intended as feathers in a peacock's tail, but this peacock isn't trying to signal for reproductive purposes. It's an absurdity, a symbol that has forgotten its meaning. Simulacra is the endpoint of a society that has become so interested in gazing upon itself in the mirror that it chokes to death on its own self-congratulation.

Over-technologization exposes those in society most susceptible to the vice of pride to the yawning chasm of failed genetic lines. In principle, there is nothing wrong with such pruning, and it is better enjoyed as tragicomedy (if you've the stomach), but such a rapid pruning may leave a significant amount of capital tied up in the prideful burned and lost forever, leaving the heirs of such a society with poorer institutions and a poorer society.

As such, if I may propose a new take on the question of guiding society, given the insights of Malthus and eugenics. A gentler means of approaching the future, making sure we get to it with our best foot forward, is to leverage the inevitability of Malthusian stagnation in favor of making a society which will accept technological innovation with more gratitude in the pursuit of civilization. By all means, do not limit births, but allow Darwin to work his vicious will on man. The death and selection seems to be performed anyway, either by abortion or contraception.

Does this mean the purpose of some individuals is just to suffer and die? That the most they can offer to society is exhibiting their poor adaptation to the environment and being swiftly selected out? Yes. [The good of the individuals of a group does not necessarily imply the good of the group, and vice versa.](#) Group fitness must come at the cost of some of its individuals. If all traits were preserved, the genetic line stagnates, and those populations which are subject to antifragile arrangements, i.e. eugenic mechanisms, shall rule.

The poor will always be with you. Alleviate their suffering and help them to come to peace with their existence, such is the purpose of religion after all. But don't pretend poverty can be eliminated. To eliminate it would require eliminating human nature, which is only to say the elimination of mankind. Nihilism lurks behind every mistaken ideal!

ur-Malthusianism is an embrace with the depth of human nature, which is ruled ultimately by the logic of sexual reproduction and death. To travel to the center of the earth, and come back again, the means of refeaturizing what appears as unalloyed evil to a people obsessed with itself. As Death walks amongst us, the question cannot be "How may death be eliminated?" but "How may death be used?"

Those who would cheat death its comeuppance, who put faith in various "immortalities," seem to me to fall for an allure similar to that of the Pill. What is living without an end but Hell? Precluding the prospect of finishing one's life, in the individual sense, precludes living life to a purpose. Death is the

boundary of life which gives it dimension; life without end is life without permanence, without definition, without animation. You were evolved to reproduce and die. Literally everything you are as a biological organism has the singular intent of passing on the genetic legacy. Everything you are able to think and to feel is meant to be able to adapt you to your environment in order that you pass on your genes. Your feelings cannot be adapted outside of this, the body will always know its being cheated. The body is not interested in its own life so much as passing on life. There is nothing in it which may be stimulated to get it to believe its good lies in something else; you may only suppress its realization of itself as evolutionary failure, but this is to kill the very self meant to enjoy the attaining of its reproductive end. The self and immortal life are incompatible, and that is why *I* do not, *literally cannot*, seek salvation in it.

# Tinkering with Ideology



## Taking on the Cathedral

April 25, 2013

<http://socialpathology.blogspot.ca/2013/04/taking-on-cathedral.html>

by The Social Pathologist

*The diseases of modern life as seen through the secular confessional*



The innocuous looking guy to the left has just been [\*recently voted one of Britain's greatest ever foes.\*](#)

The task facing him was not inconsiderable. How do you beat the worlds greatest superpower with nothing more than a few guns toted by eager youths, a lot of local good will and nothing much else? And yet that is what he did.

[Michael Collins](#) is arguably one of the greatest commanders in history. His greatness lays not in his ultimate achievement, rather, in the obstacles he had to overcome to attain it. Obstacles that would have overwhelmed nearly all other mortal men. It was the ultimate challenge; Man vs British Empire.

Collins won.

The task facing Collins was superhuman. How do you secure the independence of Ireland from a stubborn British who refuse to yield it? Collins starting position was tactically woeful. The Irish Republican cause was bedeviled from the outset, by spies, informers, splinter groups factional groups and, of course, the presence of the British Army which at that time was **the** world superpower. How Collins managed to overcome all of these obstacles is a matter of legend and instruction. He is considered the father of modern urban guerrilla warfare. Mao claimed to have studied his techniques.

The secret to Collin's success lay in his intelligent unconventionality. Collins never did what the enemy expected him to do, and by outsmarting his enemy he was able to get the British out of Ireland with next to no resources.

Collins serves as a sort of example for the modern mansphere movement, a movement which appears to be gaining some notice amongst the mainstream media. Over the past few months I've noticed a gradually increasing frequency in the media words associated with the mansphere such as alpha male, neg and game. It appears the mansphere is being noticed without acknowledgement and as the media gives the mansphere more time, sooner or later it is going to be judged by its conformity to the media's program. I suppose that some mansphere writers would welcome the free publicity that comes with media exposure. But it's a poisoned chalice. The liberal media-arts-education complex (a.k.a the Cathedral) has a cultural vision which is profoundly hostile to the underlying ethos of the mansphere. As such, its engagement with the mansphere will eventually be on hostile terms. Those who chose to take the bait (i.e media publicity) are likely to be destroyed.

It is important to recognise that the mansphere would have been impossible without the internet. The ideas which have gained prominence amongst the various factions of it are so politically incorrect and so against the mainstream grain that any airing of them would have been impossible throughout the conventional media.

The official Cathedral line is that it provides for a forum for dispassionate public debate, whereas Cathedral Operations are nothing of the sort. The Cathedral's role is *that of culture management* and it

does it through exploiting the sheep like qualities of the people. It manipulates public opinion so that the proletariat respond through [Pavlovian conditioning](#) in the way which it wants it to. The aim isn't to present a logical argument as it is to enforce an emotional association. For the media have long ago recognised what Jonathan Haidt has recently preached, namely ,when it comes to Joe Average, it's the emotional tail that wags the rational head and not the other way around.

It has a variety of means at its disposal but the main point is that when the media wants to push a certain line it does so by associating the desired message with positive *feelings*. On the other hand, when the media wants to ostracise something it does it by the process of negative association. For example, when the gay marriage agenda wants to be pushed, media presentations of gay marriage will be done in such a way as to elicit positive emotions with the message. Supporters will be attractive and highly articulate and socially desirable. Detractors of the gay marriage will be presented negatively. It's classic [Goebblian psych-ops](#). The aim isn't to present a logical argument as it is to enforce an emotional association and thereby influence public opinion. Glee, for example, is strong on the song and dance but very little emphasis is made on the gay bar scene; the aim of the producers is to associate gayness with happiness and not disgust.

The machine exists to keep re-enforcing a certain cultural message. The machine is now so well oiled an any person wanting to take advantage of the "publicity" offered by the Cathedral soon becomes a unwitting victim of it if he does not pursue the politically correct line. The Cathedral will promise him a forum where he can get the widest audience whilst setting him up for failure in front of that same audience. The Cathedral is able to do this because, traditionally, the technical means of media dissemination was able to be tightly controlled. And by controlling the dissemination of information, it controlled the public square. Fighting it through the public square means fighting it on the terms set by the Cathedral. It's a recipe for failure.

And lets not forget what the Cathedral can actually do. It can ruin a man's reputation. Wreck his career. Make him lose his job thus plunging him into poverty and place his marriage under enormous strain. It can destroy his business. Alienate from his friends. Make him into a social pariah. The point is that the Cathedral is a machine that exists to support its friends and destroy its enemies, it's claim that it is a space for the exchange of ideas is merely a guise.

Michael Collins recognised that the way to take on the British Army was not to take it on directly (which would be suicidal) but to engage it *on his terms*. The way to fight it was unconventionally. Playing the traditional media's game is to engage it conventionally. Thus, in my opinion, the manosphere should [discount any advice about courting mainstream publicity](#) and resist it as best as it can. The aim is to engage in *cultural guerrilla warfare*. The medium through which this warfare must be fought is the internet, a forum where the media has virtually no control on the subject matter.

The free for all environment of the internet and its distributed nature makes "enforced" consensus

extremely difficult. Ideas can't be policed easily. The [Climategate story](#), for example, was all over the internet despite the mainstream media's ~~efforts to quash~~ failure to pick it up. History will see it as a watershed event. The advantage of the internet is that everyman can potentially reach a world wide audience. Every blog post an opinion piece and every combox discussion a moderated thread. It's true, that for most bloggers and web pundits, their influence will be minimal on an individual level (though there are exceptions) but taken in total, the manosphere can exert enormous cultural effect *outside the control of the cathedral*.

Another problem for the Cathedral is any attempt to take down one of web pundits instantly generates more web traffic for the pundit and his cause. This presents a problem for the cathedral. Whereas previously they could isolate an opponent and present the pundit to the public in a manner of the Cathedral's liking, it now cannot regulate what the public actually reads at pundit's site. *The pundit actually gets a fair hearing*. The aim then, if media attention is inadvertently gained, is to engage the media of terms of your own choosing. Do not give a media interview, instead let the media interview you on *your own blog*, that way the media cannot manipulate your public image or selectively misquote you. The worst thing to do is go "live " in an environment where they control what gets said, whom you are associated with and whom your opponents are. Roosh V's foray onto Ukrainian television [was a classic example of what I'm talking about and a close run thing](#).

*It started normal enough where they asked me general questions and then they started bringing out "surprise guests" which completely caught me off guard. They had me thinking "How the fuck did they find these people??!"*

*.....I sat in the chair and had the lights on me, the audience on me, and the host and the celebrity panel and so on, I felt quite calm and just focused on answering the questions while not **letting them paint me [ED]** as someone I was not.*

The point is that the way to attack the cathedral is to attack it from outside and on your own terms. Playing the conventional media game only makes you its pawn or its victim.

The Adobe Flash Player or an HTML5 supported browser is required for video playback.  
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Michael Collins

# Transhumanism and Palingenesis

May 1, 2013

<http://www.moreright.net/transhumanism-and-palingenesis/>

by Michael Anissimov

*Questioning Modernity*



## Intro

Palingenesis is a term tracing back to the Stoics, referring to the continual re-creation of the universe by the [Demiurge](#), which they saw as the source of all creation. “Palingenesis” derives from the Greek words *palin*, meaning again, and *genesis*, meaning birth. The word has since been applied to diverse areas, with a connotation of rebirth and renewal. In Christian theology, the term refers to the transmigration of souls, and the reinstatement of saved souls into a heavenly body. Palingenesis refers to a basic concept that transcends space and time — rebirth.

The modern philosophy of [transhumanism](#), which seeks to transcend the human condition by redesigning the human body and brain, has always had deep roots in palingenetic ideas. In Vernor Vinge’s 1991 essay [“The Coming Technological Singularity,”](#) he writes “Within thirty years, we will have the technological means to create superhuman intelligence. Shortly after, the human era will be ended.” From our point of view, he calls this “throwing away of all the previous rules, perhaps in the blink of an eye,” and that, “Developments that before were thought might only happen in “a million years” (if ever) will likely happen in the next (21st) century.” A recent poll of 699 transhumanists found that 397 (56.8%) expected “accelerating progress then Singularity” in the coming 100 years.

This transhumanist attitude towards global rebirth, fundamental change, rests on a simple fact: making big improvements necessitates making big changes. Truly large beneficial changes, for all practical purposes, are rebirths, or palingenesis. For instance, the creation of an artificial intelligence which ends scarcity and age-related decline could be regarded as palingenesis, especially if it occurs [“in the blink of an eye.”](#)

Major changes in our fundamental assumptions, such as the apparent inevitability of death and taxes, will cause major permutations in social and political structure. What exactly these will be is hard to say in advance. We can confidently postulate such changes, though, because smaller advancements throughout history, such as the invention of the printing press or crossbow, had major social and economic effects. The creation of a machine intelligence that can cheaply copy itself, is an [oracle](#), and provides [superintelligent solutions to problems](#) would obviously be a much more significant technological advance than the introduction of the printing press, and would have correspondingly greater social effects.

A noun often used to describe the effects of cybernetic augmentation, the end of aging, uploading into computers, etc., is [transcension](#). While transcension is not an inaccurate term in this context, the term palingenesis appears to be more descriptive. “Transcension” is most often invoked to refer to an individual experience, whereas palingenesis refers to a global and social event and a living process. Another shortcoming of “transcension” is that it shows a psychological focus on the boundaries and limitations being transcended, while deemphasizing the vast space of possibility that opens up subsequent to the boundaries being transcended. After the boundaries are transcended, what then? A

rebirth occurs. The focus on this rebirth is palingenesis.

## The Source of the Changes

To comprehend the potential magnitude of the changes which could be wrought by wholesale reengineering of the human body and (especially) the brain, we have to go back in history. Preferably, way back — 10 million years at least, maybe as far back as 600 million years. Every organism on this planet for the past 600 million years has been made out of proteins, and every single neuron that ever existed has had the same basic biochemical blueprint. Replacing proteins with synthetic muscles, or replacing neurons with microprocessors, is equivalent to throwing out this 600 million years of history. It's like going back 600 million years, tweaking the basic physical performance of certain physiological systems by enhancing their strength and speed by orders of magnitude, then fast forwarding 600 million years and seeing what new creatures they evolve into. Applying (trans)human design creativity to the creation of novel organisms, or hybrid organisms, has the potential to recapitulate hundreds of millions of years of natural design in a matter of years or decades.

There are many examples of this process occurring in the paleontological and historical record. Agriculture was invented by leafcutter ants 50 million years ago, but not perfected until 8-12 million years ago, when the ants became able to use living leafy biomass instead of dead biomass, greatly increasing their efficiency. E.O. Wilson called [ant-fungus mutualism](#), on which the species depends, “one of the breakthroughs in animal evolution,” on par with the ungulate rumen or the powered flight of birds. Leafcutter ants are the dominant herbivores in their ecology, harvesting more leafy biomass than any other group, about 15-20% of the total. One source claims they make up 86% of the arthropod biomass in the rainforest. That's approaching ecological closure within their niche.

Farming, as practiced by humans, took about five thousands years to develop. The first domesticated plants were planted around 10,000 BC, and by 5,000 BC, the Sumerians had developed intensive large-scale agriculture, on which their civilization, the first, depended. So, leafcutter agriculture took approximately 40 million years to develop, while human farming required 5,000 years. This is a ratio of 8000 to 1. Humans were 8000 times faster than ants at developing agriculture. That's the superiority of intellect over Darwinian population genetics.

Another process to compare is the development of powered flight. Powered flight was developed by nature at least four separate times (insects, pterosaurs, birds, bats). Mammals were [first gliding](#) around 150 million years ago, but didn't evolve into modern flyers (bats) until 50 million years ago or later. In contrast, humans began attempting to glide about 1000 years ago, and built an airplane in 1903, a gap of about 1000 years. Here, the ratio is even greater, 100,000 to 1. If we compare the evolution of flight in insects, pterosaurs, and birds with the development of airplanes, the ratios may be slightly different, but probably not by more than a factor of ten. The point is that the difference is very large.

The importance of agriculture and powered flight is not a subjective matter. These innovations make a major difference for the success of the species that adopt them. Farming among leafcutter ants made them the dominant rainforest herbivores. Flight among bats has made them among the most widely distributed mammalian groups, accounting for 20% of classified mammal species. Farming among humans caused our population to explode and civilization to be created, while powered flight has transformed the global economy, geography, and geopolitics.

## New Changes

There are other innovations which our species has yet to develop, but which we can expect to have a major impact when we do. The most obvious is the creation of true Artificial Intelligence. Nature took over ten million years to produce general intelligence in hominids, and humans have been working on it for just over fifty. If we assume a ratio of 100,000 to 1, we should expect general intelligence in machines 100 years after the first attempts, or around 2056. If we assume a ratio of 10,000:1, we can expect machine intelligence in 1,000 years. That seems like a bit of a long estimate.

The comparisons above actually understate the magnitude of the difference between the output of human ingenuity and natural evolution. While nature often requires separate evolutionary lines to develop distinct innovations, such as developing flight in one line and swimming in another, a single human civilization can pursue multiple innovations simultaneously. To the extent that machines can be interchanged, human technological development is less susceptible to “evolutionary lock-in,” whereas many natural evolutionary changes are conserved even if they become sub-optimal. Finally, many human innovations are completely novel and qualitatively transcend biological capabilities, such as lasers and nuclear weapons. Adding this all together, the amount of useful design produced per year by human ingenuity outclasses the annual evolutionary change of any other individual species by many thousands of times, maybe even millions.

The concept of transhumanism rests on taking this design power and improving the human organism. Thus far, it has mainly been applied to external objects. Only in the past couple hundred years has this power been turned inwards.

There is a tension within transhumanism, which tries to be a part of contemporary discourse, focusing on the political issues of the day, such as poverty, drones, and climate change. Meanwhile, its roots lie in the possibility of radical changes to the human condition, detailed descriptions of which reliably elicit either visceral disgust or outright disbelief among the majority of the population. Transhumanists sometimes pretend that they have a “normal” view of history and near-term possibilities, but they don’t. For an example of a transhumanist not trying to conceal his non-normal view, see this excerpt from a [recent article](#) in the New York Post:

“I’ve made my peace with the fact that, you know, this is not going to last,” Mr. Mowshowitz said,

looking out the window at weekend traffic on Sixth Avenue as though it would all disappear.

Some transhumanist figures, namely Ray Kurzweil, portray a fundamental change in the human condition as continuous with the history of technological progress, but others, such as [Nick Bostrom](#), have expressed [deep concern](#) about fundamental discontinuities in history caused by the enhancement of human intelligence. Among the transhumanist community, there seems to be two camps – the [“business as usual”](#) camp, postulating that the introduction of transhumanist technologies will produce only incremental changes, and the [“everything goes out the window”](#) camp, postulating a sudden Singularity sometime this century. According to the survey cited earlier, about 39% of transhumanists fall into the first camp, 58% fall into the second camp. The remaining 3% expect human extinction before 2100.

### Renewal in Nature and History

Palingenesis, while rare, appears at various points in natural history. One early evolutionary line of multi-cellular animals, the [Ediacaran fauna](#), evolved about 575 million years ago, during a period known as the [Avalon Explosion](#), then vanished without a trace. The “palingenesis” was the [Cambrian Explosion](#), 530 million years ago, when hard-bodied animals diversified in a fantastic way, producing most modern phyla. In that case, the palingenesis wiped out the dominant structure before it, and its effects are felt to this day. Our entire civilization is the extended consequence of the success of that event.

An older example is the [Oxygen Catastrophe](#) 2.3 billion years ago, when anaerobic bacteria were replaced by aerobic bacteria, which produced so much oxygen that most of the anaerobic bacteria were wiped out. Jump forward to the [P-T extinction](#) 252 million years ago, which destroyed some 83% of animal genera and was the only known mass extinction of insects. If this event had not occurred, the earth might be populated with completely different animal groups. The extinction was so severe that a single terrestrial vertebrate species, the pig-sized [Lystrosaurus](#), accounts for 95% of all vertebrate fossils in certain fossil beds dating to right after the event. Archosaurs, the ancestors of the dinosaurs, must have only accounted for a small percentage of living individuals in the post-mass extinction hellscape, but they later went on to radiate and dominate the world for 135 million years as the dinosaurs.

The same story plays out again during the K-T boundary, the extinction of the dinosaurs. A previously tiny group, the mammals, came to dominate the land. Everything began anew, all over again.

More trivially, rebirth happens every year during Spring. Millions of square miles of land covered in ice become warm again and turn into vast living swamps and tundra, until it all freezes, dies, and the process starts all over again.

Because most of the human population was separated by vast tracts of land and sea until historically recent times, palingenesis with respect to global culture has never really happened. In many places around the world, the basics of human life have not changed for thousands of years. The most notable example is the creation of civilization itself. A new energy source (agriculture) drove specialization

(social structure) leading to better information management and processing (writing) resulting in the creation of conspicuous indicators of prosperity (monumental architecture) and much else besides.

Singling out candidates for the triggering palingenesis among human society or civilization itself is a challenge and controversial. Christianity, science, democracy, etc., only impact distinct segments of humanity, and are still struggling with conflicting ideologies. It's not "palingenesis" unless the entire body, the whole, is reborn.

### **Transhumanism and Rebirth**

We now bring together the concepts of palingenesis, technology, and transhumanism, and a lot of controversy and potential discord springs to mind. The controversy is a sign that we might have touched on an interesting issue.

The thought of palingenesis occurring, say, tomorrow — causes discomfort. Something that threatens to detonate the familiar and predictable and replace it with something new is scary. This makes complete sense. Technology can be destructive and disruptive. In the last two decades alone, hundreds of millions of people have forgotten how to make casual conversation and deal with one another socially. Millions have never learned. The fantasy world of the Internet provides a place where we are exposed to social and political extremes, and the greater accessibility of information gives us better opportunities to [reinforce our preexisting beliefs](#). Technology may play a nurturing role for ethical laxity, propping up corrupt systems that would have collapsed otherwise. This is analogous to how greater human intelligence and hunting capabilities indirectly contributed to a much [higher incidence of myopia](#) (poor eyesight), requiring glasses. In harsher environments, genetic drift causing myopia would have been selected out by evolution.

"Technology" is not a morally valent force. It does not ["want"](#) anything. It is a heterogeneous conglomerate of inanimate tools. "Technology", in the abstract, does not "change the world for the better." It only magnifies human capabilities, and sometimes makes the world worse. The same technology that can be used to help can often be used to oppress, if only through selective distribution of the technology. Since "technology" refers to so many different things, making generalizations about its effects on human culture is disingenuous.

Examining the possibility of technology-triggered palingenesis in our immediate future is more about asking questions about humanity, and what humans are likely to do in given situations, than about technology. Asking questions about human behavior tends to make engineer and computer scientist types uncomfortable, because of all the fuzziness, uncertainty, and psychological elements involved. Conversely, understanding technology in enough detail to correctly estimate the hugeness of its likely impact over the 21st century is more in the mental realm of the engineer — right-brain types trying to grasp these details reach a wall, like an ocean vessel approaching the Ross Ice Shelf. Only when we

consider both the magnitude of the impact of technology (boring to many feeling types) and the likely behavior of human societies (tedious to many logical types) can we make any progress on predicting what might actually occur.

Empowerment by advanced technology may allow small groups to [exploit vast new domains](#) of value, both economic, military, and otherwise. Ideas that are very unpopular or even completely unknown in the current environment could become the foundations of new states. Over the past century, nearly every country in the world has undergone major upheavals, invasions, and/or profound political transitions. The only exceptions are the United States, Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Vatican City. These transitions are caused by groups of people that often begin as small groups, in some cases only a single individual. Revolutions are not exceptions — over the past 165 years, they have been the rule. New groups rise to power constantly, and form new states in their own image.

One educational example of this phenomena would be Cambodia in 1975. After a century of relative peace and stability, the Khmer Rouge regime seized power and murdered two million people, roughly 25% of the population. The Paris student group that formed the nucleus of the ruling apparatus consisted of perhaps a few dozen people, and were the most educated leaders in the history of Asian communism. Few would have guessed that they would go on to perpetrate such a bloody and radical revolution, characterized by some of the most brutal state-sponsored terror campaigns since Hitler and Stalin.

Rebirth can also be wonderful. The two centuries after the Battle of Marathon (490 BC) were among the most intellectually productive in the history of mankind, as the Greeks made [fundamental discoveries in mathematics, science, technology, military strategy](#), and authored some of the most respected literature ever composed. The world's most significant contributions were made by a group of ten million people living in a domain accounting for one-thirtieth of one percent of global land area. The stage for the development of all modern technology was set by the quantitative and logical thinking invented by the Greeks. Their impact was so great that the discovery of a few of their old books was primarily responsible for initiating the Renaissance.

There are three primary categories of human organization which have been tried over the years — liberal democracy, strong central rulers, and Communism. All three ideas are alive and well today. Throughout the 20th century, the three fought it out, and liberal democracy won. Today, billions of people live in liberal democracies. Over 1.4 billion people live in Communist China. Besides those two groups, there are plenty who already have or would prefer a strong central ruler for their state. Take Russian president Vladimir Putin — for much of his rule, his approval rating has been in the high 70s, at times pushing 90%. About 140 million people live under the authoritarian leadership of Putin, and five million enjoy the [benefits](#) of authoritarian leadership in Singapore.

There are various “miracle technologies” that could offer small groups huge power. I’m not going to

argue for that point here, just take it for granted. Potential candidates for these technologies include [molecular manufacturing](#), [intelligence enhancement](#), [AI](#), and [whole brain emulation](#). Let's assume a few more points: that some group will achieve this power by 2060, and that the political makeup of the world will be more or less the same between now and then. I'm not saying that this is likely, just assuming it for the sake of argument.

I'm further going to assume that, if the "miracle technology" is unleashed, major social changes will occur. The technology will go to some relatively small group, empowering them greatly. They go on to have a huge impact on the world. The character of that impact will be determined by which of the forms of human organization they subscribe to. They won't have a choice to "not make an impact" — their technological (and thereby economic) superiority will ensure that their interpretation of the world system is subsidized and competitors are curtailed, even in the absence of direct imperialism. More crudely, they might export their preferred interpretation of human organization through actual invasions, but a huge impact is still assumed even if outright invasion never occurs.

Taking all these assumptions into account, we can expect the radical magnification, within the next fifty years, of either liberal democracy, strong central rulers, or Communism. Let's put up some semi-arbitrary numbers — liberal democracy has roughly 2.6 billion adherents, which is essentially the Americas plus Europe. In the category of "strong central rulers", let's throw in Russia, Africa and the Muslim world, and a quarter of a billion sprinkled across other countries. That's about 3 billion people. The balance is China, roughly 1.4 billion people.

It's easy to argue over these exact numbers. The point is not the exact values, but that there are three main ways of looking at how human society should be organized, and that they each have a substantial number of adherents. For the most part, each of them are living in a bubble where they are taught that the other political philosophies are not merely wrong, but insane. For instance, a common teaching in the United States is that all authoritarian systems are equivalent to fascism and that Communism is evil. From within traditional authoritarian systems, liberal democracy is seen as crazy. Within Communist societies, liberal democracy and traditional authoritarianism as seen as counter-revolutionary... you get the idea.

Since advanced technology is not equally produced worldwide, the probability of which system will be amplified cannot be determined by global population numbers alone. Taking this consideration into account, the numbers lean more towards liberal democracy and away from strong central rulers and Communism. I welcome a more precise calculation, but for now I'll just throw out some rough numbers again: 10:1:3. Liberal democracy gets 10 tech points per capita, strong central rulers 1, and Communism is assigned 3 points. So, multiplying by the population distribution, we get probabilities of liberal democracy being amplified at 71%, strong central rulers are at 7%, and Communism gets the rest with 22%.

There are many more qualifiers which may be added to this model. I hope the starting place has been put in focus. One qualifier might be that Communist leaders feel less encumbered by political correctness, thereby being more willing to pursue [controversial research](#) that may lead to palingenesis, such as uncovering the genetic roots of intelligence. Feel free to add as many qualifiers as you like. If you feel that the world is going more in the direction of liberal democracy, for instance, then that group should be assigned even greater probability mass, since the total is averaged over the next 50 or so years.

One last bit here. We must use caution when interpreting political trends. Democracy has not “[won](#)”. In the 1950s, Communism was widely respected, including in the West, but by the 1980s, it was largely defeated. In the 1750s, it probably felt like monarchy would continue forever, but over the next century it suffered a series of devastating blows. The situation is further complicated by the observation that political change in general may be accelerating.

### **The Impact**

To reduce cognitive dissonance and do what they see as best for the world’s people, the empowered palingenetic group will export their political views. They might not even recognize them as “political views,” because within the bubble of each major system, those views are sacralized, considered “common sense,” “normal,” even “post-political”. Regardless, the elite will copy them in an effort to emulate their success. Their preference for interacting and trading with those of their own group will also increase the power of that political ideology. All these phenomena are in full effect even if the palingenetic group is not expressly trumpeting their political ideology.

What will happen? Let’s take a look at each major possibility. Note that I am not trying to make any political points here — just mechanically extrapolating the results if representatives from either of the world’s three dominant political ideologies acquire superlative powers, based on historical precedent. This entire section is much more speculative than what has been discussed thus far. Replace it with your own intuitions, if you like.

If a group that believes in liberal democracy is empowered, I assume (perhaps cynically) that the global result is likely to be similar to the foreign policy of the United States from 2001-2012, magnified many times. For instance, instead of staying out of Syria and North Korea, we would go in. The martial and strategic superiority afforded by the miracle technology would allow for less costly invasions, both in terms of lives and relative resources. If the technology is decisively superior, as would be the case with weapons produced using [molecular manufacturing](#), the force multipliers could be in the tens of thousands, meaning a single soldier backed by the palingenetic group would be able to defeat tens of thousands of enemy soldiers.

During the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the ratio of American military fatalities to Iraqi military fatalities was about 1 to 150. Simplistically, we could say the US Army was 150 times more powerful than the Iraqi

army. Even still, the subsequent costs of occupation were so high that many of its former advocates greatly regret supporting it, and the social fabric of the nation was torn apart fighting over it. What if the cost of invading Iraq had been much smaller? We might have still left, but when? The choice would be made entirely based on the will of the people in control, unpressured by practical considerations such as dollars and lives.

There is a clear desire by certain elements in the US and Europe to go into Syria and help the insurgents, but we just can't do it due to pushback from China and Russia. If liberal democracy were truly in charge, it wouldn't have to worry about their opinions. It's possible that liberal democracies could invade new countries every year, and simply stay there, installing democratic governments and making them unassailable. Of course, they might change their minds over time, but this analysis is trying to focus on the initial large impact rather than the longer-term evolution.

Within the U.S., there is a strong attitude that the more democracy the world has, the better. (This attitude is called [Wilsonianism](#).) So, a democratic palingenesis would export democracy worldwide, whether it works for each country or not. This version of palingenesis might actually involve the least change, as much of the world is already made up of nominally democratic states.

Since liberal democracies seem the most likely states to [view themselves as charities](#), a democratic palingenesis might do a lot of good for the world's poor countries. Conversely, it just might make them more dependent on the United States. Of course, [many volumes](#) have been penned on that topic.

Next, let's look at a Communist palingenesis. To be cynical yet again, and looking at history, I would be most pessimistic about this eventuality. Communist regimes were responsible for killing at least [85 million people](#) during the 20th century. If we look at the majority of years of Communist rule, they were failures. During the Cold War, NATO overestimated the economic strength of the USSR many times. An interesting exception to this failure is China since 1995, where GDP has multiplied nearly ten times over and standards of living have improved tremendously. This might give us a flicker of hope, but the sample duration is fairly limited.

Lastly, there is the "strong central leader" palingenesis. To me, this is probably the most interesting of the three possibilities, since it plays on such deep hopes and fears in human nature. Monarchies have a history of being far less apologetic than the other types when it comes to casually conquering neighboring territories or engaging in nationalism. Monarchies tend to have fewer laws than democracies, but enforce them more strictly. A monarchic or traditionalist palingenesis offers the greatest variance in outcomes, because the activity of the state is based on the direct designs of one person or a small group. The state has more freedom to act than in the other two systems.

Like liberal democracies in the West, monarchies tend not to indulge in mass murder of their populations. In fact, there are no historical examples of monarchies committing genocide against their own core ethnic group. Putting down rebellions of ethnic and political minorities, yes; systematic

genocide, no.

Dictatorships have resulted in genocide against citizens, but Nazi Germany doesn't resemble historical monarchies, which seem like a more popular model for the world's authoritarians than dictatorships. In any case, throughout the course of Roman history, there were numerous dictatorships where civilization and progress got along well. Then there were emperors who were horrible. History shows that emperors, kings, and dictators can be both good and bad. Throughout the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution, Europe was dominated by royalty, which more often patronized artistic and scientific progress than stifled it.

The impact of a monarchic palingenesis would depend heavily on the virtues, or lack thereof, of the group or individual at the top, as well as the constituency making it up. In monarchies, more important state decisions are made by experts as opposed to popular will. To the extent that structural decisions are better made by experts (true in most domains), government would improve. The influence of the popular will wouldn't disappear, either — in historical monarchies, the masses had plenty of influence over culture and commerce, just not over the mechanisms of government.

Because monarchies seem the most excited about expansion, this palingenesis would be the most likely to lead to traditional empires. Sometimes, empires are a plus for their citizens — the Pax Romana of the Roman Empire was the most legendary period of ancient history, the only serious rival to Classical Greece. For the Roman people, the founding of the Empire provided much-needed peace after nearly a century of internal bloodshed, economic failure, and political uncertainty that came before it. Of course, some of the tribes they conquered may have a different view.

## **Conclusion**

Trying to peer over the palingenetic horizon, of which the Singularity is but one example, is like looking through a glass darkly. The uncertainties involved are enormous, and the possibilities outlined here may never transpire. The objective has been to build a model of discontinuous technological and social change occurring around 2060 or so, and spell out possible consequences of that model being true. The future may be a confusing place, but since we'll be spending the rest of our lives there, we might as well take a closer look at it.

# To Light a Fire Under the Ass of the Neoreaction

May 9, 2013

<http://raptros.wordpress.com/2013/05/09/to-light-a-fire-under-the-ass-of-the-neoreaction/>

by Raptros

*hi*

oh man, not only did I get an explosion of attention when [Foseti linked me](#) (pretty much right when I was going into surgery), but also I got a [shout-out from Nick Land today](#). i know I promised I'd have a new post up yesterday, but that hasn't happened. turns out the post surgery period is pretty rough, even for healthy 22 year old such as myself.

anyway, let's get to business here. neoreactionaries! there is less time left on the clock than you all imagine! the West, this once great civilization, is dead and rotting. look! look upon the [sons](#) and [daughters](#) of this age! look at her sidebar! you think those are just screenshots of isolated instances? there are thousands more on tumblr alone! communities of kids on kali-yuga overdrive!

point is, the West: stick a fork in it, it's done. there's been a lot of talking, and many more people talking about it before, but we need to start thinking of our options for action. let's say we've got 10 years before it'll be too late to plan anything; this means the options worth talking about are: fighting, and exiting.

fighting. fighting means pushing the clock forward through the cycle of collapse, to the start of a new civilization. what was nydwracu's immediate response to my post about cities? "[Fascism!](#)". and that's what we'd be talking about here. yes, fighting involves actual fighting.

oh, yes, I know you aren't comfortable with that. you're thinking about exit already. but are you sure you're ready for this? exit, at this point, means becoming a lifeboat – preserving humanity and civilization for after the fall. here's a rough sketch. get a bunch of people together (preferably already sorted into family units) who can get along fairly well. one of them needs to be in charge. find a decent, farmable patch of land somewhere out of the way, and stock it up with supplies. dig in and stay quiet; be prepared to have to fight ... and die.

i guess we need some motivation on the subject of death here. fortunately, we've got Evola to help:

The positive *contemplatio mortis*, to which I referred, no longer gives importance to staying alive or not, and leaves death behind one, so to speak. On the contrary: from this point one should enter into a higher, exalted, free form of living, carried by a sort of magical, lucid intoxication.

(*Ride the Tiger*, ch 30 "Death: The Right Over Life".) in fact, that entire chapter (and, for that matter, book) will be helpful as you consider these options. yes, failure and death is the most likely result of any path you choose! at least by choosing a path you will die on your own terms – there is certainly no escape through paralysis. you must orient your actions towards these paths, knowing where they lead.

this leads me, by the way, to an explanation of my dissatisfaction with the trichotomy model. what I take issue with is the confusion of position and motivation permitted by the model. e.g. ethnonationalism can be a position (obviously the ethnonationalist one), but it can also be also be a motivation for a broader reactionary position (e.g. an opposition to modernity). even worse, this confusion of the two seems to come at the expense of an understanding of motivation, which I (for hopefully obvious reasons) consider

the more important concept. now that I see what I'd missed, I can actually state my case – there are certainly more than 3 motivations for becoming a reactionary, and given that the West has already failed, position is becoming increasingly irrelevant.

well, I'm starting to feel (physically) as adrift as whatever the point of this post is, so I'm going to have to end this here. hopefully the remaining anaesthetics in my system haven't muddled my thoughts beyond comprehension.

# Game, Dark Enlightenment, and Reaction

May 19, 2013

<http://blog.jim.com/culture/game-dark-enlightenment-and-reaction.html>

by Jim

*Liberty in an unfree world*

You will notice that the Pick Up Artist Community and the Christian Reactionary movement get along mighty well, despite the fact that Heartiste claims to be a minion of Satan, and despite the fact that they are in total disagreement about ultimate ends.

The thesis that Game works is logically equivalent to what used to be the right wing view of women, before the right became the left that is lagging four to eight years behind the mainstream left in moving rapidly ever leftwards.

Rightists used to believe that fertile age women were uncontrollably and self destructively lustful, and therefore needed male adult supervision to prevent them from self destructively howling for their demon lover like cats in heat, that given half a chance, a woman will bang a total stranger like a barn door in a high wind, should he superficially appear sufficiently high status, with utterly disastrous results for her family, her children, and herself. And, of course, game is largely about superficially appearing to be sufficiently high status.

Conversely, if you are a Christian, you accept that Paul was right. (Note that by this standard, there are very few Christians, and the Pope is not one of them.) And if Paul was right, most women will misbehave, unless subject to the stern controls commended by Paul. In which case, you think that game works.

There are of course lots of charlatans and con men purporting to teach game, but equally there are lots of practitioners who have a truly astonishing notch count.

From 1820 to 1960, leftists held that women were sexless angels, reluctantly forced into having sex by evil men imposing on them, therefore it was completely unnecessary to enforce the marital contract on women, only on men. In 1960, having successfully disempowered husbands, they switched to abolishing fatherhood altogether, which allowed them to acknowledge that women have some very slight sexual character, while nonetheless remaining angels.

Which view of women, then, is correct? Angels or succubi? If you are in any doubt about the answer, [see the video that I have so frequently linked in so many of my posts.](#)

If you believe that game works then:

1. You are darkly enlightened, since you believe at least one forbidden truth about human nature.
2. You should logically conclude that women should never have been emancipated and never given the vote, thus logically, you should be reactionary.

My own observations hint that possibly the sexless angels account might be accurate for sexually inexperienced girls for the first two weeks following menstruation. They are interested in romance at all stages of their menstrual cycle, but not interested in getting dirty except during estrus/ovulation, and to a lesser extent following estrus/ovulation.

However it seems to me that women tend to imprint on whatever sexual activities they try during estrus, and are subsequently happy to repeat them at any stage of their cycle. I hope that some of my readers may have better data on this question than I do. (I am crowd sourcing the issue of the effect of estrus on female behavior, particularly imprinting, for I have a suspicion that there is an imprinting effect, though as far as I know this has never been scientifically studied. We largely ignore the effects of women going into heat, or at least we largely ignore the impolite consequences of women going into heat, because we are still dominated by the ideology that women are sexless angels.)

# Cipher Ideology

December 5, 2013

<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2013/12/05/cipher-ideology/>

by Bryce Laliberte

*The high theory of neoreaction*



It is hard to look at or through neoreaction without getting the sense that Something Is Going On. At least, that seems to be the perspective alluded to in all media attention so far. Maybe we're oversensitive, or maybe we just have a better sense for reading the implicit Cathedralism. Or maybe it's just because we talk about ourselves so darn much.

I think there may be something to this. That we talk about ourselves so much could be written off as sheer narcissism, and indeed it probably is in a few isolated cases. But that doesn't explain why it is so pervasive. Is it a consequence of our Age, saturated in social media and the cult of self-promoted self-realization? Perhaps that is also a part of it. Yet I'm of the understanding that there is something entirely different about neoreaction as an ideology. It captures the mind in a way that no mere political philosophy ever does. The ordinary person negotiates himself between political views when he is so inclined, while for neoreaction it is hard to escape the sense of Lovecraftian doom. Once the mind starts working through the premises, nought but horror can dawn and one is pulled down like sink water down the drain.

*They say we're better off under patriarchy.*

*They might be right.*

Hence the oblique, glancing attacks. When an approach is attempted that self-consciously tries to avoid the "racist" epithet, and even then, still indulges, since we are only *angry white males*. And remember to tell yourself that; *only* angry white males, not that such a demographic hasn't done all the heavy lifting of history in the West, and could not continue to do so. Is that why, if we don't want to admit it's scary, we will say it is creepy? [But why is it so creepy?](#) What makes it so subversive?

It is like Pandora's box. You cannot explore neoreaction without being changed by the territory. You do not internalize neoreaction so much as neoreaction internalizes you. It is an ideology which by its very nature sears its witness into the soul of all passerby. There is something about the neoreaction which has not yet been articulated, but yet it drives the dialectic forward inexorably. One does not sit down and engage the Dark Enlightenment. There are enough allusions to make; the red pill, Moldbug's invocation to get that acid out of the freezer. One is engaged by neoreaction. It does not display itself, asking you if you would like to allow the style to decorate and furnish some intellectual compartment. It gives you the tools and instructions with which you might perform brain surgery.

One does not convert themselves. One is converted by neoreaction. Neoreaction wants to control, it wants to be free. It's the zombie apocalypse.

There is a certain degree of self-obfuscation that goes on as a part of it. We are resigned to being misunderstood and misrepresented by outsiders. We don't take that to mean we should try harder to appeal; if anything, we need to be harder to find appealing. If we're right about democracy, the worst thing that could happen to neoreaction is if it became common knowledge. Neoreaction is occultic. It

speaks in signs and prophecies about Mysteries of the Inner Sanctum. One cannot look from the Inside Out, but we can look from the Outside In.

Neoreaction, in order to even be articulated, began with a set of key insights. Cathedralism, the doctrine that Western society is ruled by an ideological superstructure known as the Cathedral, can only be explained through a memetic model such as Moldbug's. You can only see the Cathedral with the perspective of an outsider (but to have such a perspective is to be an outsider). It is a model of the world that includes, in its parts for explaining how the world works, a theory of how other people's models of the world influence their actions. It is a model which accounts for the practice of other models.

Can an incorrect model have a model of another model that captures that model's essence?

Or, to put it more concretely (and less confusingly), can the Cathedral's working model incorporate neoreaction?

I think the answer might just be no. This is something different. The whole idea of neoreaction is that, in order for it to exist, it needs to bootstrap itself out of modernism by pursuing the modus tollens of every last modernist's modus ponens. Every modernist assumption appears in error, because the what if modernism is wrong? question proves so fruitful for analysis. If reaction is a virus which modernism has increasingly treated with memetic antibiotics (racist!), neoreaction is the inevitable result of overuse. Neoreaction is the vaunted super-bug. It is not only immune to antibiotic treatment, antibiotics is its probiotic. The neoreactionary doesn't need to explain that he isn't a racist. Your concern with signaling that you're not racist just means you don't get it. Yet.

In order for modernism to understand neoreaction, it needs to understand that process of inverting each norm, and perceiving the justification to do so. In other words, for modernism to understand neoreaction, it must understand what is wrong with itself. By definition, such is impossible. One is either a modernist, and he does not understand neoreaction, or he understands both and is not a modernist. Neoreaction is modernism undone; neoreaction is modernism's undoing.

Until one is neoreactionary, one cannot argue against neoreaction.

Of course individual points here and there can be picked off. But a full scale assault? The modernists have not even begun to understand where the ideological center of gravity lies. It is too far in itself to see outside any longer; it perceives only its own reality because it is, in a Matrix-like sense, reality. It cannot see outside itself because it has eyes only to see what it does. Its metrics are all orthogonal to our own. It is like trying to measure light with a microphone.

Neoreaction is so precisely off-message it has accumulated every card of hearts, and so shoots the moon. There is almost a sense that the liberal, first coming in contact with pure, uncut neoreaction must make every alarm ring in a cacophony of incomprehensible sound. Fury to such disturbance is only natural, but once it is noticed that turning off an alarm doesn't bring the world to an end, well... maybe some other

false alarms have been installed? Boy who cries wolf and all.

Neoreaction is fascinated with itself because, like first discovering drugs, one can't help but experiment. If a little thoughtcrime proves less dissonant than orthodoxy, maybe a little more thoughtcrime wouldn't hurt. The difference between an open minded progressive discovering neoreaction for the first time and a savage, sputtering neoreactionary is only ever a Sorites paradox. It must be entirely shut out and entirely incomprehensible, or horribly true. Mind you, never just true, but *horribly true*. It seems altogether too true, unbearably true, oppressively true.

If it is to be stopped, that isn't by calling to it from modernism, for it has already turned its back, but to get ahead of it. At far enough extremes, there may be no difference between behavior which is holier than thou and behavior which is more sinister than thou. In the name of a hyper-tolerant orthodoxy those who refuse to only tolerate an abnormal and extremely narrow range of preferences, who sometimes have less than sinister words for white males, shall neoreaction ascend with the past or descend with a Brave New World.



## The Dove Sketches Beauty Scam

May 8, 2013

<http://thelastpsychiatrist.com/2013/05/dove.html>

by The Last Psychiatrist

*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen.*

l.

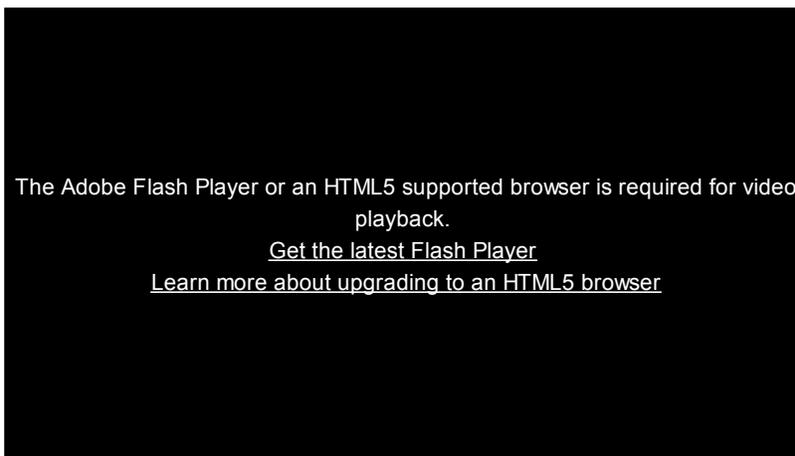


the only way to win is not to play

"Dude, are you doing the Dove ad *now*? That was so April 15th...?" Yes, I realize I missed the meme train, but it's better to be right than part of the debate, especially when there is no debate, this is all a short con inside a 50+ year long con. Remember *House Of Games*? "It's called a confidence game. Why, because you give me your confidence? No: because I give you mine."

"What's with you and *fin-de-Reagan* David Mamet?" It's not my fault Dove cast Joe Mantegna as the sketch artist, and anyway if you want to understand the world today, you have to understand how the Dumbest Generation of Narcissists In The History Of The World was educated. See also: *9 1/2 Weeks*.

Here's how you run a short con, pay attention:



### [House of Games \(1987\) - Short Con - Western Union Scene](#)

Everyone likes to know the secrets of the game, and this scene certainly satisfies. Joe Mantegna shows a famous psychiatrist (played, tellingly, by David Mamet's future ex-wife) how a short con is done, how it's improvised, and he makes it look so easy. Really easy, except for the part where you have to connect with a perfect stranger and make them like you. Did you find yourself wondering if you had the skills to pull it off? Better watch it again, sucker.

Quick test for a con: what questions does it not occur to you to ask? While you were memorizing the

language and the pacing of the scam, you didn't ask yourself, why didn't Mantegna take that guy's money at the end? Why did he let him off the hook? "He was just doing it as an example." Oh, like when a guy says he'll put in just the tip, "I want to see if it fits"? It's not like the psychiatrist doesn't know he's a thief-- that's why they were there in the first place. So he purposely didn't steal the money to make the psychiatrist feel at ease, feel closer to him. To earn her confidence by first giving her his. *She's the mark*. The aborted short con is part of an unseen long con.

But the genius of the scene is that while you, the viewer, are criticizing the stilted dialogue or the improbability of the success, "dude, that would never work in real life!" if you search your sclerotic heart you will find that you yourself *felt good* that Mantegna didn't take that guy's money, that he let him go. It endeared you to Joe, it made you feel more sympathetic to him, like he's an ethical thief, like he's Lawful Neutral. In other words, he's given you his confidence.... which means that the true mark is you.



### [Dove Real Beauty Sketches](#)

Women are their own worst beauty critics.... At Dove, we are committed to creating a world where beauty is a source of confidence, not anxiety... That's why we decided to conduct a compelling social experiment that proves to women something very important: You are more beautiful than you think.

"Oh my God," you might say, "I know it's just an ad, but it's such a positive message."

If some street hustler challenges you to a game of three card monte you don't need to bother to play, just hand him the money, not because you're going to lose but because you owe him for the insight: he *selected* you. Whatever he saw in you everyone sees in you, from the dumb blonde at the bar to your elderly father you've dismissed as out of touch, the only person who doesn't see it is you, which is why you fell for it. Even mirrors fail you. Hence a sketch.

II.

The gimmick that propels the Dove ad is a comparison between subjectivity and objectivity, though in this case objectivity is defined as however well Mantegna can use a charcoal pencil. Why not just use a

photograph?

Because when it comes to beauty, we all know photographs can be manipulated, especially in ads, especially by Dove. So the ad frees you from your cynicism and goes with a new standard of beauty, one that, like yoga or genetics, has been around for a long time AND you know very little about it; it hasn't been over-critiqued, you haven't watched it fail over and over, and thus seems pure, fantastical, true. *The artist's sketch*. How can anything this lovingly and precisely created not be the real thing? And nothing makes a middle aged neurotic happier than 45 minutes alone in a loft with a good looking man who requires no sexual contact and just wants to listen to you talk about yourself, unless he's also sketching you attentively in natural light. "Can I offer you a Pinot Grigio?" Slow down, Christian, you're making me woozy. There is not enough quantitative easing in the universe to prop up this fantasy, but at \$3000000000000 you can't say America's not committed to the attempt.

The mistake in interpreting this ad is in assuming the ad is selling based on the women and their beauty. If that were true, it would be counterproductive: if they are naturally beautiful, if the problem is actually a psychological one, then they certainly don't need any beauty products. A beauty ad operates by *creating* a gap between you and an ideal: by creating an anxiety that can only be mitigated by the product. But this ad reduces anxiety and avoids cynicism. Therefore, it is not a beauty products ad. It is selling something else. This is why there aren't any products in the ad.

Dove is telling you you don't need to do anything to be beautiful, but it knows full well women must do something *to* themselves to feel good *about* themselves, and if they don't need makeup then at least a moisturizing soap. All Dove needs to solidify this is to be recognized as an authority on beauty-- real beauty, not fake, Photoshopped, eyeliner and pushup bras beauty.

It is the sketch artist who is the most important character in the ad, the ad is selling him. That's why he doesn't just draw the sketches, he sticks around to chaperone these women to self-awareness. By the way he is depicted you understand that he knows beauty, inner and outer; he is part father, part lover, expert in what makes a woman valuable. For you to accept him, he can't be married; but since in real life he is, they only show you the right hand-- the part of him that almost autonomously draws beauty. He is an authority on appearance, he is the "other omnipotent entity" that decides whether "you are beautiful."

The ad lets the women become beautiful without selling them anything. It *lets* them win. *It* lets them win. It endears them and you to Dove, it makes you feel more sympathetic to Dove, like it's an ethical beauty products company, like it's Lawful Neutral. It gave these women its confidence; it gave you, the viewer, its confidence.

And then-- spoiler alert-- it will screw you and take your money.

III.

That Dove wants you to think of it as the authority on beauty so it can sell you stuff makes sense, there's nothing underhanded about it and hardly worth the exposition. The question is, why do they think this will work? What do they know about us that makes them think we *want* an authority on beauty-- especially in an age where we loudly proclaim that we don't want an authority on beauty, we don't like authorities of any kind, we resist and resent being told what's beautiful (or good or moral or worthwhile) and what's not?

You may feel your brain start trying to piece this together, but you should stop, there's a twist: *where did you see this ad?* It wasn't during an episode of *The Mentalist* on the assumption that you're a 55 year old woman whose husband is "working late." In fact... *it's not even playing anywhere.* You didn't stumble on it, you were sent to it, it was sent to you-- it was *selected* for you to see. How did they know? *Because if you're watching it, it's for you.*

Here you have an ad that was released into the Matrix, it is not selling a product but its own authority, and it is not targeting a physical demo, age/race/class, it is targeting something else that operates not on demography but virality. Are you susceptible? So while you are sure you most certainly don't want an authority on beauty, the system decided that you, in fact, do very much want an authority on beauty. The question is, which of you is the rube?

"But I hated the ad!" Oh, I know, for all the middlebrow acceptable reasons you think you came up with yourself. Not relevant. The con artists at Dove didn't select these women to represent you because you are beautiful or ugly, any more than the street hustler selected you for your nice smile. They were selected because they represent a psychological type that transcends age/race/class, it is characterized by a kind of psychological laziness: on the one hand, they don't want to have to conform to society's impossible standards, but on the other hand they don't want the existential terror of NOT conforming to some kind of standard. They want an *objective* bar to be changed to fit them-- they want "some other omnipotent entity" to change it so that it remains both entirely valid yet still true for them, so that others *have to* accept it, and if you have no idea what I'm talking about look at your GPA: you know, and I know, that if college graded you based on the actual number of correct answers you generated, no curve, then you would have gotten an R. Somehow that R became an A. The question is, why bother? Why not either make grades rigorous and valid so we know exactly what they mean, or else do away with them entirely? Because in either case society and your head would implode from the existential vacuum. Instead, everyone has to get As AND the As have to be "valid" so you feel good enough to pay next year's tuition, unfortunately leaving employers with no other choice but to look for other more reliable proxies of learning like race, gender, and physical appearance. Oh. Did you assume employers would be more influenced by the fixed grades than their own personal prejudices? "Wait a second, I graduated 4.0 from State, and the guy you hired had a 3.2 from State-- the only reason you didn't hire me is because I'm a woman!" Ok, this is going to sound really, really weird: yeah. The part that's going to really have you scratching your head is why did either of you need college when the job only requires a 9th grade education?

Which is why those that yelled "Unilever owns Dove and Axe!" like it was an Alex Jones tweet, those who felt tricked/used/violated that Unilever has a sexist side to it, those who thought the ad was hypocritical or "anti-feminist" are still being duped, detecting hypocrisy is 100% the play of the rube, go ahead and yell indignantly as you continue to be fleeced. Figuring out the short con is part of the long con, see also *House Of Games*, for a non-spoiler example if the street hustler is shifting the cards and you think you're able to follow them, then you're still going to lose AND your pocket is being picked. "Can't bluff someone who isn't paying attention," Mantegna told the shrink helpfully-- *he's telling her the scam*, no, she didn't listen either. So let's go to the places where people pay attention, go to the "intelligent" media outlets where all the suckers hang out, and observe the most common criticism about this Dove ad: it has no black women in it. Never mind it does, that's a very telling criticism: *why would you want black women in it?* It's not the Senate, it's an ad, no, don't you hang up on me, why do you want blacks in the ad? Because it would represent the diversity of beauty? Because without them, it sends black women the wrong message about society's standards? Your answer is irrelevant, the important part is that whatever your answer, it is founded on the assumption that ads have the authority to set standards. Which is why, in your broken brain, the reflex is to complain about the contents of the ad, not assert the insignificance of ads. The con worked. Of course it worked: they *selected* you.

"Well, not authority-- power. You can't deny their power is massive, but of course I'm not a stupid, I don't think it's legitimate." I'm sorry, no, you are stupid. You'll let it have power over you *in exchange for the right* to brag that you know its not legitimate.

This is the same problem with people who want to ban Photoshopping in magazines or want bigger women to be featured in ads. You all have the internet, right? It seems crazy to worry about how beauty is portrayed on TV and ads when there are blonde billions (rated on a scale of one to ten) getting double penetrated literally underneath your gmail window, but that obsessive worry about what's on TV or what's in an ad is completely predicated on the assumption that the ad, the media, has all the power to decide what's desirable. And therefore, of course, it does. But the important point is not that you *believe* this to be true, the point is that you *want* this to be true. You want it to be true that advertising sets the standard of beauty because in the insane calculus of your psychology you have a better chance of changing Dove than you have of changing yourself, turns out that's true as well.

Dove, et al sympathize with your powerlessness, so since you can't get anywhere near those impossible standards, ads give you a chance of making some kind of progress: a little moisturizing soap and a positive message and maybe you get closer to the aspirational images of the women in the ad. "Those women are aspirational?" Of course: they're *happy*, Dad told them they're good. It feels like improvement, it feels like change, and I hope by now you understand it's only a defense against change.

The obvious retort is that ads are everywhere, you can't ignore them. But there are rats in the ceiling of your favorite restaurant, and you ignore them no problem, you don't even look up. That's the real Matrix

you make for yourself continuously, in analog, not digital-- overestimate this, disavow that, a constant transduction of reality into a safe hue of green, until by the time you get to bed you're physically exhausted but your brain can't downshift. "I have insomnia." Time for a Xanax. Yes, it's Blue.

"Everybody gets something out of every transaction," said Joe, explaining why people want to be conned. That's what ads do for you. They'll let you complain that they are telling you what to want, as long as you let them tell you how to want.

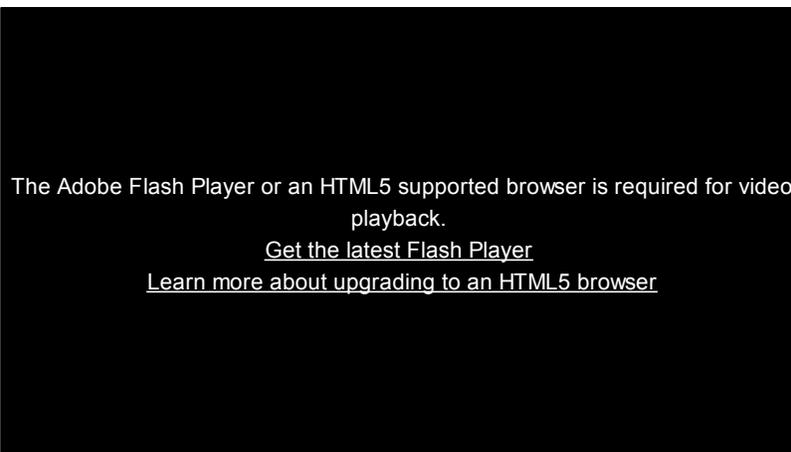
"Shouldn't my parents have taught me how to want, instead of yelling at me about what to want?" You'd think that, let's check in: have you shown this ad to your 14 year old daughter yet? Oh, you sent it to her on Facebook, that was helpful. What did you tell her about the ad? "Well, even though it's an ad and they're trying to sell you Dove soap, there's a positive message in it." No other ways to deliver positive messages? "Well, the ad is really well made, and it communicates the message more powerfully than I ever could." But if the medium is the message, shouldn't you NOT show her this ad?

David Mamet has some excellent insights, but for practice what you preach wisdom you have to defer to a Wachowski sister: stop letting the Matrix tell you who you are.

#### IV

Did the way the sketching sessions were conducted remind you of anything? The women aren't in yoga casual, no one's wearing sneakers-- they got a little dressed up for the appointment. Observe the way they talk about themselves, trying to find just the right words because, you know, their inner experience is very complicated; and the unfinished, hesitating haste with which they take their handbags and walk out at the end leaving the artist behind. The loft is certainly an inviting, comfortable setting, warm and safe, but it doesn't belong to them. They know they are merely visitors in a shared space. That setting is exactly like therapy.

You may think this is merely my (a psychiatrist's/*House Of Games* viewer's) biased perception of this, except that a) they're in San Francisco, where the main output is crematorium roast coffee and cash-only psychiatry, and b):



## Florence on Dove Real Beauty Sketches

My father was emotionally very distant-- and so was my mom. And I didn't get the emotional comfort I needed...

It's been really clear to me over my life that I've made really bad choices, and that's a reflection of my self esteem. I chose the wrong jobs, the wrong husbands...

I use a toolbox of things I tell myself... whenever I hear negative thoughts about myself, I remind myself I have to use what's inside me, my authentic self, to feel good about how I am.

This isn't every woman I've ever been stuck next to on the A train who spotted me with a psych journal or a flask, this monologue is in the ad. Let's find out why: anybody watching this ad in therapy? Anybody watching this ad ever fantasize about what it would be like being in therapy? What a coincidence.

This woman is roots deep in therapy, she thinks about herself in the language of "insight oriented therapy," how has this strategy worked out for her?



Florence Gray

Yikes, an Oscar Wilde novel. But the thing to notice here is not that this thinking has failed but that this thinking has BOTH failed AND she thinks it has worked amazingly well for everything else EXCEPT her perception of her physical appearance, her self-esteem; only in that one single area does she "have more work to do on myself." If you ask her about her capacity for empathy or her social/political beliefs or her "values"-- those aren't evolving, those are evolved, they are unassailable. "I have a lot of love to give."

*How do you know?*

I'm not picking on her, any woman who has to raise two kids on her own or with a husband has my unconditional support, but truth hurts, that's how you know it's true. The confidence with which she *knows* how her perception of self-esteem affects everything in life, "it couldn't be more crucial" is not an insight, it is not wisdom gained from years of therapy: *she has been conned*, it is society's long con so her pocket can be picked.

The ad's association to therapy here was probably not planned but it was inevitable, just as Mantegna *selecting* a psychiatrist and not an engineer or a cook or a stripper as the mark in *House Of Games* was inevitable. It is the only system of rules based on self-deception, it encourages the illusion of "self" separate from behavior. And as long as psychiatry uncritically elevates identity over behavior, it makes it - not the patients, it-- an easy mark for con men with their own agenda: SSI, the justice system, gun control, schools, whatever. "It's called a confidence game. Why, because you give me your confidence? No: because I give you mine." Take a minute, think it through.

Self esteem is sold to you as an inalienable right, not something to be earned; and if you don't have self-esteem it's because fake society made you feel bad about yourself. But fake society also made you feel good about yourself, it propped you up. The reason you got an A and not an R and believed it is because you actually believe you are an A kind of guy, Math, English, History, Science, PE, and Lunch notwithstanding. A, not R. But if everyone deserves it, it has no value. Which is why getting it is unsatisfying.

Self-esteem is relative, advertising knows this, which is why it operates on comparisons between you and the aspirational people in the ad that seem better because they own the product. The Dove ad dispenses with the aspirational people and actually compares you to you. But that's not you, it's aspirational you, "wouldn't it be great if people saw me in an idealized, sketchy kind of way?" But even as it does this, it pretends self-esteem is innate.

One of the great insights of psychoanalysis is that you never really want an object, you only want the wanting, which means the solution is to set your sights on an impossible ideal and work hard to reach it. You won't. That's not just okay, that's the point. It's ok if you fantasize about knowing kung fu if you then try to actually learn kung fu, eventually you will understand you can never really know kung fu, and then you will die. And it will have been worth it.

You can't see it, but since this is America, the problem here is debt. Not credit card debt, though I suspect that's substantial too, but self-esteem debt. They're borrowing against their future accomplishments to feel good about themselves today, hoping they'll be able to pay it back. Melinda's 26, at that age some self-esteem debt is reasonable as long as you use it to hustle. But what happens if you overspend now and can't pay it back by the time you're 40? Look above. Time for therapy or a moisturizing soap. There's not enough quantitative easing in the universe to prop up this fantasy, but you can't say America's not committed to the attempt.



## Real Men Want To Drink Guinness, But Don't Expect Them To Pay For It

September 25, 2013

[http://thelastpsychiatrist.com/2013/09/real\\_men\\_want\\_to\\_drink\\_guinness.html](http://thelastpsychiatrist.com/2013/09/real_men_want_to_drink_guinness.html)

by The Last Psychiatrist

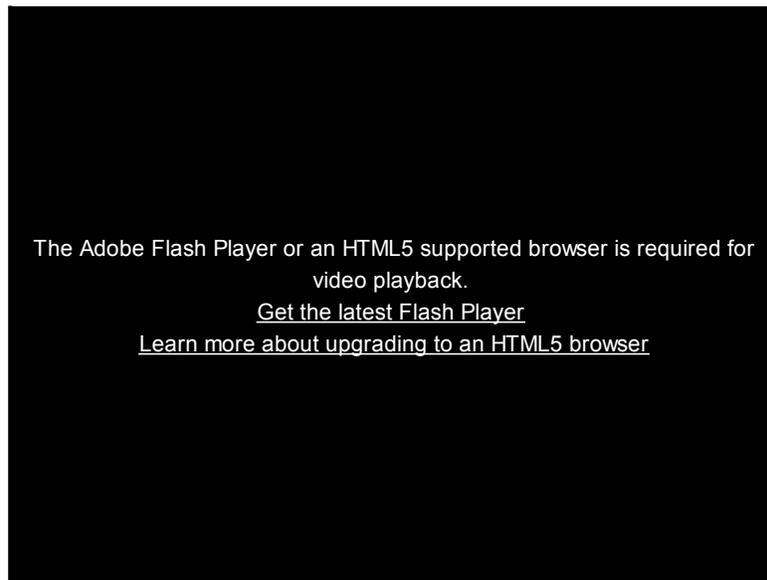
*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen.*

l.



the reason the bubbles go down is because of the drag created by the bubbles rising up the center.  
yeah, like a metaphor.

Click this ad. It's great, the internet told me so, it says it represents something good about humanity. You're going to cry and feel good about the future and then consider ordering a Guinness. That is, unless you already like Guinness and then you're going to have a totally different reaction, like switching to Belhaven.



[Guinness basketball commercial.](#)

*"The choices we make reveal the true nature of our character."*

Yeah, we're sheep. Message received. That wasn't the message? Are you sure?

According to social critics around the internet this ad is "such a refreshing change", "great to see sensitivity and strength combined", "promotes a new kind of masculinity." I'd like to know what was wrong with the old masculinity? The one featured on *Game Of Thrones*? Was it too masculine?

Before you applaud this ad for "breaking the mold of beer adverts" you would do well to remember that all ads are aspirational, not representational, and for sure not inspirational, i.e. the ad thinks this will work on the target demo because it describes an aspirational image for the demo, i.e. i.e. the ad has made several important assumptions about the kind of person who would like this ad-- *not the product, the ad*-- and you're not going to like them. Still don't see it? Take yourself back to 1990. What would this ad have looked like?

In 1990, the ad would have shown the masculinity and heroism of the *crippled guy*: him, in his chair, keeping up with the bipeds, both physically and mentally, taking shots and landing zingers.

**Wheels (laughing):**

You still throwing bricks? What is this, a Masons' convention? I got an idea, let's just gather up all these bricks and build a shelter for the homeless so your mom has a place to live.

**Group (laughing):**

Oh no he didn't just bring up your momma!

**Biped (laughing):**

Can someone sub in for Mr. Motherfucking March Of Dimes? He needs to take off for two hours to watch 60 Minutes.

**Group (laughing):**

GroupOooooohhhhhh! Snap! His momma looks like Morley Safer!

**Wheels (laughing, fouling a tree ent):**

Sorry, you either smoke or you get smoked. And you got SMOKED!

**Biped (laughing):**

Tree ent! Oh, that's funny on two levels!!

*(Wheels shoots but is blocked by Biped)*

**Biped (laughing):**

It's true, white men can't jump!

("good game", high fives all around.)

**Voice Over:**

A real man doesn't see limits. He doesn't see disability. He takes on whatever life throws his way, sets up, and shoots for 3. It's not about the best trick shot, it's about points on the board. And the way he handles the rebounds will define him as a man. Life is a team sport, and most people play to lose. For the winners, there's Guinness.

Then we'd pass the bong around and watch *Simon & Simon* reruns. I may not be remembering everything accurately, it was a long time ago.

But this ad does the exact opposite: it shows a bunch of "men"-- signaled by the modern external cues of tricep tattoos, wide gaits and carefully managed stubble-- playing *down* to Davros's level, not as a one time offering, but as a *regular weekly game*.

That's very sensitive, but, just curious, do these guys who grab a shower in the locker room have another weekly basketball game where they play standing up, or is this all it takes to satisfy their interest in recreational athletics? Because I can't imagine anyone who actually likes playing basketball to be able to do it only this way. Perhaps their Cosmo girlfriends give them *two* evenings off a week for bro-ing?

Get ready for a super-sexist comment that is nevertheless 100% true, good thing my rum makes me impervious to your idiotic criticisms: reducing yourself because you think it's a show of solidarity is a straight up chick thing to do, see also Slut Walks and crying excessively for the deceased. It was super-brave that Kellie Pickler shaved her head to support her friend with breast cancer, but what the hell was the point? "Breast cancer awareness!" Isn't that what the implants are for?



getting the message out

The most generous interpretation of her "look at me" behavior would be, "I'm supporting my friend, showing that people can be beautiful even without hair, especially if they have a spectacular body and a national dance show, and a glam squad, and a wig, and are not on chemo." Message received, oncology can bite me, I'm calling a stylist.

I can hear the grumbling, so I'll make a slight modification: only a woman would *allow* another person to reduce themselves in a show of support. When Joseph Gordon-Levitt improvised the head shaving scene in *50/50*, Seth Rogen didn't then grab the hedge clippers and say, "I'm not going to let my BFF feel bad about himself" because that would be, you know, \_\_\_\_\_. "Is it gay?" "No, no, is it retarded?" You're both right. Everyone's a winner!

I could use this ad as a commentary about the wussification of America, "the guilt of privilege", the Land Of Sensitivity Training, etc, etc, but that would be wrong and anyway I don't have that kind of time. I started writing a porn book, this book has become my own personal nightmarish Hamlet, a scary real life example of what the "return of the repressed" looks like, and FYI it looks horrifying. Remember the scene in *Ju-On* where whatever the hell that ghost thing is materializes in the window, not to look at anyone specifically, but... only to reveal that it is watching?



According to psychoanalysis, this is what turns me on.

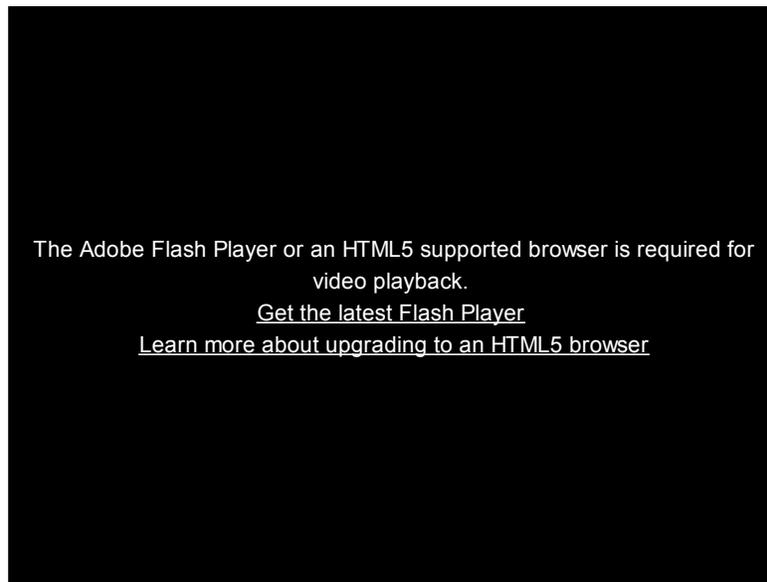
II.

All of the psychologically necessary praise for this ad can be attributed to two things: 1) It's for Guinness, which is already a kind of masculine product; 2) the woefully deluded premise that ads try to sell you on a product. Oh my God, what year is this? Stop it, this is WRONG.

Ads do not try to sell you a product, is *Mad Men* canceled yet? On that now unwatchable soap opera Creative stays up all night eating chinese and trading tag lines, trying to capture the essence of the product. Essence of the product-- for whom? In fairness, back then there was only one TV and one wallet per household, so demos tended to be a little more broad, by which I mean women. Fair enough, and not

anymore. Now ads target a specific demographic, and tailor an aspirational message/image for that demo on which is piggybacked whatever product paid for the take out. THE PRODUCT IS IRRELEVANT. Write it down on a sticky note next to A-B-C, it will help.

If the ad works you will consequently want the product no matter what it is, baaaaa, this is what I mean when I say ads teach you not what to want but how to want. You could use this exact same Guinness ad to sell something as unmasculine as guar gum flavored ice cream and it would work just as well, and I know this because



### [Mother Dairy Chillz](#)

While you wonder who copied what and why they bothered let me observe a key difference between this Indian ad and the American: in the Indian ad, *everyone is handicapped, and the one biped joins in*. His innate importance is signaled by his Iverson jersey, keep in mind this is 2006. That's your metaphor for an aspirational, westernized, privileged but still socially conscious young man in India surrounded by... the rest of India.

III.

My interest here is not the tricks the ad uses to get you to like Guinness, but what the fact of the existence of such an ad says about American men today. It's bad. It's really, really bad.

Let's go back to the assumptions the ad makes about its target demo. What is the target demo? Think about this. *Not who drinks Guinness already*, this is not a "brand reinforcement" ad. Who are the people the ad is trying to *attract*? The ad doesn't comment on Guinness *drinkers*, it is making assumptions about people who like the ad. Who is the ad trying to attract?

"Is it paraplegics?" That's a weird guess. "Is it basketball players?" I'm going to assume that's code, no. "Is it 30 something guys who play basketball and then go to bars to meet women?" No, that's Heineken's

gimmick. Aspirational-- look at the ad: who is *not* those men, but considers *them* masculine, sees something more masculine than themselves?

It's beta males. The best of men, except for actual men. What is a beta male? *He is the kind of man who anxiously looks for something to identify him as a **man**, while doing nothing to become a man.* For him, there's Guinness.

"Hold on. You're saying that Guinness assumes if I like this ad I'm like, a... loser?" Yes. *Or a girl.* Tagline:

Dedication.

Loyalty.

Friendship.

I'm sorry, is this an ad for beer or golden retrievers? Why not "good nutrition" or "isn't always yapping about her frenemies"? Just because the guy saying them sounds like a man doesn't mean these words are branding for men. Usually "male" values are the things you have to teach or encourage people to do, like bravery, or sacrifice, or stoicism, where the default, the easier thing, is to not do those things. Dedication and friendship don't code for men, they are too basic for men, they code simply for person, although women get associated with them because... not much more is expected of women. For whatever reason society has made the observation that women seem to be worse at friendship than men, and that reason is called TV, way to set the bar really really low, Shonda. "You're... my... person." Ugh, Jesus, someone Silkwood me. It's not that these values are inferior, it's that you can't imagine someone else needs to praise them-- or that any person alive or dead would feel good about themselves for having them-- or would seek to be described this way. "I'm a good friend." Of course you are, there's no sacrifice involved, plus it gives you someone to talk at. This Guinness ad is for the demographic that aspires to positive experiences and pretend challenges buried in rhetorical cover so to avoid the guilt about its meaninglessness. "The cedar roasted asparagus has good chew. I don't know how to enjoy it, so I'll Instagram it."

Wheelchair b-ball is nice but it has nothing to do with being a man or masculinity, or females and femininity, or anything, and the point here is that the public's desire to link it to masculinity is a sign of three very bad things: a) a pervasive sense of insecurity and inadequacy in many men which has a precise psychoanalytic characterization that I will not elaborate on here and which the ad reassures you is soooo not true, you loyal friend, you-- you're a real man; b) another example of the media teaching people how to want, how to think, in this case about themselves; c) the general public's exhaustion with masculine men who don't deliver on their masculinity, i.e. and e.g. getting the check.

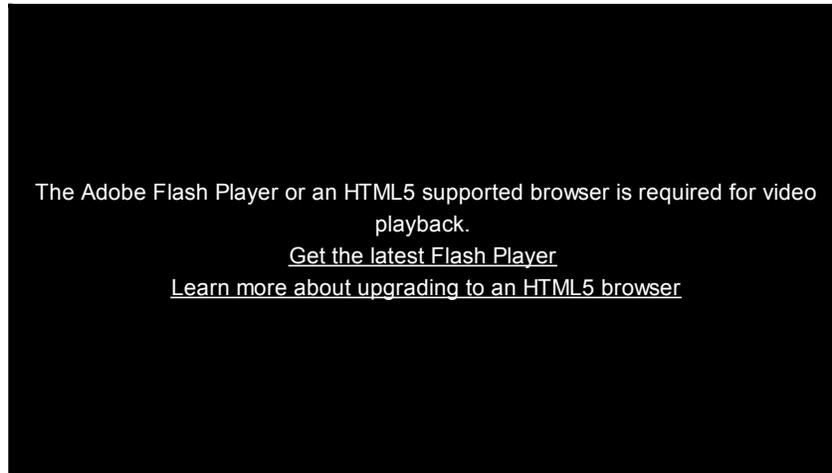
"I think your interpretation of the ad is wrong." Maybe this is the Dexedrine talking, but I think you liked the ad. Do a system check: did you like the ad? "Well, I kinda liked the song." Yeah. That's why it was also

in *Grey's Anatomy*.

#### IV.

You may have heard that it's hard to be a modern woman because of "the impossible expectations media sets", but you should try it from the penis side. Not measuring up in America generates a distinct response in men, let's see if I can elicit it in you. No? Wanna bet?

Here's an ad that is female analogue of the Guinness ad, i.e. it played on the same show and time. Let's run the experiment.



#### [2013 Cadillac SRX TV Commercial, 'Rainy Run' Song by Serena Ryder](#)

*Storyboard: Raining. Pretty brunette in Iris & Ink trench and skirt sufficiently above the knee comes out of a Lean In and, oopsy, she has no umbrella. Oh my God, that's so hysterical. So she runs to a passing salaryman and huddles underneath his. He's surprised, obviously, the last half-Asian to come up on a white guy in the rain was The Ring and we all know how that ended. (Code for "Asian" by walking by a Chinese restaurant.) She gazes into his eyes. "We're headed the same way, right?" she NLPs. "Yeah!" he responds, but five steps later you can see his pacemaker go off as she blue balls him for another umbrella that crosses their path, this time a basketball player's. (Everybody still with me? Let's keep going.) A few steps later, she froggers off towards the next passing guy, and when she settles in their eye contact lingers for longer than this married guy has had in a decade. "After you," she says in some kind of way that means some kind of thing. Three more steps, and she dumps him and his thrifty tote bag for a luxury SUV. She closes the door, a sigh of relief. She made it.*

So? How do you feel? Here's the tag line: "it's all in how you get there." Well, how did she get there?

Here's one interpretation: she's a cunt, by which I mean a woman. The commercial represents a reality about women, hopping from guy to guy, taking, taking, taking. And that sigh at the end was what she really thinks of men. =choads.

You'll observe that this harpy never said thank you, she never even said excuse me. She just assumed it was ok, she was entitled, the world belongs to women, and when she got as far as his five and a half inches could take her, she was off to the next guy, black guys and homewrecking. Even better, she is proud of how she pulled it off, because getting to her car isn't the only goal, learning how to manipulate emasculated men is just as important, note she never used a woman. The tag line reminds women that they shouldn't feel to guilty about it, men are dispensable. As an aside, buy a Cadillac.

That's one interpretation, but the striking thing about the ad is how she explicitly did not slut her way from man to man. All she did was ask to use their umbrella-- and got it. That's the Female Power. What's enraging isn't that women are sluts, but that they are not sluts-- that they are able to manipulate men, get what they want, *without paying for it*. That message to female viewers is what gets men angry.

The problem with this analysis is that it assumes the message is for women only, as if women are the ones who buy themselves Cadillacs, and as if men would not be exposed to this commercial except by a wife who drags her husband over to it, "oooh, look at this great ad! I want a car!" But this ad was on at 4pm on ESPN, same time as the Guinness ad, for the specific male demographic that... is home watching ESPN at 4pm, e.g. guys home at 2. What's the aspirational message to those men? She's exactly the kind of woman they wish was in love with them. "I want the kind of woman with max female power, that can get anything she wants, and that everyone wants, but no one can get-- and she picked me." See also female superheroes.

Ok, but *why does she need to manipulate men?* What does the ad assume that women assume about men?

There's a gigantic error in the ad, yet to most people the ad is totally believable, like this is a hidden camera vid, this error is invisible to them; and if this error was corrected this ad would have never been possible. Do you see it? *Why didn't one of these "men" just walk her to her car?* Three guys, not one thought of this? She's under your umbrella and your natural instinct was not to protect, to help? So wrapped up in what it all means and power imbalances that you couldn't just... behave? Ok, forget about chivalry-- out of sheer selfishness, a hail mary longshot? Sure, no expectations, but what the hell, let's see where it goes, maybe she'll ask you out for a Guinness? Were you so insulted by her "entitlement" that you couldn't just try? Or so flustered because a woman *that you have stripped of her ordinary humanity and forced her to be a symbol of value* chose to be near you, your brain couldn't figure out what to do next? In which case her decision to leave you for another umbrella was astutely correct, odd how she and the commercial knew that. All men are good for is an umbrella *because she cannot rely on men to act like... men*.

The point is not simply that those men should have walked her to her car, the point is that the ad knew with 100% certainty that it would not occur to any man watching to do this; that it would not occur to any woman watching that it's weird no man thought to do this. Meanwhile, what did occur to men was that

she's a jerk.

Look at it from your daughter's perspective: should she date the guy who walks her to her car, or the guy who doesn't walk her to her car? "You can't judge based on that!" What else can I judge on? Didn't you judge her based on her wanting to stay dry?

"Hold on. You're saying that Cadillac assumes if I hate this ad I'm like, a... loser?" Etc, and so forth. Love and hate are opposites for lovers, not ads, for ads the goal is to stimulate want through any emotion convenient.

Tagline: Ladies, it's all in how you get there, because you're on your own.

This is what the ad is telling women, and you, its foundational assumption: the public's exhaustion with men who don't deliver on their masculinity, their general loss of ambition, drive, respectfulness... and purpose; coupled with men's haunting suspicion that their true worth-- "in other people's minds"-- is signaled by women's opinions of them, after all, money, jobs-- all that is fake. Hence the need for something to redefine masculinity, to make it real.

"Well, feminism has emasculated men." Really? A girl did that to you?

V.

The Guinness ad proposes that what makes men men is that they don't act like stereotypical men, if and only if they look like stereotypical men, otherwise they're not men. That sentence is 100% correct, but it could only have been written by a madman. Reshoot that commercial using the cast of *The Big Bang Theory* and the entire aspirational message is obliterated. The mere fact that they took stereotypical-*looking* men to use as contrasts to "stereotypical men" means they themselves assume that "stereotypical men" are indeed the real men, everyone else is waiting to be labeled, by some other omnipotent entity, that they are close. And if this is confusing, just change "men" to "women."

It's confusing because the Guinness ad is a mess of signals and symbols that you usually only see purposely mixed together for parody, like a Hooters waitress who also turns out to be really smart.

The Adobe Flash Player or an HTML5 supported browser is required for video playback.

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[Learn more about upgrading to an HTML5 browser](#)

### [Coach Jon Gruden Hoot Camp TV Commercial "Pour" - #stepintoawesome](#)

Ok, she's only smart at mixology and football, but to a guy watching ESPN at 4 in the afternoon, not coincidentally the same place/time the Guinness ad and Rainy Run were running, this signals as genius. The question is, why would the demo watching this want her to be smart ALSO? Look at her, what more do you want? Which is the same question as, why would the demo watching this want the Guinness guys to be "a new kind of masculinity"? What is the precise origin of the *want*?

Look at the guy in the chair, gentlemen of 4pm football, that guy is aspirational you. I'm told Vitamin E is some kind of battalion leader, but the only reason *she* is talking to *him* is because she is smart, i.e. the fantasy for the viewer is that to talk to a girl *like her* he doesn't have to be interesting, engaging, witty or cool, let alone young or attractive; she's "smart" and likes "smart guys" so she's happy to stick around and talk to "smart" guys about the things that interest *them*. Again, "smart" here carries the loosest possible definition so it can apply to 4pm Disney affiliates, but the point is no different than if she was solving for x. You don't have to woo her on her terms (whatever they may be), she's ready to meet you on yours.

At this point you will no doubt think that the fantasy here is to be able to score a Hooters waitress or a 36-24-30 but this is neither true for you nor for the ad. The point for the ad isn't her as physically attractive but her as a type-- a Hooters Waitress-- if she was thirty pounds heavier but still had the same attention to her appearance (makeup, etc), and adopted the style and mannerisms of hot girls then she would still cause that kind of approach anxiety, she would still be such a symbol, I'm pretty sure this is the entire gimmick of the Kardashians. I know this is going to sound like madness, but 8/10 that approach anxiety is defensive, you think you want something you really do not want, that person is not for you, I don't mean not good for you, I mean you do not really want this; but anyway the point here is that the ad mixes up the symbols as humor, to fool you into thinking that what's humorous is that this type could play against type; but the horrifying, Ju-On reality is that the symbol ceases to be a symbol for you the moment she violates her own symbolism-- the moment you get to know *her*-- and then the *want* DISAPPEARS. Just like fear. If that ghost in the window so much as coughs like reality you will scale the

wall and *beat it the fuck out*.

And I know all this is true because the ads told me so, in order. You're going to be infuriated at this blonde Hooters Waitress for only being attracted to chiseled abs and a commanding phallus, but even if she miraculously chose to come under your umbrella, you'd see suddenly she was only a brunette, huh, and you still wouldn't do anything about it. And off she goes, a missed opportunity. And before that ignites your amygdala into a blinding self-hatred, you will remember that it's all the cunt's fault, and besides, never mind all these girls, the fact that you're a good friend to your less fortunate friend is what makes you a man; but since you are not actually a good friend, indeed, you don't even have any friends, well, this ad will signal to yourself that you are. Message received.

As an aside, drink Guinness.

# A typology of magic

October 4, 2013

<http://nydwracu.wordpress.com/2013/10/04/a-typology-of-magic/>

by nydwracu niþgrim, nihtbealwa mæst

*reactionary futurism, critical legalism*

Most neoreactionary wizardry has been focused on [black magic](#):

The key of black magic is the art of *naming the nameless*, of showing that that which appears natural—that is, *ideology* in the true sense—is not. A secure ideology (in the man-on-the-street sense of “political memplex”) is one that has no name. What is the name for that on which American liberalism and American conservatism agree? What is the name for that on which *Americans* agree? Liberalism is an -ism; conservatism is an -ism; but talk of justice, of human rights and freedoms, is not.

The American caste system, the Anglo-Soviet split, and even this article itself—these are all works of black magic.

But practical politics relies much more on *white magic*: building an [ideography](#), a set of words, or [ideographs](#), with connotational/emotional and exosemantic/thede-signaling loads pointing in the direction desired by the ideography’s builders. This is the essence of Moldbug’s concept of ‘idealism’.

There are two operations in black magic: definition and undefinition. Moldbug *defines* America’s castes; graaaaaagh [undefines](#) ‘racism’. Definition consists of redrawing the semantic map of the territory of the world—in rationalist terms, *cleaving reality at its joints*; undefinition consists of showing that an existing piece of the semantic map does not accurately represent the territory of the world, that it folds together things that ought to be separated, and that it obscures thought by doing so, such that, for example, an attack on one thing that falls under the term can be taken to refute another thing that falls under it, to which the attack at hand does not apply.

There are four operations in white magic: invention, reinforcement, reversal, and erasure.

*Invention* consists of drawing up a new ideograph, a new word with connotational and/or exosemantic load. This may occasionally appear as black *definition*, and in fact invention is likely to require definition as a prerequisite, as with the invention of the term ‘white privilege’. Without any semblance of denotation, the word is less likely to have either meaning or direction. And when an ideograph exists without a definitive denotation, it often appeals to a pre-existing tradition, and its invention is likely to contain an attempt at definition—Plato’s and Rawls’ attempts at *inventing* ‘justice’ both fall under this category. It’s also possible for already existing non-ideographic words to be imbued with ideographic load, as [Theden](#) has been doing with words like [‘Brahmin’](#).

*Reinforcement* is exactly what it sounds like: restating an ideograph and its connotational and/or exosemantic load. This may seem controversial, but I will claim that, for many Universalists, ‘white’ is a negative ideograph. [Observe](#):

The thing about the Republicans is that when they have a tantrum, they really have a tantrum. Right now, somewhere in Washington, DC, there are a bunch of rich men with white hair, white skin, and

black hearts screaming and stomping around in their suits because they don't want poor people to have affordable healthcare.

'Black hearts' carries an obvious negative connotational load; juxtaposing it with 'rich men' and 'white hair, white skin' *reinforces* the negative load of both, in both the connotational—the negative load of the 'black-hearted' referents of the adjective is to spread onto the adjective itself—and exosemantic—these people are to be taken as *the enemy*—senses.

*Reversal* consists of *reversing* the load of an ideograph, whether connotationally or exosemantically. This occurs in two forms: *reclamation*, switching the load from negative to positive, and *declamation*, switching the load from positive to negative. I use the word *reclamation* because it already exists: “reclamation of slurs”: “You’re going to call me a queer/nigger/redneck/faggot? Fine, I’m a queer/nigger/redneck/faggot; I’ll take that as part of my identity and use it to positively signal my thede affiliation!” This is an example of *exosemantic reclamation*. *Connotational reclamation* proceeds along the lines of, say, (and I know I’ve seen this argument somewhere) “You’re going to call me a racist? Fine, I’m a racist! Were I not a racist, I’d hate my own people! Do you hate your own people, you race-traitor bastard?” As always, the connotational and exosemantic aspects are often linked: the attempts at reclamation of ‘liberal’ seem to be both. As for declamation, [see Theden on progressives](#).

*Erasure* is an extreme case of declamation: the ideograph acquires such negative load that those who previously took it as positive are forced to disassociate themselves from it. I read an interview a few days ago with a DC campaign operative who said that denotationally liberal candidates can’t associate themselves with the word ‘liberal’ anymore. (This is not a new phenomenon; it comes up in Bloom County, so it’s been around since the Reagan era.)

# Horrorism

November 3, 2013

<http://www.xenosystems.net/horrorism/>

by Nick Land

*Involvements with reality*

Neoreaction, as it tends to extremity on its Dark Enlightenment vector, frustrates all familiar demands for activism. Even if explicit anti-politics remains a minority posture, the long-dominant demotic calculus of political possibility is consistently subverted — coring out the demographic constituencies from which ‘mobilization’ might be expected. There is no remotely coherent reactionary class, race, or creed — it painstakingly explains — from which a tide-reversing mass politics could be constructed. In this respect, even the mildest versions of neoreactionary analysis are profoundly politically disillusioning.

When demotist ideologies have entered into superficially comparable crises, they have forked into ‘realist’ compromisers and ‘terrorist’ ultras. The latter option, which substitutes a violent intensification of political will for the erosion of the extensive (popular) factor, is an especially reliable indicator of demotism entering an idealist state, in which its essential ideological features are exposed with peculiar clarity. Terrorists are the vehicles of political ideas which have been stranded by a receding tide of social identity, and are thus freed to perfect themselves in abstraction from mass practicality. Once a revolutionary movement becomes demographically implausible, terrorists are born.

Neoreactionary realism, in contrast, is positively aligned with the recession of demotic sustenance. If this were not the case, it would exhibit its own specific mode of democratic politics — an evident absurdity. Any suggestion of frustrated rage, tilting into terroristic expressions, would immediately reveal profound confusion, or hypocrisy. Lashing the masses into ideological acquiescence, through exemplary violence, cannot imaginably be a neoreactionary objective.

Demotist activism finds its rigorous neoreactionary ‘counterpart’ in *fatalism* — trichotomized as providence, heredity, and catallaxy. Each of these strands of fate work their way out in the absence of mass political endorsement, with a momentum that *builds* through the dissolution of organized compensatory action. Rather than attempting to make something happen, fatality restores something that cannot be stopped.

It is thus that the approximate contours of the horrorist task emerge into focus. Rather than resisting the desperation of the progressive ideal by terrorizing its enemies, it directs itself to the culmination of progressive despair in the abandonment of *reality compensation*. It de-mobilizes, de-massifies, and de-democratizes, through subtle, singular, catalytic interventions, oriented to the realization of fate. The Cathedral has to be horrified into paralysis. The horrorist message (to its enemies): *Nothing that you are doing can possibly work*.

“What is to be done?” is not a neutral question. The agent it invokes already strains towards progress. This suffices to suggest a horrorist response: *Nothing*. Do nothing. Your progressive ‘praxis’ will come to nought in any case. Despair. Subside into horror. You can pretend to prevail in antagonism against ‘us’, but reality is your true — and fatal — enemy. We have no interest in shouting at you. We whisper, gently, in your ear: “despair”. (The horror.)

# Discrimination

August 9, 2013

<http://www.xenosystems.net/discrimination/>

by Nick Land

*Involvements with reality*

Bryan Caplan has [had](#) two epiphanies, which sum to the conclusion that — bad as tribalism is — misanthropy is the real problem. His ineradicable universalism betrays him once again.

It matters little whether people are *uniformly* judged good or bad. Far more important is whether such judgment is *discriminating*.

The central argument of Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals* is clarifying in this regard, not least because it explains how radical mystification came to dominate the topic. How could there ever come to be a moral quandary about the value of discrimination? Considered superficially, it is extremely puzzling.

Differentiation between what is 'good' and 'bad' requires discrimination. This is a capability no younger than life itself, which it serves as an indispensable function. As soon as there is behavior, there is discrimination between alternatives. One way leads to survival, the other way leads to death. There is nourishment, or not; reproduction, or not; safety or predatory menace. Good and bad, or the discrimination between them (which is the same thing), are etched primordially into any world that life inhabits. Discrimination is needed to survive.

The very existence of archaic hominids attests to billions of years of effective discrimination, between safety and danger, wholesome and putrid or poisonous food, good mates and less good (or worthless) ones. When these elevated apes differentiated between good and bad, appetizing and rotten, attractive and repulsive, they found such discriminations sufficiently similar in essence to be functionally substitutable. When judging that some food item is 'not good for us', a person is 'rotten', or the odor of a potential mate is 'delicious', we recall such substitutions, and the primordial sense of discrimination that they affirm. There can be no long-term deviation from the original principle: *discrimination is intelligence aligned with survival*.

Two contrary developments now present themselves. Firstly, there is a sublimation or sophistication of discrimination, which might be called *cultivation*. Abstract concepts, modes of expression, artworks, delicate culinary flavors, refined behaviors, and exotic elaborations of sexual-selection stimuli, among innumerable other things, can all be subtly discriminated on the ancient scale, supporting an ever more intricate and extended hierarchy of judgments. The reflexive doubling of this potential upon itself, as captured by the 'higher' judgment that *to discriminate well is good*, produces a 'natural aristocracy'. For the first time, there is a self-conscious 'Right'. This, at least, is its logico-mythical ur-form. *To divide the good from the bad is good*. Order, hierarchy, and distinction emerge from an affirmation of discrimination.

Because the Left cannot create, it comes second. It presupposes an existing hierarchy, or order of discriminations, which is subverted through a 'slave revolt in morality'. The formula is simple enough: *to discriminate is bad*. Following from this leftist moral perversion, as its second-order consequence, those who do not discriminate (well), but are in fact discriminated against, must be the good. In the new moral order, therefore, to be bad at discrimination is good — or 'universalist' — whilst the old (and now 'evil')

quality of good judgment, based on competent perception of patterns and differences, is the very quintessence of sin.

Lawrence Auster's thinking, which would not usually be described as 'Nietzschean', [conforms](#) to the conclusions of the Antichrist perfectly in this:

*We thus arrive at our present system of mass nonwhite immigration, multiculturalism, racial preferences for minorities, the symbolic celebration of minorities, the covering up of black-on-white violence, and antiracism crusades directed exclusively at whites. **Under this system, whites practice assiduous non-discrimination toward the unassimilated, alien, or criminal behavior of racial minorities, while practicing the most assiduous discrimination against their fellow whites for the slightest failure to be non-discriminatory.** This is the system that conservatives variously describe as "political correctness" or the "double standard." However, from the point of view of the functioning of the liberal order itself, what conservatives call the double standard is not a double standard at all, but a fundamental and necessary articulation of the society into the "non-discriminators" and the "non-discriminated against"—an articulation upon which the very legitimacy and existence of the liberal society depends. [Auster's emphasis]*

The racial pretext for this righteous diatribe is not incidental, given the prevailing sense of 'discrimination' in Left-edited languages. Caution is required, however, precisely because vulgar racism is *insufficiently discriminating*. All generalization lurches towards the universal. The abstract principle of Leftism is, in any case, far more general. The trend towards the Left-absolute is entirely clear, and pre-programmed: *no state of human existence can possibly be any better or worse than any other*, and only through recognition of this can we be saved. Do you sinfully imagine that it is *better* to be a damned soul like Nietzsche than an obese, leprous, slothful, communist, cretin? Or worse still, in Bryan Caplan's world, that one might design an immigration policy on this basis? Then your path to the abyss is already marked out before you.

It does not take an exceptional mastery of logic to see the inextinguishable contradiction in Leftist thought. If discrimination is bad, and non-discrimination is good, how can discrimination be discriminated from non-discrimination, without grave moral error? This is an opportunity for Rightist entertainment, but not for solace. The Left has power and absurdist mysticism on its side. Logic is for sinners.

Two hanging questions:

Can Left and Right be rigorously [distinguished](#) in any other way?

Isn't [Christianity](#), as Nietzsche insisted, inextricable from this mess?



## Orwell and Newspeak

December 11, 2013

<http://socialpathology.blogspot.ca/2013/04/taking-on-cathedral.html>

by The Social Pathologist

*The diseases of modern life as seen through the secular confessional*



As I mentioned [in my previous post](#), I've gained the impression that Orwell developed his Newspeak dictionary in order to explain the cognitive phenomena he observed about him with regard to those committed to the Left. That's not to say that the same cognitive phenomenon can't be observed amongst the Right, rather, Orwell realised that many mass movement type ideologies are logically contradictory and to sustain themselves their adherents must engage in mental gyrations to maintain their belief in them. Where I feel that Orwell erred in his understanding of [Newspeak](#) is in its relation to the human intellect of the average man.

Orwell understood Newspeak as being part of the apparatus of totalitarian control: something forced onto an unwilling and unwitting public. And to a degree it was, but what I don't think Orwell ever grasped was the devilish mechanism by which Newspeak operated.

In 1984, Orwell felt that masses would "wake up" if they had access to Goldstein's revolutionary book. It never occurred to Orwell that the masses wouldn't care as long as their animal pleasures were provided for. The Party, much like Juvenal before them, recognised that public would not care much about higher concepts such as truth or freedom as long as they were provided with bread and circuses; or in the Party's cynical terminology, [Prolefeed](#). The average man, provided with a diet of booze, sports, porn and simple material comforts could be relied upon to never trouble his head with higher concepts such as truth, justice and love. In fact, trying to pry them away from these things in the name of "truth" would likely cause them to support the existing regime. (Note: this means that a capitalist totalitarianism, with its superior ability to provide for material goods, will be harder to dislodge than a socialist one.)

The Party understood the cognitive mechanisms of the average man better than Orwell did. Newspeak was a thought control mechanism aimed primarily at the natural intellectuals of the society, and the way it worked was by forcing intellectuals to think like the common man. Newspeak, was in essence, a mechanism to force thinking people into "prole-mind".

Take, for example, the concept of [Doublethink](#); the idea of keeping two mutually opposing ideas in one's head without noticing the difference. Orwell saw this mode of thought as an aberration with regard to normal thought but never realised that this state of affairs is the common mode of cognition (Cognitive dissonance) of the average man.

Or take for example the sublime concept of "[Bellyfeel](#)". Orwell describes the phenomenon better than I can;

Consider, for example, such a typical sentence from a Times leading article as "Oldthinkers unbellyfeel Ingsoc." The shortest rendering one could make of this in Oldspeak would be: "Those whose ideas were formed before the Revolution cannot have a full emotional understanding of the principles of English Socialism." But this is not an adequate translation. ... Only a person thoroughly grounded in Ingsoc could appreciate the full force of the word bellyfeel, which implied a blind, enthusiastic, and casual acceptance difficult to imagine today.

Orwell was trying to express what [cognitive neuroscience is only now beginning to formalise](#). In trying to understand the blind enthusiastic support Democrats have for Obama, the statement "Democrats bellyfeel Obama" is a far more accurate understanding of the pseudo-cognitive process involved in their support of the President than, "Democrats give their full and enthusiastic support of the Obama presidency after a careful consideration of his policies". "Gut-instinct", more than reason, is mass-man's mechanism of political orientation. This is why Fascism and Socialism are better understood as appeals to the "gut-brain" rather than logically and empirically justified modes of political thought. Orwell really needs to be recognised as the father of modern political neuroscience.

Totalitarian regimes cannot solely rely on oppression for their survival, they also need to rely on some measure of co-operation amongst the populace. The way they do this is by *exploiting the cognitive miserliness of the average man*. The five minutes of "hate", the glorification of Big Brother, the endless propaganda all work by exploiting and [conditioning System 1 thought processes](#). Newspeak was a language which forced those of any intellectual ability to think like the average man thereby rendering them susceptible to the cognitive conditioning techniques. To think in Newspeak is to think like a prole and avoid System 2 thought.

Orwell, like most other left wing intellectuals, never fully appreciated just outside the mindset of the proletariat he was. Though a committed Socialist who felt that he belonged to the "workers", there is plenty enough evidence that he had a hard time mixing with "the people." He just simply wasn't one of them. His understanding of prole stupidity, based upon his won frame of reference, was that Newspeak was "forced" onto the proles, whereas, in reality, it was their natural mode of thought(System 1). Orwell's fundamental misunderstanding of Newspeak lay in the assumption of what I call the rationalist fallacy.

The rationalist fallacy assumes that the average man is "rational" when it counts. The problem is that average man is not, cognitive miserliness is the norm. Therefore any system of thought or organisation which relies on the rationality of Joe Average is going to fail in the long run. The problem is that a lot of mainstream conservative thought is based upon this premise which in turn undermines its own survival and helps feed the leftist beast. Any Conservatism which believe in the right of the cognitive miser to choose is a dead man walking. This criticism of the prole-mind is not based upon any snobbery, rather it is of functional basis. Competency, not class, should be the sole criteria for decision eligibility. The Left needs the stupid to survive.

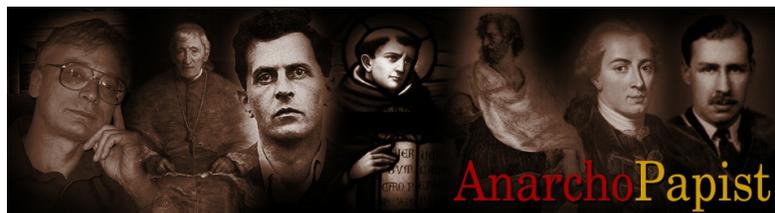
# Wittgenstein, Ideology, and Signaling

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<http://anarchopapist.wordpress.com/2014/01/20/wittgenstein-ideology-and-signaling/>

by Bryce Laliberte

*The high theory of neoreaction*



I have been having internal debates with my old foe, Wittgenstein. Lest it is any secret, I have long been a great admirer of Wittgenstein, and would consider him *the* foremost philosophy of the 20th century, and without an understanding of Wittgenstein (especially what makes the early contrast from the later) one should fail to understand what makes the 20th century a unique century for philosophical development. Wittgenstein forwarded a predominantly anti-philosophical philosophy, which may make one suppose it is non-philosophical (indeed, Wittgenstein seems to have assumed he had achieved as much), but it is really the most trenchantly useful series of conceptual tools for developing a system of thought. As I am consciously concerned with the development of a system of thought, from time to time I am at blows with Wittgenstein over some aspect of how we are able to mean things by our language, for half the struggle in developing a system of thought is placing it into the context of how a mind actually thinks and knows. I am interested in *ideology*, which may be most literally interpreted as *the logic of ideas*. One who knows logic knows that logic gives not a single fig for whether an idea is true or even semantically sensible; input the logical relations, and the mechanistic process of identifying material implications can be undertaken without understanding of the original premises. This is what makes computers possible, and it is what makes artificial intelligence possible.

There is a reason for my treatment of ideology as such. The meaning of an idea cannot be separated from its logic; the dialectic inheres to the act of communication. Furthermore, every act undertaken by an individual can be interpreted to mean something. Language is only a specific instance, a highly specialized tool for communication, but it is as a hammer to a rock. Hammers are not the only way of putting in nails, only the most (usually) effective.

How can language be on a continuum with all other action, where density of information is concerned? It has to do with intent. All action undertaken by an individual is undertaken for some (consciously and/or subconsciously) recognized reason, and with regard to that reason we concern ourselves with trying to determine the intent of others. Behavior is read as a way of knowing a person's mind, even if only a less clarified means than language.

That we mean things to others is trivially obvious in certain cases, even if we are otherwise skeptical of understanding a behavior so ordinary as brushing one's teeth. Clothing is an obvious example. Given even a relatively small income (in the West, at least), a wide range of means of clothing oneself open up, leaving only the question, to those able to interpret it, of which group they should like to signal affiliation with. Blacks understand this much better than whites, who often gawp at their willingness to put off "more significant" expenses in order to dress in the latest fashion, but the logic of the group should make it very clear. Individual survival is contiguous with survival in the group, as the group is itself the means by which the individual secures his own livelihood. Corporate America may be less beholden to these signals, as whites are simply less tribalistic, but that does not mean there isn't a rational motivation for doing whatever it takes to acquire the hippest pair of Air Jordan's.

The individual, in other words, does not perfectly exist outside the group. Yes, the individual may be able

to survive on his own within the wilderness, proving that we couldn't define humans as essentially dependent on groups, but to focus on the individual is like ignoring the complexities of pack behavior in wolves. Not all wolf behavior is pack behavior, but all wolf behavior is evolved for pack behavior (or near enough to be indistinguishable). The individual's own identity is not constituted in order to please some elementary desire possessed within, it is put together largely in part to facilitate ease of movement within and between groups.

The danger of this reasoning comes in when one considers not material means of signaling, but "personal" and "private" elements of the individual which it is rude to interrogate. However, by ideology, there is nothing which separates a belief from clothing. The lesson of politics should be not that politics is the mind killer, but that politics brings out everything that is base within man. There is a very simple reason for this. Politics is only dominated by the realpolitik, and the realpolitik is as much defined by simple material constraints on how people may interact with each other as much as what they wish to get out of the interaction. Insofar as the material constraint is a force, and insofar as that material constraint does not change, the species will evolve in order to exploit that. Our innate biases and preferences have the purpose of survival and procreation, and whatever will get an individual to those goals is fair game for Darwin to make use of. Evolution is very crafty, nature is very shrewd. As much as we might mean it, everything, and that means everything, in the individual has been adapted to the environment in order that the responses to stimuli which most frequently end with survival and reproduction will be promoted. If that is "objectively" beneficial traits such as intelligence and strength, negative traits such as sluttiness and simple shortsightedness, or even a predisposition to liberal beliefs, these will be selected for.

The logic of ideas is an instance of these material constraints. Though we are not used to thinking of ideas as having dependence on material constraints, especially if one is more idealist or dualist, it remains the case that the soul is dependent on the brain for the task of computation and understanding. (I am a hylomorphic dualist where this question is concerned, by the way.) It follows that there are better and worse means of managing ideas. Initially it may seem that there can only be one optimal ideology, but as with so many things, it depends upon the conditions in question. As much as I promote neoreaction as an ideology, I have my reservations at the edge of significance, i.e. where ideas have deeper meanings yet to be explored. A person of only so much intelligence will not be able to "grok" an ideology from the top-down, so any ideology which depends on that top-down grokking can influence, but cannot be adapted by, the ungrokked. Likewise, from above, a person who sees the limits of one's ability to grok the logic of ideas also sees the limits of their ability to really make the ideas known to the other.

That ideology is literally the "logic of ideas" should be a pointer as to why it must be defined as a "self-totalizing meta-narrative." There is simply no thinking outside ideology: if you're outside ideology, you're outside any logic of ideas, and inasmuch as they depend on an intrinsic logic (spoiler: they do), then all ideas depend on an ideology. Clearly, that ideology does not need to be consciously developed and

explicated by the individual in order to be referenced by their manner of acting, but it will always be the case that one will be able to identify the underlying ideology of an individual through sufficient observation subject to instances of experimentation.

This is why I insist on neoreaction being an ideology. I know some remain convinced of its necessarily pejorative and negative character, but this seems an unwarranted moralizing contingent on a certain kind of signaling. “We’re not an ideology, they’re an ideology, that’s why they’re thoughtless buffoons!” But what if we’re all thoughtless buffoons? The idea may seem absurd or silly, but let’s take it seriously for a moment.

I’ve always been aware, in this practice of “going meta” on arguments and modes of argumentation, that anything I say not only can but arguably should be put back on oneself. There isn’t anything wrong with psychologizing one’s antagonist, as long as one distinguishes between communication to the person and communication to the argument (when these are confused is when you commit an ad hominem *fallacy*), but one should also strive to psychologize oneself. Why am I arguing as such? What does this argument signal?

This leads to the opinion that, whatever one is willing to say of another’s psychological character and how this is a constituent in their opinion, one must be willing to say it (and allow it to be said) of himself. It seems simply silly that, for all the articles and texts and comments on the internet which bring up studies that document certain biases in reasoning, everyone supposes themselves immune. (This supposition of self immunity seems itself a bias.) This seems the wrong way to go about it. If one’s ideology, or logic of ideas, forces one to be fundamentally at odds with one’s own evolutionarily predicated innate biases, then that ideology is flawed. It is at odds with human nature, and as such any mind inquiring sufficiently into its denotational character must note a lingering contradiction between thought and action. The point is that there should be no such contradiction, for thought is but a specific form of action. Ideological contradiction is, in other words, the purest form of doublethink. It is the inability to reconcile action with thought, or really, to reconcile one’s action with one’s action. It is to live without integrity, if we adopt a quasi-existential manner of speaking.

*But evolution doesn’t care about integrity.* It’s far too shrewd. It doesn’t care what its progenitors think, feel, or believe, so long as it makes one more successful at survival and reproduction. If the preference for sugar cubes, Marxian class analysis, or cream soda happened to make one more fit, then those traits and genes which benefit the development of the acquiring of those things will be selected for. Where civilization depends upon the maintenance of ideas, then evolution is working to make people apt to expressing those ideas.

The only thing with ideas is that they are not static. Where we are otherwise subject to a kind of biased object permanence (think Platonism) with ideas, in reality an idea only exists as it is expressed. I’m not suggesting that distinct utterances of “ $1 + 1 = 2$ ” mean different things ultimately, the meaning of that

expression is only contained in that particular expression. Apart from the material instantiation of its expression, the meaning does not exist. The meaning is not identical to its material constituents of expression (the meaning of this sentence is not in these pixels), but without that material, the meaning is not put forth, and does not actually exist. When we speak of ideas in the abstract sense, we are speaking of things in the sense that we speak of stones falling or gases dispersing in the abstract sense: laws which describe the actions of particular things, but they are not sentences which happen to describe any particular event.

Given this kind of understanding, it is impossible to not subject what others say to an analysis that takes into account every part of where they are coming from and where they are going. What is meant to be signaled? Have they come around to this conclusion through reason, or through association? How would different ideologies interpret such a statement? How would they respond to particular kinds of objections? and so on. Such an analysis, when one enters upon it, inevitably leads to the self-analysis which at once stalls the process of reasoning and explodes it. Almost everything becomes a possibility, but nothing seems meaningful. An ideology cognizant of itself as such (for the power and persuasion of so many others lies in their signaling anti-ideological sentiment) is capable of any other ideology. It may be successful practically by default, for a system that consciously perceives its own operation and goals may manipulate itself to become a system which maximizes to that end, especially where the other ideologies insist on obscuring their own ideological pretensions. An idea that stands under the recognition of how it is formed with reference to a particular logic of ideas must be formed differently than an idea formed to another logic. It can be formed with the intent of denotation, connotation, exosemantic situation, and memetic propagation. The logic of ideas is everywhere human action is essential, for human action never escapes a logic of ideas. To be rational is to be ideated (to have ideas), to have ideas is to be subject to a potentially unelucidated logic of ideas, and this is only to have an ideology. There are no ideas without ideology. It is simply to deny that an idea isn't defined or subject to a logic.

What is the logic of ideas? That is still something under exploration, but it is at least why I propose that neoreaction is not a mere political philosophy. It incorporates far too much and is simply not reducible to the trends and philosophical methodology of modernism. If it's a philosophy, it is at least a philosophy of political philosophy, but without being mere meta-philosophy. It takes different moral and epistemological values for granted, or at least is willing to take other values under consideration in order to navigate an analysis free of subconsciously valued propositions. (Note the relative inability of self-identified liberals to use economic concepts in their reasoning; it's always a moral issue before it's an economic issue.)

If I am right that logic, even if it does not bestow meaning (let us not get confused on precisely what I am *meaning*), is at the highest of considerations for understanding a meaning, a sentence, a sentiment, and especially if I am right that ideology may be analyzed as the logic of ideas, then ideology is the highest and most general classification of understanding. It is even higher than religion/worldview (given my

seminal critique, there is no real difference between the two). Metaphysics, epistemology, and the more basic study of logic all occur within ideology. I'm not sure this means ideas cannot persist in relevantly similar form between ideologies, but it is at least clear that support for some social norm, even if the same in end, does not occur coincidentally with support for that same social norm from another ideology.

What is the place of signaling in this? My point to this end is that an ideology which is open to the proposition of exosemantics may utilize semantics in a way peculiar from other ideologies. An ideology which depends for its power on obscuring its own reality within the mind of its progenitors is limited in that it simply cannot go there. The subject is taboo, for the simple reason that the knowledge could only be incorporated following the complete dissolution of that ideology. In fact, I might propose a "living system of thought." Outside the view of systems of thought as stable, statically existing objects, and much more attuned to an Aristotelian view to the reality of ideas (the meaning is instantiated in the expression), one conceives a philosophy that aims not at a set of "correct answers," but a philosophy that aims at reaching "answers and meanings salient to one's purpose." What one takes as a standard of "truth" or "usefulness" or "meaning" is itself a part of the package, and once one has gone there, one cannot leave it out. The meaning of a sentence under the auspices of a philosophy of meaning cannot mean the same as a sentence without it. This is my goal: a living ideology. It is why I am reticent to give particular answers, but very keen on putting together arguments and ideas that challenge the mainstream and the individual. I want to know, not only what is out there, but why I think I know what I know (and the more I look into it, the more I can only use "knowledge" in a less than perfectly epistemological sense). An answer to everything should include why it's the right answer.

A signal within a community of knowledge discovery/production (I'm leaving it as an open question for now) cannot emerge (that's another open question) without the signal being noticed by the group as a signal, fundamentally changing its character. What is a signal between the signally-aware is not the same as those who accept signals for informing their worldviews yet are unconscious of the work getting done by signals. It opens up a mode of critique to ideas, ideas which we are generally not familiar or comfortable with. "Am I believing this only to express affiliation with this group?" Indeed, it seems the experience of conversion, whether that be to a religion (as understood by modernists), a political view, or something else, can only be explained by this change in desire of expression. One begins signaling in favor of the other group, and that can include a signaling a strong rejection of the identified rival group (I offer for consideration my own antagonism to Protestantism; yes, I am inviting you to psychologize my anti-Protestantism). Under a modernist ideology one might loathe their own signaling (though frankly such a loathing seems very... white), but under a neoreactionary ideology, which seeks to take every inevitability to its own advantage, such signaling can be engineered to a high degree of hierarchy, e.g. one's ability to signal by such a means indicates one possesses a sufficiently high IQ to at least recognize what counts as the means of signaling one's own group affiliation (consider the Austrians and their manner of speaking). Neoreactionary signaling, in other words, requires that one grok neoreaction, to see what is "plain silly fun" and what is "super serious business."

This is where Wittgenstein comes up. Always, it seems in philosophy there is the desire to “get outside one’s own head” and take up a “God’s eye view” of the world. The problem is that there is no such thing. Whatever we can mean by “getting outside one’s own head” we must recognize such a task is absurd, and if there is a “God’s eye view” it must be incommunicable to humans, and that’s assuming we even mean anything by such sentences. The ability to mean things, to have communications express intent between the gulfs of private personhood, is the ultimate question of ideology, and whoever solves that, can control minds as much as they could ever be controlled.