THE
VITAL CENTER

EXPANDING THE LIBERAL CENTER

FOR BLACKS IN AMERICA, HOPE IS EVERYTHING

Ismael Hernandez

PARTIES, PRIMARIES, AND POLARIZATION

Tyler Mruczinski

IS THE GLOBAL SOUTH REVOLTING AGAINST WESTERN PARTIALITY?

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By Thomas D. Howes

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Welcome to our latest issue, "Expanding the Liberal Center." At its core, this issue champions the idea of liberal centrism not merely as an ideology, but as an approach that is vital for the sustainability of our political communities. For this reason, I begin this issue with a brief explanation of what I mean by liberal centrism and why I think it is important to expand the liberal center of US politics.

The second essay, authored by Angel Rodríguez Luño, Professor and Dean Emeritus at a pontifical university and a longtime consultant for the Vatican's doctrinal office, is a revised translation. It delves into the distinction between personal ethics and political ethics, shedding light on debates surrounding postliberalism. While postliberal perspectives often lean toward a paternalistic view of politics, Rodríguez Luño offers a perspective that is better adapted to the reality of modern politics.

We are also very proud to present contributions from the brilliant Ismael Hernandez, Chris R. Morgan, and Tyler Mruczinski, which focus on issues concerning liberalism here in the USA, as well as those of Alexis Carré, Judd Baroff, and Garion Frankel, which deal in different ways with liberalism on the international stage. These are all fantastic essays that our editing team enjoyed reading. We close with insightful reviews by Joseph Stieb and our founding editor, Jeffrey Tyler Syck, as well as two poems by Thomas Banks.

I hope you enjoy reading these contributions as much as I did. May they contribute to the project of rebuilding the liberal centers of our political communities.

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ON LIBERAL CENTRISM

By Thomas D. Howes

The opening of the Estates General on May 5, 1789, in the Salle des Menus Plaisirs, Versailles. The terms 'left' and 'right' emerged that year as members of the National Assembly aligned: supporters of the Ancien Régime to the president's right, and advocates of the revolution to his left. (Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons)

The Cold War is back, and the American people are divided. Radicals on both the left and right support America's <u>enemies</u>, and some even call for <u>national divorce</u>. Amid this intense division, liberalism finds itself under attack. Although there are many on the left and right who still love America and would like it to be there for our kids and grandkids, polarization seems like an intractable problem. And sometimes it seems like we do not have enough true adults to respond to it.

But it is not too late. America has survived foreign invasion, slavery, civil war, reconstruction, and two world wars, and still it stands. And there is a feasible path to survival. But it will take people on both the left and right working together to expand the sensible center of our political communities. This means working to make both political parties more intelligent and competitive; it means accepting short-term imperfection for long-term sustainability; it involves public figures modeling civility and reciprocity, showing respect for processes and norms, and always putting country and moral principle ahead of tribalism. It means embracing what I call liberal centrism.

NOT AN IDEOLOGY OR A COALITION

Liberal centrism, as I defend it here, is not so much an ideology as an *approach*. It is "liberal" in the old sense that connotes both liberty and generosity. This was how it was used by Adam Smith when he <u>wrote</u> of a "liberal plan" for the economy, and by George Washington when he <u>referred</u> to America's "liberal policy" of religious liberty. Centrism, moreover, is inseparable from liberalism. Among other things, it is an attitude in the context of dis-agreement that looks for solutions that everyone can at least live with. Thus, according to this conception of liberal centrism, "liberal" and "centrist" are mutually reenforcing terms. To be centrist is to be liberal, and to be liberal is to be centrist. And there have been plenty of self-described liberals and centrists who see themselves in this way.

The United States is a model context for what I call liberal centrism because it was founded with an emphasis on the basic equality of people, and governance by consent. Moreover, its form of governance, with its separation of powers, checks and balances, and rule of law, provides time-tested tools for resolving conflict peacefully and fairly, and in a way that everyone can live with.

Liberal centrism, in sum, is an approach to politics that is attentive to the health of a political community comprised of equals, and thus it is attentive to respect for the implicit and explicit rules that govern our political relationships.

LIBERAL-CENTRIST POLICYMAKING: COMPROMISE AND CREATIVITY

Any good government is a just government, but as the Duke of Albany puts <u>it</u> in King Lear, "striving to better, oft we mar what's well." The approach I defend recognizes this and seeks to prevent the many injustices that arise from pursuing progress inattentive to the reality of politics. A liberal-centrist approach is also more careful that the tensions of political disagreement are properly mitigated. Sometimes stability requires progress, and other times restraint. In extreme cases, radical measures are necessary to preserve what is worth preserving, as happens in justified revolutions. But often, we give up too much of the health and stability of our political community for gains that can soon enough be wiped away. Liberal centrism looks for progress that is sustainable.

Within a nation, there are frequently strong convictions for policies that are imprudent and that experts find ignorant. This happens, for instance, with economic policy, and populists love to exploit it. A liberal centrist must, however, take into consideration these misguided but strongly held convictions. As <u>scholastic</u> social contract theorists already understood, no one person has natural political authority over others, and all legitimate political authority arises from the implicit or explicit social pact of the community of equals. A wise statesman and a well-designed constitution can temper the community's irrationality, limiting the chaos of daily politics, but they cannot—and should not—ignore the community's will completely if the polity is to be healthy and sustainable. This is not only a moral demand but a practical one. Idealism and impracticality also take away one's opportunity to make the improvements that are politically feasible.

For example, although I am inclined to disagree with Franklin Roosevelt's reforms in the New Deal on <u>economic grounds</u>, the best argument for them was that they might have prevented the more <u>radical</u> politics of Roosevelt's rivals. If this is true, then it is <u>perfectly consistent with liberal centrism—at least a</u>

more center-left form of it—insofar as it looks to make things better in a context of imperfection, attentive to political limitations and other constraints. To be a part of a community of equals requires us to persuade others and often to make compromises. Unfortunately, both leftwing and rightwing radicals often have little faith in persuading their fellow citizens. When they do not get what they want, they abandon the cause of constitutional democracy altogether. But if America is to have a long future, we need more patience and a renewed faith in persuasion. There is no better alternative.

LIBERAL-CENTRIST LEADERSHIP

Our political culture lacks leaders who behave like adults. And today's consumer demand for political entertainment produces something that looks closer to professional wrestling than intelligent discourse. What entertains us are the follies of our political opponents more than any positive and thoughtful alternative. And rather than challenging ourselves to learn, we prefer those who tell us what we already think. On the side of leaders, rhetoric as a tool for truth-sharing has been abandoned and replaced by flattery. Of course, this was always the case to some degree. But there is a growing sense that it has become worse in recent years.

That the importance of leadership goes beyond policy is manifest in the behavior of Donald Trump, whose policy preferences are often shared by center-right Republicans. Yet I doubt even Trump's supporters would call him a centrist. Even before his efforts to pressure officials to overturn the 2020 election, and before the events of January 6, his behavior was a constant source of political chaos. His supporters downplay this, saying Trump's opponents are overreacting to "mean tweets," but he clearly sows division.

We want the USA to survive, and for that reason we need leaders that bring people together, not ones that stoke the flames of animosity and resentment. Instead of Trump, we should look to people like Dwight D. Eisenhower, who carried himself not as the president of his supporters, or even the Republican party, but of the United States of America. Indeed, his public behavior was directed at unifying the country rather than dividing it. And for this he is fondly remembered.

LIBERAL CENTRISM IN THE JUDICIARY

A popular theory of constitutional interpretation on the right is called "originalism"; it takes different forms, but in its most common form it treats as authoritative the original public meaning of the amended Constitution. One strength of originalism is that it recognizes that the judiciary's role is limited and, when dealing with any written law, the judge's role is presumptively to identify the original meaning of that law, not to make a new one. That is compatible with the liberal centrism I have defended. But originalism can be applied in a rather non-centrist way when it is not combined with epistemic humility or sufficient respect for settled procedures and precedent. What is decisive is what is called the "role morality" of the

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> *When [radicals] do not get what they want, they abandon the cause of constitutional democracy altogether. But if America is to have a long future, we need more patience and a renewed faith in persuasion.*

judge, who should be attentive to his or her part in the political community. This requires prudence and cannot be reduced to a simple formula or a technique of historical interpretation. But ultimately it is about showing respect for the judge's own limited authority within the community, a community whose written law and unwritten norms and customs are binding on the judge outside extreme cases that warrant civil disobedience. This is because, as noted already, the judge only has limited authority over others and the authority he or she has is delegated by the community and the social pact that binds it.

The difference between centrist and non-centrist judicial decisions comes out in cases in which the Court exercises judicial review to strike down laws. When text and precedent come together to form a

more certain basis for the judgment to overturn democratic majorities, it is one thing, but when there is a good deal of discretion and uncertainty, judges should recognize their own limited place. Trusting one's own judgment is important in life and poker, but even in the latter one must balance one's certainty against the gains or losses of being right and wrong, and when it concerns the livelihoods of others, one should be even more cautious. As Judge Harvie Wilkinson III argues in his criticism of the Supreme Court's landmark Second Amendment case, *District of Columbia v. Heller*, when it is a close call and there seems to be an element of discretion to a ruling, judges should show deference to other branches of government, if they do not want their own policy preferences to ultimately determine the case. Both conservative and liberal Justices have been guilty in this regard.

Judicial restraint, as it is called, represents a crucial element in a more centrist judicial philosophy. It involves both deference to other branches of government and to the Court's own precedent. There is often ambiguity in the law. James Madison understood that such ambiguities in the Constitution would have to be resolved over time. Sometimes the Court must pro-

During the 2021 storming of the United States Capitol, a gallows erected by the crowd loomed near the Capitol building. (Photo credit: Tyler Merbler via Wikimedia Commons)

-vide tests and interpretive lenses for lower courts so that the law can be functional and applied consistently. And occasionally corrections must be made. A centrist approach errs on the side of precedent and restraint while still faithful to the law according to established and impartial rules of interpretation. It does not look to replace the roles of other branches of government.

A LIBERAL-CENTRIST CULTURE

Finally, a liberal-centrist approach takes on another form at the level of the citizenry and public discourse. An important desideratum for political culture is a shared attentiveness to promoting the health of the political community. This entails giving the "other side" their due, showing reciprocity and civility. A healthy political community is ultimately the responsibility of citizens. In the long run, the way they treat each other will be reflected in their leaders. That is why the effort to build a liberal center starts at the level of political culture.

The "national divorce" some radicals advocate would have disastrous consequences. Part of what makes the United States great is its ability to secure freedom of movement and trade over a large geographical area and to provide domestic peace and security for the same. Thus, America's union is our greatest strength, and our best hope for preserving the union today is by expanding the liberal centers of our federal, state, and local political communities. Moreover, these liberal centers will always include center-right and center-left perspectives. But for both, it requires creativity in improving things without dividing people further. It involves a balancing of decentralization and centralization, of individual liberty and self-government; it also involves commitment to reciprocity and civility, to compromise and prudence, and to taking our losses with patience and our wins with mercy. That is what I mean by liberal centrism, and that is what we need today.

What can be done in the short term? I suggest that the center-left and center-right develop their own caucuses for reforming the major parties. This is much more feasible than most people realize, because only 20 percent of the population votes in primaries. If people from each side produce an effective centrist caucus, that could reduce polarization significantly.

Some partisans will not like this because an improvement to the opposing party makes winning elec-

-tions more difficult. They hope that their party will continue to win indefinitely. But a one-party system is unsustainable. In 1950 the man who wrote the book *The Vital Center*, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., explains <u>why</u>:

> The Republican party, after due meditation in the wilderness, a while ago came forth with a statement of principles […]. A leading Fair Dealer was soon after heard to remark, "What this country needs is an intelligent opposition." Now this wish should not be dismissed as a pious but insincere genuflection to the two-party system. The hard fact is that, while the Democrats may gain short-run benefits from the present absence of competition, thoughtful members of that party understand the long-run dangers from absence of competition. An essential function of a party in our system is to secure the concurrence in our political processes of that part of the community which it represents; and, if a party becomes so feeble and confused that it turns into an object of public pity or contempt, it can no longer assist in securing that concurrence. As a result our whole political fabric suffers; the party itself disappears; and there is no guarantee that any new party which rises in its place will have a basic respect for constitutional processes and public order.

Others hope that a third party, more ideologically based, is the best hope to put a check on the two major parties. But we are de facto a two-party system and that is not changing anytime soon. Without substantial reforms, it is simply baked into the system. At the very least, it would take a long time to develop an alternative. It is therefore much easier and more efficient to build a centrist caucus within each of the two major parties. I would call the rightwing one the Eisenhower caucus. Since only a portion of each side vote in primaries, it would be less difficult than many realize for such caucuses to substantially affect the kinds of candidates that each party promotes.

If that succeeds, then the stakes of each election will go down substantially. We might not like it when the other party takes control, but we will feel more confident that they will at least promote policies and reforms everyone can live with. Most importantly, this will preserve America's beautiful experiment for our children and grandchildren. ∎

Thomas D. Howes is the editor-in-chief of The Vital Center*, a research fellow at the Austrian Institute, and a lecturer at Princeton University. He has recently completed a manuscript provisionally titled* Natural Law & Constitutional Democracy*. He also has a contract with the Acton Institute, along with his co-author James Patterson (Ave Maria), to write a book entitled* Why Postliberalism Failed*.*

PERSONAL ETHICS AND POLITICAL ETHICS

By Ángel Rodríguez Luño
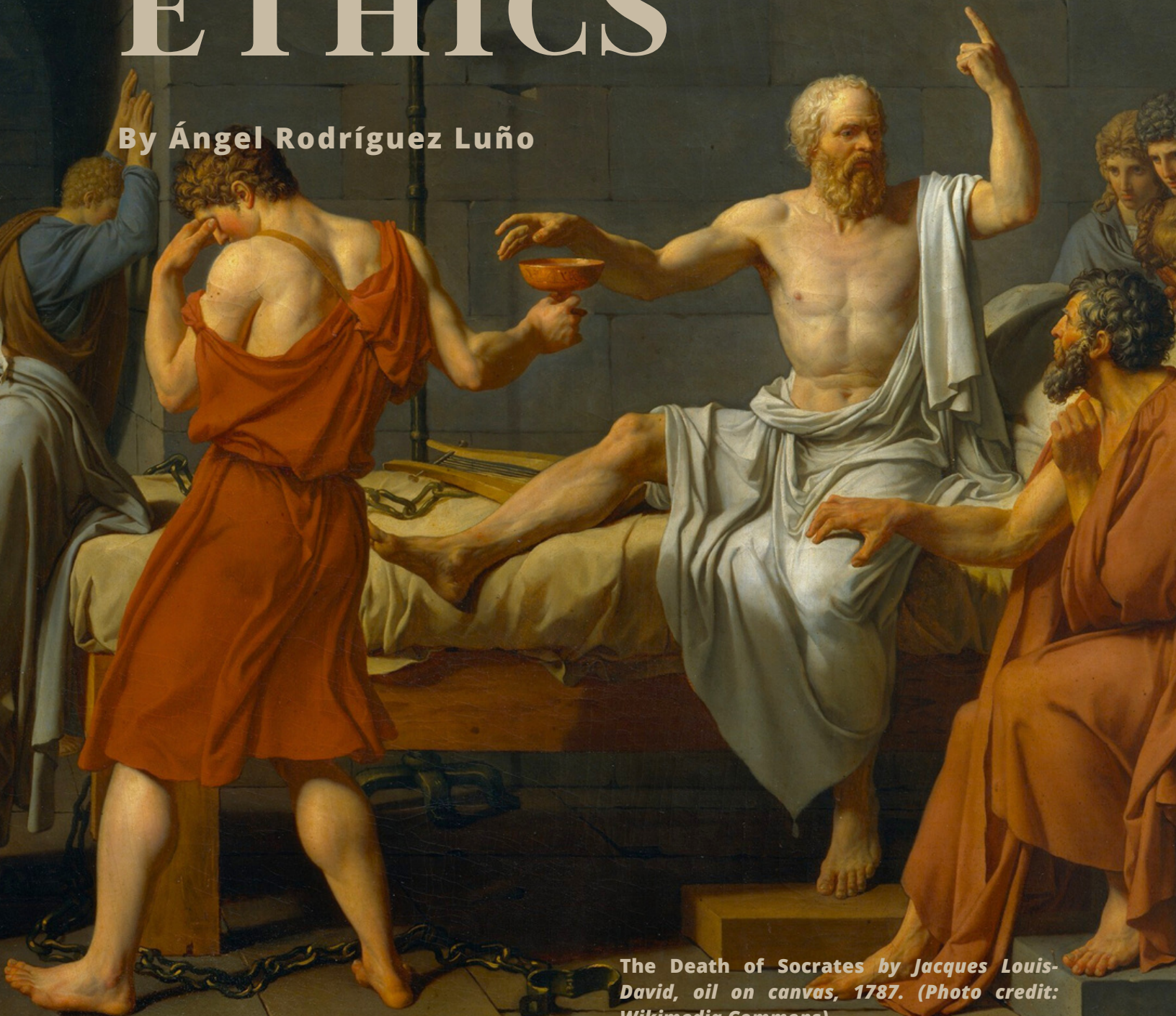
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL ETHICS AND POLITICAL ETHICS

The moral sphere, understood as anything that is not amoral, is equal in extension to that of freedom. Private life as well as professional, economic, and political life are equally moral realities. And thus, together with personal ethics there are also professional ethics, economic ethics, social ethics, and political ethics. I will limit my focus here to the relationship between personal ethics and political ethics. As I understand it, personal ethics concerns a person's conduct as it is ordered towards the good of human life taken as a whole. It is worth asking whether political society has this same aim.

It is easy to see the importance of this issue if one considers, first, that a person's life and ethical development presuppose certain social and political conditions, according to which the state may, by means of coercion, require or prohibit certain behaviors; and second, that personal liberty is one of these conditions—one of the most important. This is why freedom is rightly seen as a fundamental and inalienable right of the person. Thus, the state's use of its coercive power is a rather delicate matter that should be based on criteria of justice, dignity, and practicality—criteria that should be rigorously specified and applied. If this is not done, great personal and political evils will arise.

TWO INADEQUATE SOLUTIONS: ARISTOTLE'S POLIS AND THE MODERN POLITICIZATION OF ETHICS

An inadequate way of resolving the problem consists in thinking that political ethics should be an exact equivalent of personal ethics. This is the type of solution that Aristotle provides for our problem. For Aristotle, the ethical perfection of man is developed and expressed completely and thoroughly within the political realm. The polis and its laws tend toward and, in a way, cause the formation of the citizen's ethical virtues. Hence, the knowledge of what makes the polis good and fair depends on the knowledge of what makes a good and happy life for the individual: ethical virtues are also criteria and objectives of political laws. The good man is equated with the good citizen, in the sense that the individual, insofar as he or she is ordered toward his or her own perfection, is

also ordered toward the polis. This political theory contains notable strengths. It is indeed true that the genesis of virtues and their moral education require a particular form of human community that is unified by a conception of the good, by a common tradition, and by certain shared ethical paradigms. Moreover, it is equally true that social and political relationships, along with their organizational and technical dimensions, will inevitably have an expressive dimension as well. They always express certain conceptions of the human person and of the good, and they propose models that transmit and reinforce in citizens the sense of their identity and the value of their membership to the group.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that the Aristotelian political model, in its original formulation, would prove unsuccessful today for at least three reasons. The first is that with Christianity, the concept of the person enters into play, and the dignity and freedom of the person ultimately rests in a sphere of values that transcends politics. This breaks the organic link between the individual and the polis. As Mario D'Addio puts it, "The Greco-Roman ideal of a political community, which seamlessly merges religious ethical requirements with the more strictly political, becomes impossible after the Christian experience."

Second, today there exists a certain pluralism of conceptions of the human good, so it seems that the political order should look primarily to guarantee to each person and group the conditions of a free, peaceful, and just coexistence. And third, Aristotle's political ideal would entail an unbearable violation of personal freedom and personal morality; it would create a situation of police vigilance and of manifestly unjust governmental interference; it would endow the state with the function of acting as the source and the judge of personal morality—a function and competence it does not possess.

Let us call another inadequate (and currently very widespread) solution *the politicization of ethics*. This represents the opposite extreme to the position just described, and historically it was born as a reaction to that position. The main goal of this second solution is to avoid intolerance, that is, to exclude radical and definitive assessments of personal ethics, which are used to justify an illegitimate use of political coercion. The means adherents have chosen for achieving this goal consists in redefining the object of ethics, claiming that it must deal solely with those rules of justice

that are necessary to guarantee coexistence and social collaboration. Everyone would regulate his or her own personal (or private) life according to personal choices outside of the scope of morality. This problem is certainly important, but it is not well resolved. The distinction between the public and private spheres, or between personal morality and political morality, is relevant and necessary in relation to the powers of the state and of criminal law; however, it is not always easy to establish. Now if that distinction means leaving the private sphere out of the philosophical search for truth, as it inevitably does in the *politicization of ethics*, then it makes the mistake of expelling from ethical reflection what regards the human good. The latter is then dissolved into a set of private choices that would be equally valid despite being contradictory. Because of the effects produced, this solution ends up turning against itself. An ethical vacuum arises from it, and this generates attitudes and habits that are inconsistent with the rules of collaboration and of impartiality that political ethics considers universally binding. The lack of valid ethical motivation leads to the demands of justice being perceived as an external constraint that exasperates, with the consequent situations of *anomie* or *normlessness*.

The *politicization of ethics* is today one of the elements that hinders an adequate understanding of personal ethics. When, for example, from the principle that the police should not intervene if there are unchaste sexual practices taking place at home that are not disturbing anyone, one concludes that such behaviors correspond to personal choices about which ethics has nothing to say, then one has missed the difference between ethical reflection and the penal code. This leads to the same error as the first solution, but now taken in a different direction.

The first solution sacrificed freedom at the altar of the truth of the human good; the *politicization of ethics*, however, sacrifices truth at the altar of freedom. Both solutions presuppose an unsustainable anthropological thesis, namely, that the human, as a being endowed with intellectual knowledge and freedom, contains within himself or herself a contradiction that can be solved only by sacrificing one of the two terms.

It is one thing to assert that whoever says "A" and whoever says "not A" must be equally respected and not discriminated against by virtue of their thought. It is quite another to say that both positions are equally

true, or that philosophical reflection has nothing to say about them. Moral skepticism does not follow from the need to respect everyone; in fact, moral skepticism is ill-suited for providing a foundation for such respect. Nothing can be established upon skepticism.

THE FORMAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN PERSONAL ETHICS AND POLITICAL ETHICS

The solution that seems the most appropriate is very old, although it has gone almost unnoticed in the history of philosophical thought. Suggested by Thomas Aquinas in the opening paragraphs of his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is a

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> *It is clear that when personal behavior gains public relevance, as seen in instances like homicide or serious violence within the family, such behavior ceases to be private.*

different approach to the one discussed throughout the commentary, which is that of Aristotle. Saint Thomas clearly states that within ethics, not everything is political, nor is everything personal or an application of personal ethics. Ethics has three branches: personal ethics, familial ethics, and political ethics. Each of them is moral knowledge, but each of these parts has a specificity regarding its formal object, that is, each has its own logic.

The distinction between personal ethics and political ethics is based on the way in which political society forms a whole: there are actions of political society that result from the collaboration among people in view of the good of the political whole (the common political good); at the same time individuals and groups within political society retain a field of their own ends. Personal ethics concerns all the actions performed by the individual as such, including

those concerning political society (e.g., paying taxes), evaluating their consistency with the good of human life taken as a whole, that is, evaluating their morality, which also includes the virtue of justice.

On the other hand, political ethics concerns the actions taken by political society; that is, it directs the acts by which political society gives itself a form and a constitutional, legal, administrative, and economic organization. It evaluates this form and organization from the standpoint of its own goal for the political community, namely, the political common good. Political ethics is ill-equipped to determine the morality of the actions of the individual as such: rather, this is the task of personal ethics.

Actions of the individual can, however, also be subject to political ethics, but only from the standpoint of their illegality, not from the standpoint of their immorality. Political ethics is concerned with the proper ordering of the life of the community, which requires that goods and personal behavior that are of public interest are protected and promoted by the state, and that personal behaviors that attempt to oppose these goods are also declared illegal. It is the task of political ethics to determine, in view of the political common good and considering all concrete circumstances, which goods should be safeguarded and how, and what negative ethical behavior should be banned and how. In summary, political ethics, in addition to determining the morality or immorality of the actions of the political community (for example, of a civil law or governmental decision) also establishes the illegality of those ethically negative behaviors that threaten the goods whose protection is required by the political common good.

The structure and division of moral theology according to the duties of the human being to God, to himself or herself, to others, and to society, greatly hampers the right approach to the problems of political morality, and this accounts for why moral theology remains caught in a loop today. The duties of man to society are, in fact, duties of personal ethics, usually derived from legal (general) justice. Political ethics is not concerned with the duties of the individual to society, but with what the acts of political society should be. Political ethics evaluates the relationship between the form that society gives itself and the common political good that is its reason for being.

View of the Acropolis from the Pnyx: the official meeting place of the Athenian Democratic Assembly. Painted by Rudolph Müller, 1863. (Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Jacques Maritain proposed a criterion of distinction between personal ethics and political ethics that is closer to what I argue here. Maritain's proposal was based on the distinction between the transcendent ultimate end and the *bonum vitae civilis*, or the good of civil life. His proposal, however, included the defect of having two different criteria to judge the same actions, and judging such actions from different standpoints (a kind of double standard), when in fact personal ethics and political ethics judge different actions: those of the individual, and those specific to political society.

The distinction we have just established might be challenged by the argument that ethics is always personal because it is concerned with free actions, which are always actions of individuals, while society cannot be the subject of a free action. Thus, moral or immoral entities would be, for example, the person or persons responsible for a law or an administrative act, and only secondarily and derivatively the law or the administrative act itself.

Faced with this objection, it should be noted that my distinction does not deny that free actions are actions of one person or a group of persons. Neither does it deny the personal fault of those who make an unjust law or administrative act. It claims, however, that there is a distinction between the political and individual dimension in which free human activity operates. To fully equate both dimensions would be a mistake that could have either hyper-individualistic or collectivist outcomes. For example, in the case that a parliament enacts a tax law that is contrary to the common good, voting officials are morally culpable if they believe the law unjust. They might not be culpable if they think in good faith that the law is just, and the law proves to be harmful to the common good only in the long term. Now, regardless of the personal morality of the officials, such a law has an autonomy, consistency, morality, and effects that all remain even after 150 years of its enactment, after all who voted for it have died. If such a law is harmful to the common good, then it is so even if the officials had not realized that it was unjust. If the economic and social circumstances should change so that the law becomes advantageous to the common good, then the law is just and should not be changed, despite the enactors' evil act. The law can thus be judged independently.

Consider, further, that the legislature is collegial and works according to the principle of political representation. The laws are not those of the individual officials but of the state and, as such, are judged ac-cording to the common good. By means of a parliament elected by the people, it is the political community that gives itself the law: it determines how the community should live and organize itself, which is the subject matter of political ethics. And as already stated, this does not deny that the acts of the officials also possess a personal morality (such officials are honest if their work sincerely seeks the common good, and not when their personal or partisan interest leads them to hold what they know to be harmful to the common good). At this point, we only wish to deny that there is a complete identity between both dimensions of morality, the personal and the political, and we argue that between them there exists a formal difference, which, however, does not undermine the profound unity of ethics.

From the distinction between personal ethics and political ethics, the following consequences arise:

1. No behavior can possess a double moral standard —one for personal ethics and another for political ethics. It would be wrong to think, for example, that lying should be illegal for individuals and legal for the government or state. There is not a double moral standard, because the same phenomenon can never be regulated at the same time and in the same way by personal ethics and by political ethics. Each one of these two parts of ethics has a formally distinct object, and each has formally different moral dimensions.

2. In performing its task, personal ethics and political ethics maintain a close relationship with one another. For example, political ethics could not evaluate the morality of a law dealing with drugs without considering what personal ethics teaches about drug use. Similarly, personal ethics could not specifically determine a person's duties of justice without knowing the laws of the state to which this person belongs, since just laws give rise to personal moral obligations. Additionally, there are behaviors that are only ethically positive or negative because of the law of the state.

3. To the same extent that political society is ordered toward the good of the people, political ethics depends on personal ethics. Thus, political ethics can never consider as good from the ethical-political perspective a law that promotes an ethically negative personal behavior, nor could it permit a law that prohibits an ethically mandatory personal behavior or that mandates a behavior that a person cannot perform without incurring moral guilt.

4. For establishing that a behavior must be prohibited by the state, however, it is not sufficient to show that is ethically negative, as it is universally admitted that not all morally wrong acts should be punished by the state. It must be demonstrated that such behavior, in addition to being negative from the perspective of personal ethics, is detrimental to the common good, and that the same common good does not provide any reason whatsoever to advise tolerance here and now. For the same reason, it is also not fitting to conclude that the fact that the state does not penalize that behavior means it is ethically good, or at least not negative.

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> *Insofar as we are human, we are faced with two problems: we must live well and we must live together. Living well is more important; living together is more essential, because only together can we live and live well.*

Some examples and applications can better clarify what I am saying. When a person raises the issue of whether to pay all or part of his or her taxes, this is a problem of personal ethics, which must be assessed also in light of just civil laws. But when the issue arises of whether the state should continue with the current tax system or whether it should make major reforms, we have a problem of political ethics that should be evaluated according to the requirements of the common good. A problem that concerns political ethics is, for example, evaluating how school or health-care systems are organized. Political ethics is not competent, by contrast, to deal with the morality of prostitution, since it is an issue that falls neither to the parliament nor to the state. But presupposing that

such behavior is immoral, political ethics must, in conformity with the common good, evaluate the stance that the state must assume with respect to this phenomenon. And depending on the circumstances, it may be politically just to grant a certain tolerance, provided that it always prosecutes organizations that force people into prostitution.

There may be circumstances that warrant tolerance, such as the cohabitation of a couple who are not married. Political ethics, however, considers out of bounds any codification of these de facto unions or their legal assimilation with marriage, as this would assign a public (social) interest to something that corresponds to exclusively private concerns and is not subject to legal regulation aimed at ensuring the social function of marriage. Those who choose a lifestyle that does not aim to contribute to the social interest cannot reasonably claim recognition and legal guardianship of a public nature that is based on such social interests. Naturally, people who live in a de facto union enjoy all rights and services that the state offers to its citizens and have at their disposal all the institutions and benefits guaranteed by private law. What political ethics does not allow is for these people to enjoy the rights and benefits of the legal institution that they reject. In our thesis that the state cannot approve negative behavior from the standpoint of personal ethics, it may be argued, for example, that a law decriminalizing small lies or small domestic quarrels could be a good law. Such an argument would not make much sense, because it does not respect the distinction between the personal and political spheres. Small lies and small domestic quarrels are not relevant to the political common good—that is, they are not within the purview of the state—and therefore, the civil law does not deal with such behavior: with respect to them, the state must simply be silent.

Naturally, if the law is silent about these actions, then it is clear that they are not prohibited by law and, therefore, it is arguably implied that they are permitted. It may, however, be unfair for the state to explicitly approve them, because that would mean that the existence of a private and personal sphere comes by grant from the state (totalitarianism), when in fact the existence of a personal and private sphere of citizens, in which the state cannot intervene, is a natural right that the state is obliged to recognize and respect. In any case, it is clear that when personal behavior gains public relevance, as seen in instances

like homicide or serious violence within the family, such behavior ceases to be private.[1] ∎

ENDNOTE

[1] The curious reader can find our position in Ángel Rodríguez Luño, *Introducción a la ética política* (Madrid: Rialp, 2021).

Ángel Rodríguez Luño is Professor Emeritus and former Dean in the School of Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. An expert in ethics and moral theology, he has also served as a consultant to the Dicastery (formerly the Congregation) for the Doctrine of the Faith since 1993.

FOR BLACKS IN AMERICA, HOPE IS EVERYTHING

By Ismael Hernandez

Hope is everything. <u>Aristotle once said</u> that wonder lies at the beginning of philosophy, and it seems to me that similarly hope lies at the beginning of human flourishing. A people without hope languishes and then perishes. It is in the languishing that we can see the most desperate of all human conditions, as those who struggle cannot see the landscape of possibilities that lies ahead. Their subjectivity—their capacity to be a subject that acts rather than an object that is acted upon—is impaired by fear and by assumptions about their destiny that rob their future. They are deceived to think that hope is a punishment, a dangerous sentiment to be avoided so as to escape disappointment.

Thomas Aquinas makes it clear that hope is both an emotion or sensible attribute and a rational quality. Ultimately, hope as a rational quality is a theological virtue, because the object pursued is God himself. Union with the *summum bonum* is apprehended by the mind, which instructs our will to move us toward it. As a sensible attribute, however, hope experiences and desires a lower good through the mediation of senses. Proximately, hope is an emotion responding to the reality of sensible goods, which we recognize and stretch toward in their pursuit because they are authentically good. The theological virtue and the passion are distant from each other, but they share an affinity because both move us toward something worth searching for. The emotion paves the way, so to speak, to union with God but, in the here and now, motivates us to find the goods that surrounds us as we journey toward finality. How can a people live without <u>that impulse</u>? Hope is an assured expectation and trust that moves us to act in ways that align with our human existence. As such, hope is teleological, the substance of our purpose in life. Hope and purpose are sisters because hope is saying yes to purpose.

The very existence of Black people in this country is an icon of hope. Striving against overwhelming odds, they survived the alienating experience of being severed from their kin group by local enemies and sold to complete strangers who shipped them like cargo. Then came the dreadful middle passage and the beginning of new hardships. The journey stimulated the creation of a new identity in a foreign land. Being in bondage in Africa was followed by ignominious slavery in America, but the enslaved never abandoned their effort to reduce their marginality and resocialize within a new community. Fugitive slaves braved dan-gerous escape attempts, but the mass of slaves simply worked day in and day out while raising their families under terrible circumstances, while not even legally owning their own bodies or the fruits of their labor. They tried to *learn* and *build* in hopeful expectation, even when there was no good reason to expect a better life. Still, they hoped and envisioned the day when they not only would enjoy corporate status within America but even experience personal freedom—a privilege denied to both slaves and most non-slaves all over the world.[1] In his autobiography, <u>*Up from Slavery*</u>, Booker T. Washington gives us a glimpse of the hope that fermented in the heart of every slave:

> I had no schooling whatever while I was a slave, though I remember several occasions I went as far as the schoolhouse door with one of my young mistresses to carry her books. The picture of several dozen boys and girls in a schoolroom engaged in study made a deep impression upon me, and I had the feeling that to get into a schoolhouse and study in this way would be about the same as getting into paradise.

Having been deemed subhuman chattel, this people still strived and hoped. Their slavery was but the scenery in the drama of their perseverance. That scenery should never be given any protagonism, as if Blacks were objects of forces instead of subjects of meaning and purpose. Hope came from the strong inner core of their beings as they forged their American identity. That identity owes more to the shared spiritual and moral strength formed through their experience than to the degradations imposed on them. Although outwardly it seemed as if their worth derived from the practical utilitarian exigencies of being possessed by another, <u>in reality it came from within</u>, and that inner worth was indestructible.

THE SOURCE OF HOPE, AND ITS ABANDONMENT

For a people to have hope they must know what the good is. The good, after all, consists of those intelligible, right, and desirable qualities we perceive in things. The good must be knowable and reachable, and the habit of pursuing it is called *virtue*. Virtue is a difficult, arduous apprenticeship because often our

lower inclinations fight against the dictates of reason. Yet, it is possible to reach it. Just imagine how desperate human existence would be if we could perceive these necessary qualities only as empty abstractions. Despair would constitute the very essence of our existence as we long and pursue the unattainable. The gods must be cruel in giving us the sensible capacity of knowing that these desirable qualities exist but forever denying our access to them.

The passion of hope is simply the human inclination toward the pursuit of the goods of this world as we journey into eternity. This passion exists because it is connected to certain truths about the human constitution. The historic conception of human nature tied an "ought" to the reality of an "is." There is a law written in the heart of human nature—a law that, as the fifth-century presbyter Lucidus described it, is "the first grace of God" (See in this regard, Russell Hittinger's *The First Grace*: "The natural law is said to be 'the first grace of God' [*per primam Dei gratiam*] before the coming of Christ [*in adventum Christi*])." In

Booker T. Washington in 1905. (Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons)
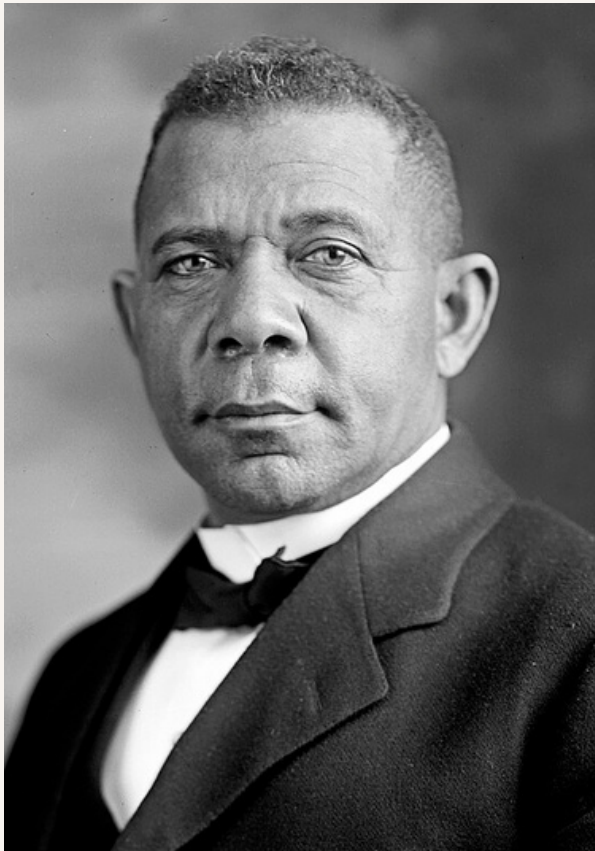
pursuing these goods we can develop habits of action that perfect the nature of human beings. The danger of the skepticism that now informs our body politic is its distrust of the very existence of purpose built into the fabric of human nature—because it assumes that there is no human nature. There seem to be only ideas in our minds, which threaten to dissolve the good within empty words and rationalizations about power struggles expressed in *narrative discourse*. This type of discourse provides a structured conception of anecdote; that is, it is a type of fiction.[2] In this view, humans produce meaning by way of anecdote, which is prior in the mind and not in the nature of things. We discover nothing about ourselves, we create everything; we invent meaning and purpose and impose it via power. Now, if there is not a knowable and objective world of values and virtues, how can the contemplation and pursuit of goods such as justice, beauty, and goodness be possible? Can we have authentic hope? If *ought* cannot be derived from *is*, then what is the basis for human action, right and wrong, legal systems, or virtuous living? In the hands of a skeptical culture, hope dies, while the hordes sing revolutionary songs and praise the death of the old order where reason was not merely the slave of our passions.

In the history of Western thought, it was the nominalist conceptions of Thomas Hobbes that rendered human reason utterly incapable of knowing universals. In his hands, reason became merely an instrument to arbitrarily assign meaning to words. These words bear no necessary relationship with reality. They introduce order into the chaos of purposeless existence. Men are driven by passions—raw, destructive, selfish, and wicked—and our destiny is to live a life that is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." In Hobbes's *De Homine*, as Russell Hittinger points out, Hobbes presents men in architectonic fashion; men are reduced to particles of accumulated matter, mere modes of material quantity without a telos or end. A human being is a "stimulus-response mechanism that endeavors to augment its power." In the *status naturalis* the human condition is one of "war of every man against every man" because existence is little more than a struggle for power. That status needs to be superseded by a covenant, *a status civilis*, where men look to the political sovereign as the savior of their condition, investing him with power by depriving themselves of freedom.

The assault on the Aristotelian and Thomistic con-

-ceptions of human nature continued with thinkers like David Hume and Jeremy Bentham. Later, a climax was reached with Immanuel Kant, from whom the German idealism of Johann Fichte, F. W. Schelling, and its most reputed figure, G. W. F. Hegel, sprang. The pedigree of skepticism could not be complete without Nietzsche and his "will to power." As philosopher Samuel Gregg explains, "Nietzsche believed that man had to recreate his own nature, to become the one who realizes that if there is no truth, the only thing left to do is act." From this philosophical tradition, Karl Marx emerges to continue the enterprise.

Since then, we have descended into a neo-Marxist and postmodernist erasure of hope by way of radical claims about what it means to be human. Anthropology remains at the heart of all our controversies. Human goods, if they exist, we are told, do not derive from inherent facts about human nature. All goods are socially construed because there is no given human nature. Everything is given to us by the social imposition of a law that, similar to Hobbes's nominalism, dictates meaning, purpose, and goodness. We are in a war of one against the other, because war is all there is in the pursuit of power. Human beings do not think or feel, nor is reason "the sovereign architect of the order of knowledge," as Kant put it (See Rommen, *The Natural Law*, 78). Humans are beings only because we assign that meaningless label to the facticity of purposeless matter.

Absent such a thing as nature itself,[3] there is no human nature and, of course, no *summum bonum*. Absent human nature, there are no objective goods to pursue, human or otherwise. In the absence of goods, there is no hope. Absent hope, there is no impetus for habits to pursue its objects—that is, there is no virtue. It follows that theories and visions recognizing power as the key element in social, political, cultural, and racial interaction are unable to offer hope to a people whose very social identity was built by hope. They cannot assist us in the creation of a flourishing environment where there is a strong protection for the dignity of human beings. The fate of Black Americans and of all human beings lies in the dictates of the powerful, and as such, we remain within the slavery system's paradigm. Maybe today those with power deign to recognize our dignity, maybe tomorrow they rescind it. Modern neo-Marxist theories sprung from more ancient errors can only offer antagonism as the instrument to acquire power in a journey undertaken

by beings who are no more than curious accumulations of atoms destined for nothingness. Hope is reduced to an insubstantial word that gives us a good feeling.

As we see, the death of hope has a history. That history left crumbs in a trail of the deconstruction of the most basic tenets of human dignity, one that differs little from the racist ideologies that perpetrated some of the most injurious attacks on Black dignity. The main political, cultural, and intellectual patterns of thought and action in the West today are patterns of deconstruction. Our epistemology is being altered and with it the patterns of thought that seek to classify and explain entities. This transformation thus leads to a change in our ontology. Claims about the nature of being and existence are altered and with them claims

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> *Theories and visions recognizing power as the key element in social, political, cultural, and racial interaction are unable to offer hope to a people whose very social identity was built by hope.*

about the most important object of inquiry: man himself. We seem to no longer know what reality is nor what the human person is in the context of existence. Inevitably, our praxis is changing, both legally and culturally. Due to this shattering activity, we can barely recognize ourselves.

What is the basis for this deconstruction? I believe that it is an amalgamation of various schools of thought, in tension with each other but all intent on bringing about a brave new world through the exorcism of wishful thinking. Both structuralist and post-structuralist theories are in the recipe, vying for power over our collective consciousness. On the one hand we have the structuralist Hegelian understanding of being and social change via its Marxist rendition. For Hegel, the history of social change was the history of the evolution of the *Geist*, that is, a process of negation and incorporation of ideas to produce a synthesis

that dominates an era. The dominant ideas of a time are the *Zeitgeist* of that period. Hegel believed that these changes had a logical pattern, because within the dominant ideas of a time there were necessary contradictions and challenges that eventually moved into tension and transformation. Hegel called the process of building a new paradigm of ideas that contains both the previous dominant ideas and their negation, sublation. A new set of ideas emerges, victorious but containing all previous ideas within it. There is a logical pattern at play as humanity grows in knowledge.

Karl Marx took Hegel's basic structure and determined that what is at the heart of social change is not the ideas of a time but the dominant patterns of economic production. These dominant patterns benefited a given social class that in logical and scientific evolution contained within itself the seed of discord. Just as the *Geist* gave rise to a new set of ideas for Hegel, for Marx the dominant class gave rise to an antagonistic class following a logical and scientific necessity. The key for society to move forward was power, acquired through radical and violent change, through revolution. Moreover, both the Hegelian and the Marxist systems saw the various cultural, political, linguistic, and economic forces within an era as emanations or epiphenomena of a basic element at the base of social reality. In Hegel, this irreducible element was the *Geist*, and in Marx it was social class.

Of all challenges to the Western tradition of thought, the most successful in practical terms was the Marxist. But something happened to Marxism in the course of time. After the death of Marx, as fundamental Marxist predictions failed to come to fruition, a number of alternative explanations for these failures contended with one another for power. [4] Meanwhile, the revolutionary activism of Marxism brought about great upheaval in all of Europe, culminating in the Communist takeover of Russia. Now we had more than theories of social change—there was actual change.

MARXISM IN BLACK AMERICA

In Black America, orthodox Marxism came to dominate minor sectors of the Black intellectual class early on, with W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson serving as prime examples.[5] The excesses of Leninism and later Stalinism in Russia made it necessary to explain not only Marx but the Soviet debacle itself. In the United States, the "New Left" emerged after the death of Stalin in 1953 and constituted a revival of hopes for a metamorphosis of socialism. Marxists fantasized that at last the solution to the conundrum of the mixture of socialist economics with a totalitarian state was at hand. The Promethean project of a new reign of justice was finally possible. The cause of Blacks became the most important axis of that aspiration, because it embodied the most severe aspects of capitalist oppression. Eventually, a challenge to the more reformist approach of Dr. Martin Luther King emerged within the Civil Rights Movement—a development that was informed by the ideas of the New Left.[6] Although not all challenges to King's leadership were Marx-inspired, the Marxist type seems to have eventually dominated this alternative movement.[7] Anti-Americanism and classic Marxist theory continued to inform this transformation of the movement, but elements of neo-Marxist thought were present and moving fast. Race began to be conceived not as an epiphenomenon of class but as a basic reality of identity, irreducible to any other element. Racial identity rather than class consciousness became the focus. "Whiteness" became the principal scourge of humanity. The key to solving the problem of capitalist oppression was to "abolish the white race."

Some new theories emerging within Marxism seem to propose a return to a more Hegelian system. In a twist, there is now a desire to return to the younger Marx, the more Hegelian Marx, to induce an epistemic revolution. This recovery of a more primitive Hegelianism does not conclude with the postmodern erasure of identity or its elitist and academic attitude of nihilistic despair at the state of existence, which envisions no political solution. The postmodern critique has been infused with a tool for action, a new praxis, with identity as the weapon. Identity, now collectivized and expanded into multiple axes, serves as the engine for social action under a new designation: "social justice." As power and knowledge determine social reality, activism is the new sacrament conveying the indelible mark of authentic revolutionary zeal. The new "liberationist paradigm" is being internalized within the whole culture. Its task of separating identity from biology remains, but identity is now seen as formed

against the backdrop of oppressive social constructs such as knowledge, language, and power, all of them exploited by the powerful.

The ideas of an era as expressed in its culture are seen now as essential to bringing about the revolution, and these various axes are not reducible to class. Each of them is grounded at the base of social reality within a maze of oppressive silos. Among the movements advocating these new theories we find the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, Gramscian theories commonly known as cultural Marxism, and what we can loosely call the "Social Justice" movement. A thousand cuts into the bleeding body of Western civilization will cause its death.

What remains as the key tying thread in this revolutionary enterprise is the *will to power*. Gone is any totalizing metanarrative that explains change, such as Marx's metanarrative of class conflict. Gone

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A post-structuralist mood has increasingly taken hold over the whole enterprise of revolution. A will to power is now expressed in a refusal to be governed even by the nature of reality.

is the certainty that there is a coherent or even scientific logic to social change. Among the many silos of the revolution, a post-structuralist mood has increasingly taken hold over the whole enterprise of revolution. A will to power is now expressed in a refusal to be governed even by the nature of reality. Everything we once took for granted is to be challenged because all of it is oppressive. Objective reality, traditional morality, morality itself, and even the very understanding of being are social constructs that create social law imposed by power.

What is more radical, and frightening, is that the changes bringing about a new phase in history—or to use Foucault's terminology, a new episteme—are random. There is no logical, transformative structure to the breaks between one epoch and another. There are

no rules governing revolutionary phases, as there were in orthodox Marxism. An epistemology of random discontinuity is supreme. The reign of unpredictability and radical and maddening disjunction is here. All that matters is the devastating hurricane of change and the radical view of the human person's identity described ideologically. Blackness becomes a raw decree from those in power, the idolatry of ideology consuming all and erasing or adding melanin at will. Grand theory necessitates an order in the mind, a rational assessment of processes; the new departure requires only what Nietzsche identified as key to social existence: the will to power. Critical theory applied to the question of race is an example of the will to power that rejects the need for a coherent metanarrative with logical sequence. Revolution does not need coherence, it needs activism. As Carl Trueman writes, "All previous metanarratives have, for good or ill, attempted to provide the world with stability, a set of categories by which cultures can operate." The new radicalisms reject the need for an epistemology that is seen as part of the very system whose eradication is sought. As Noelle Mering tells us, "The point is to destabilize, fragment, and eradicate hierarchy, history, meaning, and fundamental human identity."

Black feminist thought generated the most radical notions of neo-Marxism now informing our notions of race. Black feminists began to analyze the roles of class, sex, and race as distinct forms of oppression. Early on, feminists had analogized sexism and racism. In 1904, Mary Church Terrell emphasized that in the double jeopardy of sex and race, Black women had the lower hand because they were women: "Not only are colored women […] handicapped on account of their sex, but they are almost everywhere baffled and mocked because of their race. Not only because they are women but because they are colored women" (Quoted in Deborah King's "Multiple Jeopardy Multiple Consciousnesses," 265). Reflecting the longstanding competition for the lowest position in the paradigm of oppression, by 1988 Black feminist Deborah King observed, "Still others have suggested that heterosexism or homophobia represent another significant oppression and should be included as a third or perhaps fourth jeopardy." Her words witnessed the emergence of additional claims of similar oppressed axis status that now number in the dozens.

The claim for special status for blackness in the

kaleidoscope of oppression is based on the belief that the equations of oppression are not additions, as if each axis is subsumed identically. Instead, in the interdependence of multiple axes there might be a hierarchy. Of such importance is race that Black women were seen as marginalized not only within the larger culture but also within the feminist movement itself. Today, many claim identities in the gender realm that conflict with their genetic sex, but the notion that similar claims could be made against racial determinants remains inconceivable.

So radical is this system of multiple axes of oppression where race appears to remain as primary in a maze of identities that only Blacks can explain the significance of their oppression. And, as race is an ideological construct, Blacks are only those whose consciousness aligns with the progressive political and racial zeitgeist, giving them an epistemically privileged position. Objectivity in the analysis of social reality is merely the academic expression of oppression by a system informed by Whiteness through a "Euro-centric-Masculinist knowledge validation process."

This process determines everything with one aim in mind: the maintenance of the balance of power. Liberation only comes by rejecting the mirage of objectivity and acknowledging the epistemic advantage of members of the oppressed group, whose perspective cannot be questioned without unjustly injuring them. The epistemology of scientific research, called *positivist* by radical feminists, is challenged because it requires distance between the inquirer and the subject of inquiry. Patricia Hill Collins rejects the scientific method because it "asks African American women to objectify themselves, devalue their emotional life, displace their motivations for further knowledge about Black Women, and confront in an adversarial relationship, those who have more social, economic and professional power than they." In other words, what Black feminists proposed and later has been extended to the entire spectrum of social science including questions of class, gender, and race, is adherence to collectivist and unfalsifiable ideological epistemology.

"A return to the person—unique and unrepeatable, with the *imago Dei* imprinted in our being—is the critical step away from the nightmarish idealism of radicalism and all its monsters."

A RETURN TO THE PERSON

Abandoning the totalistic poison of neo-Marxism will help us fight the politics of despair and bring hope to our people. A return to the person—unique and unrepeatable, with the imago Dei imprinted in our being—is the critical step away from the nightmarish idealism of radicalism and all its monsters. I abandoned these monsters long ago, as I journeyed from my island of Puerto Rico to southern Mississippi. I was a young, Black, communist kid who hated America, landing in Dixie! Here, over time, I was confronted with new ideas and a new experience. A new anthropological lens allowed me to realize that I was not merely a drop in the ocean, whose dignity existed strictly within the wave of revolution. I was instead a subject whose dignity was intrinsic and not determined by being a specimen of a group. That experiential encounter with liberty is the antidote against radicalism. Although my new home was an imperfect country by any measure—all societies are—I discovered that I was not a cog, a replaceable component part in a faceless mass of humanity. I am a free, volitional, and rational being who is capable of self-determination and irreducible to a mere component. Our task in Black America is to help people discover the grandeur of their personal dignity, one that inheres in them, not one bestowed on them by external agents. When we create a context for our uniqueness to express itself, an amazing and undirected process of improvement begins.

Liberty as the sum of all our freedoms can come only from newly reaffirming an old anthropology that recognizes our capacity to scrape into the dirt of the ground and, through the sweat of our brow and the insights of our minds, create value for ourselves and for others. When we create the context of liberty and systems that reflect the rational and volitional nature of every person, we discover a universe of possibilities and poverty ceases to be destiny. The poor are no longer merely mouths to be fed, bodies to be clothed, and problems to be solved. We also understand that our race is not at the heart of our identity. Every small step opens up a tiny new realm for the possibility of truly autonomous action. We must believe this, proclaim it boldly, and teach it widely. Even more importantly, we must help people experience this reality through simple and practical projects that position them, as individuals, as protagonists of their

development, instead of remaining passive, like scenery in the drama of historic forces outside their control or tokens of pity or magnanimity. We are not drops in a wave. We are an ocean of possibilities. ∎

ENDNOTES

[1] As Orlando Patterson shows, the idea of personal freedom as a value was envisioned by many in the non-Western world but became an institutional value only in the West. The condition of belonging, participating, and being protected by society was a universal aspiration of slaves attempting resocialization within the master's community all over the world, but personal independence and freedom was never realized institutionally. Yet, in America, the slave observed from afar the exercise of personal freedom as a dim possibility, harboring hope for it. Orlando Patterson, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

[2] Narration is the accurate exposition of actual events, and narrative is the exposition of things as though they happened. Narratives prefer the use of anecdote to showcase a central theme or meta-narrative. Anecdote is preferred by adherents of postmodern and critical theory because objectivity, in their view, is a phantom. The "truth" that must become central to social interaction is the story of the oppressed, told through their experience and interpretation. A good example of the use of narrative discourse at the service of an ideology is Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

[3] A problem with the concept of nature is its multiple overlapping meanings. What is often denied in modern philosophy is the idea that things have a basic essence, namely, the qualities that make a thing what it is. These qualities inhere in the thing itself and point toward a purpose. For a summary of the five meanings of nature, see John Habgood, *The Concept of Nature* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 2002), part 1.

[4] Instead of the increased pauperization of the proletariat caused by the internal alienating forces of capitalism, Europe began to experience the emergence of a middle class. Another set of questions in revisionism surrounded the question of tactics and the relationship between the revolutionary class and the bourgeoisie. Lenin was involved in both aspects of

revisionism by proposing the theory of imperialism as the final stage of capitalism to explain the development of a European middle class and by proposing the theory of the united front tactic on the question of alliances with the bourgeoise class.

[5] Du Bois's support for Marxism created problems with the NAACP leadership, and he left the organization 1948. He ran as the Progressive Party's candidate for Senate in 1950 and eventually became known for his defense of <u>Joseph Stalin</u>'s regime. In 1961 Du Bois officially joined the American Communist Party before leaving the country to live in Ghana. Robeson similarly defended Stalin. See James Kirchick, "Paul Robeson Was an Unrepentant Stalinist. Rutgers Should Acknowledge That," *Washington Post*, February 19, 2019.

[6] In addition to these early Marxists, there were other prominent Marxists such as Lucy Parsons, James W. Ford, Amiri Baraka, Angela Davis, and Huey Newton. Movements such as the Communist Party USA, the Black Panther Party, and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers were important outlets for Black revolutionaries.

[7] Malcolm X's approach is a good example of a non-socialist alternative to that of King. As James H. Cone puts it, "Although Malcolm was open to learn from anyone who was concerned about liberation of humanity from oppression, he was primarily a black revolutionary and not a Marxist revolutionary." James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 184–85.

An abbreviated version of this essay appears in a forthcoming collection of essays to be published by the Woodson Center. The author is grateful for the permission to publish the longer form here.

Ismael Hernandez *is the President of the Freedom and Virtue Institute.*

IS THE GLOBAL SOUTH REVOLTING AGAINST WESTERN PARTIALITY?

By Alexis Carré

In the past four months, a wide range of experts and diplomats expressed concern about the West's vocal support for Israel, claiming that it is undermining its efforts in the Global South to build support for Ukraine, and, beyond that, for a rules-based international order. They find paradoxical allies on the right in those who contend that loyalty to Israel is indeed incompatible with maintaining significant support for Ukraine while leaning in favor of the former. But loyalty is not the main foundation on which those experts and diplomats lay their claim. They mostly refrain from moral or political arguments in favor of either side of the conflict. Their wariness at supporting Israel is thus not an endorsement of Hamas or the Palestinian cause broadly understood, but a statement of priority and pragmatism. What they do suggest then, whether implicitly or explicitly, is that, had we condemned or distanced ourselves from Israel's reaction to Hamas's assault on its soil, we would have maintained our credibility with key partners and preserved our interest. One aspect of that claim, that sympathy for Israel should not entail undersigning whatever retaliatory action it might decide to carry out, seems fairly uncontroversial. It also speaks to the virtues of the "neutral and benevolent" observer, which probably explains some of its appeal. But it further implies that the West's partiality in the case of Israel would be, or so the story goes, what prevents others from acting justly in the case of Ukraine. However reasonable that argument might appear on its face, the change of attitude it suggests, or the attitude it would have required us to adopt in the past months, betrays its failure to grasp the nature of the international situation today and the motivations of those who act or refuse to act on account of the West's alleged hypocrisy.

Let us first note that support for Ukraine in the "Global South" was never strong, despite our best efforts. What is true was that some countries could be convinced to adopt a helpful but passive neutrality toward a war that remained outside the sphere of their most immediate concerns. Such an attitude was largely facilitated by the benefits several of those countries anticipated from trading with Europe and the US, particularly what the latter could no longer or were unwilling to obtain from Russia and China.

In the Middle East, the policy of Arab states was also not essentially determined by Western exemplarity. Rather, the situation in Palestine had been dormant for some time, and Arab states could now

publicly present the argument that Iran's claims to leadership in the region constituted a greater threat to them than Israel ever was or intended to be. As the Iranian nuclear deal indicated diminishing Western resolve for a hard containment, it became increasingly justifiable for Arab states to acknowledge that Israel was an objective and indispensable partner in their strategy against Tehran. As far as Ukraine was concerned, Israel itself had remained cautious in its support, and Arab countries were happy to provide the oil and gas Russia was no longer selling to Europe without antagonizing Moscow by taking a hard political stance on the heart of the issue. It is that very dynamic (which seemed to have stabilized the region) that Iran used to turn the reasons for peace against peace itself.

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> *It is therefore doubtful that any level of moderation on our part, short of flatly siding with the attackers, would have preserved the credibility that is of such concern to those well-meaning realists.*

It would thus be a mistake to understand the reactions currently unfolding in what these experts call the Global South as the result of any attitude we should have refrained from adopting. These reactions served our enemies' interest and were always part of their plan in enabling Hamas' build up. Helping reactivate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict offered Iran and Russia an opportunity to force Ukraine's allies onto the scene of another conflict where neutrality was known to be inconceivable for most of the populations of the Global South. Indeed, regardless of our actions, Israel is already considered a creation of Western powers by large swaths of those populations that do not recognize its right to exist. It is therefore doubtful that any level of moderation on our part, short of flatly siding

with the attackers, would have preserved the credibility that is of such concern to those well-meaning realists. No degree of involvement "against" Israel, or "in favor" of the Palestinians, that was politically acceptable for Western societies, could conceivably match the expectations of the Global South regarding the end of this conflict. There is thus no scenario in which our attitude would not conflate, in the minds of many, both wars into a single manifestation of Western hypocrisy; from the standpoint of these populations, so long as it rejects the political conclusions of its professed sympathy for the sufferings of the Palestinians while accepting them in the case of Ukraine, the West will be deemed deceitful. Rather than restore our credibility in pursuing a shared goal, the type of moderation that the realists are calling for will be perceived as an expression of the West's lack of commitment to its own goals when those happen to not align with the Global South. It will indeed confirm that the West *needs* to be deceitful–and speak empty phrases—because it is weak—or incapable of acting.

The advocates of moderation overlook the obvious fact that, beyond this particular conflict, support for a rules-based international order had been collapsing for more than a decade. The series of coups in Africa, increasing Houthi activity in the Suez canal, Azerbaijan's aggression of Armenia, and Venezuela's increasingly bold claims on a sizeable part of Guyana, did not happen because the West was perceived to be on the wrong side of any conflict. They happened because cliques of ambitious men with the necessary means at their disposal thought now was the time to exploit Western powers' incapacity to intervene, due to the diversion of their resources elsewhere and to the general perception that their societies altogether lacked the moral capacity, the courage if you will, to use force in the event that those resources would still be available.

The chaos now unfolding confronts us with the vacuity of the longstanding hope that entire regions could be stabilized through peaceful means like negotiations, foreign aid, and sanctions, without exposing Western powers to the need for costly and demanding political action. The policy based on those means consisted (with more or less success) in convincing the ruling class of these countries that they would be better off following the rules of the international order than opting for violent and authoritarian means. As history is once again on the move, these tools' capacity to influence the conduct of these countries is vanishing at a surprising pace. The appearance of order, which claimed these instruments as evidence of its credibility, now reveals itself to have been, if not entirely fictitious, at least incredibly more fragile than we thought. The reality that such an order concealed, or that hostile actors felt they could see through the veil of discourse, was that the West, with all its wealth and might, could still help or hinder

World map depicting the Global South in red and the Global North in blue. (Created with mapchart.net)

Global South
Global North
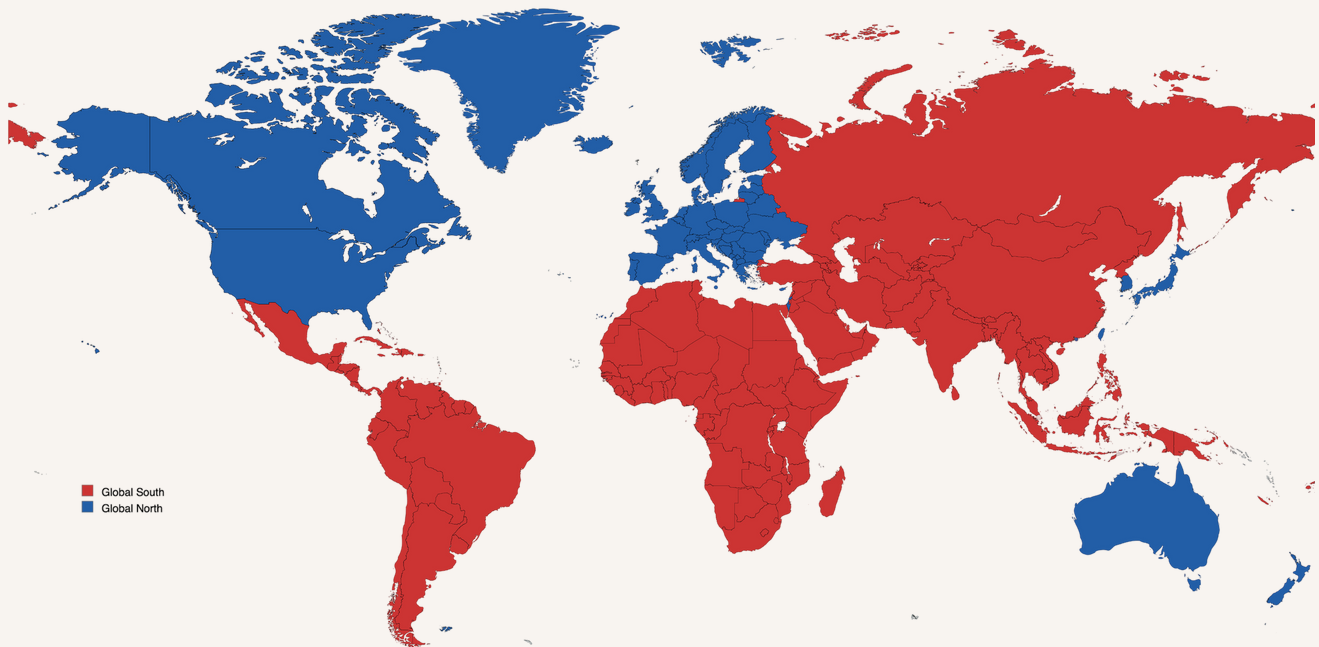
the action of others, but that it was itself paralyzed. Political deliberation differs from physical causation. Words, even very convincing ones, can fail to produce the effect they were supposed to produce if no one takes responsibility for them. When not followed by action, even words of reason or moderation sometimes trigger the very chaos they were aimed at preventing. Justifications, even very convincing ones, may still fail if they do not motivate anyone to act.

Given the present situation, let us acknowledge that the apostles of violence and authoritarianism never intended to judge our conduct, or our justifications, in a spirit of fairness. Determining what should be done based on the premise that they will be fair is therefore unlikely to produce the intended results. Instead, they have used and abused the rhetoric of Western injustice and hypocrisy regardless of circumstances, not least because it lent credibility to their claim to act so ruthlessly in the service of their country. In Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali, military officers justified their take-overs in part by claiming that the French presence was the only thing preventing local armed forces from defeating the terrorist groups, of which some went so far as to claim France was actually the hidden cause. Terrorist activity in fact increased after the withdrawal of French forces, and so did the military violence against political oppositions and ethnic minorities, which had been somewhat contained by the Western presence. The portion of the ruling class in those areas that knew Western support to be in the best interest of their countries also knew it to be conditioned by a certain degree of integration into the international order. What their local enemies knew was that this support offered these rulers no effective protection and that the arguments of foreign aid or Western indignation would be powerless if they decided to take over.

The point is of course not to provide a blank check to political adventurism. But one does not need to embrace passivity as a virtue in order to identify lack of restraint or imprudence as the vices they are. Let us ask ourselves this: How many just causes or meaningful reforms of the international order have been effected by what we would like to call our moderation? How many unjust actions and breaches of that order have been authorized by the lack of action it is now manifested as? And has the balance of those two things increased or damaged the credibility of the rules-based international order?

The rules-based international order is not coming apart at the seams primarily because the West is perceived as unjust and hypocritical, after all it could be all that and still be strong enough to force obedience; it is coming apart because hostile forces are seeing our continuous lack of resolve in defending such an order as an opportunity to use authoritarian and violent means to achieve their objectives without fear of consequences. What people call the "Global South" is hardly united around a common conception of justice, or of an alternative to the current international order. What China, Russia, Iran, Hamas, Azerbaijan, Venezuela, and the juntas in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger do share are the conclusions they draw (in the pursuit of entirely dif-

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> *Rather than the excesses of a strong, unjust, and hypocritical West, let us reckon with the fact that it is our own lack of action toward Iran, Russia, and others in the last ten years that is at least partly at fault for the deaths of Palestinians and Israelis today.*

-erent ends) from Western inaction. It is therefore entirely unclear how our moderation would have not appeared, to those who feel empowered by our fear of violence, as yet another show of what they take to be our moral and political decline. What is true is that given the present state of affairs, none of the options at our disposal will resolve the current tensions to everyone's satisfaction and without contentious and divisive domestic debates.

The goal of subversive warfare, the kind waged on us, is to leave no option to the adversary that cannot be framed as a defeat. Used by an adversary that cannot obtain material superiority, its goal is to sup-

-press its enemy's moral capacity to act: his resolve and credibility. If Western powers do nothing, they will confirm their weakness and vindicate the gamble of the aggressors and of those who aspire to emulate them; if they do something, they will be said to be "alienating" the Global South and appear in the eyes of many to side with injustice. The alternative we are given is either to retreat or to lose our integrity. But that false dilemma which paralyses us only seems to leave us no options we can live with because of the inaction that precedes it and on which it is largely based. By presenting us with two evils that we (or a sufficient number of us) have reasons to fear or reject, they either make us unable to choose, or (similarly) divide our societies into two camps, each opting for one of these mutually exclusive options. But let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that selecting victims and insulting fellow countrymen we so clearly do not care to persuade is a sign of commitment and a serious attempt at collective action. By doing so, we simply make ourselves comfortable in the passive seats that aggressive powers have happily reserved for us before a stage on which they plan to make their scene. "Since we did nothing there is nothing to be done"—we then cry at the end of the play, feeling sorry for ourselves and others. As a result of this show, because the West has been made weaker and more divided, <u>material support for Ukraine has indeed been wavering, allowing Russia to make progress that will cost more lives to undo</u>.

Rather than the excesses of a strong, unjust, and hypocritical West, let us reckon with the fact that it is our own lack of action toward Iran, Russia, and others in the last ten years that is at least partly at fault for the deaths of Palestinians and Israelis today. The same fear of consequences that led us to seek appeasement with Iran a decade ago is today the very force allowing Iran to trap us in a dilemma, forcing either paralysis or division—a dilemma of Iran's own making at a time of its own choosing. Moderation, on

its own, will not serve us or others if we do not overcome the pathological fear of our own action, which has handed over all initiative to our enemies, nor will it alleviate the fate of the victims on either side.

If we care about them, it should no longer be possible, indeed it should no longer be permissible, to console ourselves about that fear in the hope that the world itself would provide the guidance we no longer feel we can find with our own judgement. Moderation is hardly a virtue if it merely means adapting our conduct based on the will of others as a means to escape a question we no longer feel in our power to answer: What should we do? Let us not forget that true moderation would require us to have a clear goal and an energetic desire to reach it. Where are we to find such a goal and such a desire in need of tempering in the West today? Talks of moderation comfort us simply because we are unsure of our purpose and fearful of taking responsibility for defining one. But do we have a choice? Our failure to act and to trust the judgement that motivates our action will not leave room for a globalization that spontaneously produces peace for the benefit of everyone; it is already producing a situation of chaos in which many will suffer. Engaging in a theatrical display of support on either side does not alleviate the responsibility we bear for the present situation. It is merely a polarized manifestation of the very same inaction, the fear of the very same question: What should we do? ∎

Alexis Carré *is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Program on Constitutional Government at Harvard University. His research deals with war and liberal democracy. He was awarded the Raymond Aron Prize for research for his dissertation carried out at the École Normale Supérieure (Paris) on "War and Law: The Refounding of Liberalism against the Conservative Revolution in Leo Strauss and Raymond Aron."*

WHY TIKTOK SHOULD BE BANNED OR SOLD

By Judd Baroff

To indulge the natural human inclination to ban our neighbors' vices (those truly or those only imagined unhealthy) is to transform ourselves into an unfree people—and quickly. This is why calls for any "ban" deserve a heap of skepticism, and why we Americans have developed a thick bias against bans. As rules of thumb go, this bias against bans is not just understandable, it is laudable. But as a builder plans by rule of thumb yet builds with square and measuring tape, so we too should let this rule of thumb guide our bias but not our policy. Most argue our bias when discussing TikTok because we imagine ByteDance (its parent company) as a company like any other. But TikTok is a creature of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a tool used by that adversarial (indeed, enemy) government to surveil, blackmail, harass, threaten, and suppress the free speech of Americans.

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> *The CCP shut down all of Marriot's websites and threatened to boot them entirely from CCP-controlled China. Marriot's offense? They listed Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, and Macau as standalone countries.*

In making the assumption that the CCP controls TikTok, I don't mean to steal a base. Even most who argue against banning TikTok agree. In their article for Harvard's Kennedy School, "Why the US Should Not Ban TikTok," Bruce Schneier and Barath Raghavan write, "There's no doubt that TikTok and ByteDance, the company that owns it, are shady. They, like most large corporations in China, operate at the pleasure of the Chinese government. They collect extreme levels of information about users." The

European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, said much the same thing in a March 30, 2023 speech: "All companies in China […] are already obliged by law to assist state intelligence-gathering operations and to keep it secret." In his *Slate* article "What Just About Everyone Is Getting Wrong about Banning TikTok." Justin Sherman writes, "[The CCP] has made clear its ability to coerce technology firms in China to hand over data, manipulate content, and otherwise assist with the state's objectives." And Paul Matzko, writing "No, the US Shouldn't Ban TikTok" for the Cato Institute admits, "[T]he Chinese government could require TikTok to hand over data about any of its US users. And if it were to pressure TikTok's content moderation team to algorithmically downgrade videos that didn't toe the (literal) party line, we would have no way of knowing other than leaked documents and whistleblowers." So we have scholars published by an establishment university in these United States, an establishment politician in Europe, a left-liberal American magazine, and a right-libertarian American think tank all admitting the CCP controls TikTok.

THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY IS THE ENEMY OF AMERICA AND OF ALL FREE PEOPLE

Proving the CCP is America's adversary seems at least as easy. Indeed, a proposed bill to the United States Senate specifically names the CCP as America's "adversary." Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) introduced the bill, and twenty-five senators from both parties co-sponsored it. Meanwhile Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI) and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) wrote a letter to the Commerce Secretary saying, "TikTok cannot safely operate in the U.S. while controlled by a foreign adversary." To take us abroad, during the same speech quoted above, President von der Leyen said, "the Chinese Communist Party's clear goal is a systemic change of the international order with China at its centre," a line later repeated by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. Or, to quote China expert Tanner Greer's 2020 *Tablet Magazine* article, "China's Plan to Win Control of the Global Order," "The stakes of this struggle could not be higher: [The CCP] believe[s] that the future of the global order and the survival of their regime is at stake. Americans

should not be surprised when they act like it." With TikTok, they are acting like it.

Yet many have learnt since 2020 not to "trust the experts," and we all know how much to trust the politicians. So let us look at the CCP's words and at their deeds. Xi Jinping speaks openly about his aim to challenge and overthrow these United States. At the very beginning of his first term, circa 2012 but underlined until 2019, he said the CCP's goal is to "[lay] the foundation for a future where we will win the initiative and have the dominant position [over these United States]." This foundation seems to have been completed by the 19th Party Congress in 2017, where Xi argued that it was time for the CCP to "cease to hide its strength and bide its time" and instead "dare to fight." What does "dare to fight" mean? Well, less than three years after that speech, the CCP dissolved Hong Kong as an independent political unit, despite guarantees of independence until at least 2049.

And these United States cannot simply refuse to "fight" or withdraw our military. The CCP cares even less for our military than for our culture. From a leaked 2013 Communist Party directive, we learn that the party describes itself as fighting an intense, ideological struggle for survival with these United States. What ideas threaten the survival of the CCP? Concepts like "separation of powers," "independent judiciaries," "universal human rights," "Western freedom," "economic liberalism," "total privatization," "freedom of the press," and "free flow of information on the internet." Their fear is that allowing the Chinese under their dominion to consider such ideas would "dismantle [our] party's social foundation" and jeopardize if not destroy the party's power. Even if we scoff at the idea that our society (with the FAA, SSA, FAFSA, etc.) is one of "total privatization," most of these are indispensable, impossible to do away with except through societal murder. Indeed, the CCP considers the very concept of "civil society" threatening.

This is not just talk. Here are some other consequences of the CCP's "dare to fight" politics, their "wolf-warrior diplomacy." The CCP shut down all of Marriot's websites and threatened to boot them entirely from CCP-controlled China. Marriot's offense? They listed Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, and Macau as standalone countries; that same year, the CCP forced Delta, Zara, and Medtronic to make similar apologies for similar "slights." More famously, the CCP threatened to ban a *Fast and Furious* movie unless John Cena apologized. His offense was saying,

"Taiwan is the first country which can watch the film." Blink and you miss it. But the CCP demanded —and received—a downcast apology on Weibo (a CCP-controlled social media app), in Mandarin.

Their economic coercion sometimes targets whole nations. In 2010, Norway's Nobel Committee gave Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo its Peace Prize. The CCP punished Norway "by freezing political and economic relations with Norway, [and] introducing sanctions against imports […] [which CMI's Michelsen Institute found cost Norway] between 780 and 1300 million USD." Likewise, when Swedish PEN announced in early November 2019 that it would give its annual award for persecuted literary figures to the Swedish publisher Gui Minhai, whom we're about to meet, the CCP pressured Swedish PEN to retract the award. When they refused, the CCP banned many Swedish ministers from traveling to CCP-controlled territory and threatened trade action.

Now, speaking of Mr. Minhai: a Swedish citizen, he is an author of more than two hundred books on CCP politics and Chinese history who operated a bookstore in Hong Kong. In 2015, he was kidnapped from his home in Thailand. He appeared several weeks later in CCP-controlled territory, saying he had turned himself into the CCP to resolve an old traffic ticket. He also renounced all diplomatic protection from Sweden. In 2019 he was sentenced to ten years for "illegally providing intelligence overseas." The CCP once also kidnapped four executives of an Anglo-Australian steel company with whom they were disputing. The CCP held the executives hostage (for almost ten years) while launching cyber-attacks at the company to get their way; now the company is more reliant on the CCP than ever before. Neither incident was the first or last time they have kidnapped people, in Vietnam, Hong Kong, or elsewhere around the world.

The CCP's attacks against free people living abroad is nigh impossible to exaggerate. In a couple hours' search, I covered five Word pages with bullet points. Here are only some of those I found. The CCP regularly engages in bribery of foreign politicians and institutions (the United Nations, Australia, these United States, Britain, and these United States again). They also intimidate broadcasters, newspapers, and activists, for example in these United States and New Zealand. The New Zealand case gives us perhaps the most haunting line in this investigation: "Kill the

chicken to scare the monkey." The CCP is especially cruel to Chinese abroad, often kidnapping their families back home as punishment (for example, at Purdue University, Brandeis University, University of Georgia, McMaster University, Georgetown, Harvard, University of Calgary, a teacher, activist, and American citizen living in California, a refugee living in Montreal, another refugee living in the Netherlands, at St. John's University in Queens, and, nowhere near finally, at least six students of one particular professor who has taught from these United States to Australia). They even ran an illegal police station in Manhattan to harass and in some cases even attack Chinese living abroad.

One of the most appalling is the story of Mark Horton. He suffered comparatively little, but he has no connection to the CCP, is an Australian and an Olympian, and yet neither he nor Australia could do much when, after outing his Chinese competitor as a drug cheat, the CCP sent gangs to systematically burgle, threaten, and harass both him and his parents.

This intimidation included cyber-attacks on his father's business, glass placed in his parents' pool which lacerated his mother, and roving bands of youths banging pots and pans outside their house in the middle of the night. Not that it would excuse their actions, but one might have less sympathy for Mr. Horton if he had been lying. But no—it has now been proven, and his competitor is disqualified from competing in the Tokyo Olympics.

With these examples in mind, I find it avails the (to coin a phrase) anti-anti-TikTokers nothing at all to argue, as Glenn S. Gerstell does in the *New York Times*, that "if it wanted to collect information on Americans, China could […] purchase almost limitless amounts of information from data brokers." Purchasing previously collected information is not just "a little more effort," it is a whole different ballgame. Owning TikTok, the CCP not only owns companies' and politicians' access to one hundred million Americans, it not only owns all demographic data, it also owns all archived posts, all deleted posts, all

Shou Zi Chew, the CEO of TikTok, testifies during the House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing entitled "TikTok: How Congress Can Safeguard American Data Privacy and Protect Children from Online Harms" at the Rayburn Building on March 23, 2023. (Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons)

private messages, any calls made on the app, as well as real-time access to the algorithm, sensitive financial information, and, on top of all that, the very code itself, which could be modified surreptitiously for espionage. Already the Federal Government and many States have banned TikTok on their employees' phones. Indeed, the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party recently wrote, "as of late 2020, ByteDance maintained a regularly updated internal list identifying people who were likely blocked or restricted from all ByteDance platforms, including TikTok, for reasons such as advocating for Uyghur independence." If the CCP is willing to bribe politicians, harass students, kidnap family members of activists, kidnap activists themselves, run illegal police stations in Manhattan, and place glass in the swimming pools of the parents of a foreign Olympian who spoke the truth, just how willing would they be to collect any teenage indiscretion so they could harass, intimidate, and blackmail future CEOs, judges, and senators?

We are tying a noose around our own necks. If nothing else, this evidence dissipates any loose talk of "xenophobia" and "China-bashing," which hangs in the air around anti-anti-TikTok arguments like the odor of three-day-old fish. Mr. Matzko admits as much: "If you think, as the Sinophobes do, that armed conflict with China is inevitable and imminent, then taking down TikTok is merely a logical preparation for what is to come." Yet Mr. Matzko also proves that awareness does not remove all objections. Let us tackle those now.

ADDRESSING FURTHER OBJECTIONS

Mr. Gerstell worries that action against TikTok risks further escalation with the CCP: "Keeping Chinese enterprises invested in the U.S. economy" will "[dampen] China's willingness to antagonize the United States. President Xi Jinping would surely think twice before" jeopardizing US-CCP trade. Apparently shutting out American businesses, threatening American residences and citizens, and running outlaw police stations do not jeopardize US-CCP trade. Yet that trade seems also to have paid no "indirect but powerful geopolitical dividends" in the CCP's "no-limits" alliance with Russia, in their extirpation of Hong Kong, in their support for Russia's war in Ukraine, or in their disdain for Israeli self-defense. As recently as early October, the CCP harassed Philippine vessels on islands off the coast of the Philippines that a 2016

international tribunal had adjudged Philippine.

Mr. Gerstell and Tae Kim, who writes in Bloomberg, also worry about possible economic retaliation against American companies. Mr. Kim writes, "The list of potential targets […] is long." Perhaps the CCP could step up its geopolitical offenses and even retaliate against American companies, but perhaps also Mr. Gerstell and Mr. Kim could talk with Marriot and Medtronic, Apple and Google, the NBA and Hollywood. Reading so many words of caution not to antagonize the CCP feels like hearing bystanders call upon a pummeled man not to strike back against his bully lest it incite violence.

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> *We are talking about speech only indirectly; we are talking about what control the CCP may have over the private information of Americans, what power we will allow the CCP to have, in America, to surveil, blackmail, harass, threaten, and suppress the free speech of Americans.*

There are other economic concerns less contingent on the CCP's good behavior. Not only, as Caitlin Chin-Rothmann notes, do many Americans make their living directly or indirectly from TikTok, but, as Mr. Kim in his Bloomberg piece has it, "Over the long run, the domestic technology industry is far better served having vigorous competition." I think this is the anti-anti-TikTok crowd's strongest argument, yet it only avails if we see the trees and ignore the forest.

If, as we propose, TikTok is an arm to exert CCP influence in these United States, what is the social damage and economic peril of refusing to suppress the CCP's control over TikTok? In the short term, we extend the CCP's economic control from Hollywood

> *Owning TikTok, the CCP not only owns companies' and politicians' access to one hundred million Americans, it not only owns all demographic data, it also owns all archived posts, all deleted posts, all private messages, any calls made on the app, as well as real-time access to the algorithm, sensitive financial information, and, on top of all that, the code itself.*

and the NBA to perhaps hundreds of thousands who now owe their livelihood to a creature of the CCP. Worse, when we do face the inevitable de-coupling years down the road, perhaps during a conflict over the Republic of China's independence in Taiwan, not only will those who rely on TikTok suffer more, not only will more people (those who come to rely on TikTok in the interim) suffer, but their personal hardship will come at a time of the general economic disaster likely to follow any sudden dissolution of Chimerica. We should not be hard-hearted to the real consequences for people who rely on TikTok (and, indeed, this is reason enough to prefer a forced sale over an outright ban), but CCP control of TikTok must end, and it will end later if it does not end now. Better to jump into the pool than be pushed in.

If we do not ignore the economic liberties of Americans, even less may we ignore their rights protected in constitutional black and white. That is the argument behind an ACLU press release, which quotes their senior policy counsel: "we have a right to use TikTok and other platforms to exchange our thoughts, ideas, and opinions with people around the country and around the world." And of course Americans do have rights to speak publicly, to publish what they will on whatever platforms will have them. So it is perhaps unsurprising that the First Amendment arguments are often the first raised and the most facially plausible. Yet these arguments also fail, for our concern is not

with what Americans may say. Our concern is not even with what foreigners may say; foreigners can write in *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*, or, more realistically, on Twitter and Facebook, as readily as any American (that is, not the Chinese under CCP control). Our concern is not even with what CCP officials may say on the unedited Twitter accounts they use, which their subjects cannot read. If our concern were CCP speech, we would debate whether it were acceptable for the CCP to own much of Chinese-language media across these United States (and in Australia and around the world). But that is not our concern. We are indeed talking about speech only indirectly; we are talking about what control the CCP may have over the private information of Americans, what power we will allow the CCP to have, in America, to surveil, blackmail, harass, threaten, and suppress the free speech of Americans.

In the 1940s a young couple spoke and privately distributed the documents of other people. As far as raw physical facts go, that is all they did: activities entirely protected by the First Amendment—no murders, no bribes, no assaults, not even threats. Yet that couple, the Rosenbergs, were convicted of spying for the USSR and sentenced to death. Now, the Rosenbergs stole secrets that led directly to the Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons; I am not suggesting we execute Shou Zi Chew for running TikTok. But these United States suspect that TikTok is currently engaged in espionage, and we know TikTok can easily be converted to that purpose. These United States (and other countries besides) regularly expel CCP spies; we should likewise expel TikTok.

Any reliance on the courts blocking former President Trump's ban of TikTok in 2020 simply confuses that issue. That case was not decided on First Amendment grounds. Former President Trump attempted to ban TikTok by executive order through the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). Yet the IEEPA explicitly prohibits the regulation of any "information or informational materials." Mr. Trump's failure would be in no way analogous to any law passed by Congress, which would target the CCP, a foreign adversary, on grounds of espionage. As Jennifer Huddleston reminds us in *USA Today*, these United States have banned Huawei on espionage grounds, and that ban stands. If these United States have the power to chase from our markets hardware only because it might be compromised, how much more power do we have to ban

or force the sale of a CCP company designed to spy on Americans and legally obliged to do so?

Ronald Reagan famously said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction." A free people is right to be vigilant against restriction of its freedom. Indeed, I wish we Americans were rather more vigilant, for I could whip up a pretty packed list of both petty and potent threats to our liberty that we regularly ignore. But vigilance is not naïveté, and a man shows no virtue when he fences phantoms. TikTok is a tool of the Chinese Communist Party, designed and legally obligated to spy on Americans. If one hundred million Americans have not the honor to stand up and say, "no more," Congress has the power to say it for them. And Congress should.

Ban TikTok, or at least force its sale away from CCP control. ■

Judd Baroff is a writer living in the Great Plains with his wife and young children. He blogs about writing, art, and culture on his fortnightly newsletter (The Hortus Scriptorius), and he's currently writing a book about the Figures of Speech. You may find him at juddbaroff.com or @juddbaroff on Twitter.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND THE LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER

By Garion Frankel

INTRODUCTION

When the Anglo-American political theorist Thomas Paine famously declared that "the world is my country, to do good my religion," he could not have possibly imagined that his words would help form the framework behind an enduring multinational program meant to foster peace and harmony between nations. Nevertheless, Paine's quip has been transformed into Global Citizenship Education, or GCE, a sprawling United Nations (UN)-sponsored pedagogical framework, which, despite only having been named relatively recently, was born out of the rules-based international order that emerged after the Second World War. In the past decade, thousands of schools in the United States, Canada, China, Colombia, and Europe have adopted at least some elements of GCE, which is generally oriented towards equipping students with the necessary tools and knowledge to think and act on a global scale.

It is worth noting that despite the UN's clarification that GCE "aims to empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies," there is significant debate as to what a genuine GCE entails. Some forms of GCE emphasize skills-based learning, which is designed to foster a globally competitive workforce, while others attempt to inculcate a moral worldview focused on empathy, inclusion, and humanism. A few, less common variants of GCE have an outwardly Marxist or radical orientation, grounded in the works of scholars like Paulo Freire, though it can be argued that these are unorthodox appropriations of GCE rather than a genuine attempt at applying UN tenets. In any case, whether GCE is a mechanism to produce a twenty-first century workforce, a method of producing compassionate, empathetic, and globally-aware students, or a form of Freirean education in which children worldwide are meant to facilitate radical change, the ends are generally the same—GCE means to promote the critical thinking, democratic values, and moral conscientiousness that nominally undergird the liberal international order.[1] This poses an intrinsic problem for GCE advocates, since what is intended to be a global program inevitably becomes subject to national-level considerations.

In response, some scholar-educators have reaffirmed the need for GCE in schools. Elizabeth Barrow at Georgia Southern University argues that GCE should position itself in direct opposition to nationalism, as "promoting empathy for the global village and an understanding of the world's interconnectedness should be supported by educators across all disciplines and all grade-levels." Other scholars affirm the adversarial approach, but go a step further, postulating that GCE should be entirely reoriented towards combating populist nationalism. The University of Iowa's Hyunju Lee, echoing many educational progressives, asserts that nationalism can be useful in creating institutions, but it ought to be tempered by an embrace of diversity and international awareness vis-à-vis public education. Ali Altıkulaç and Alper Yontar's research suggests that "constructive patriotism," which they define as the philosophy "sensible citizens" adopt when they embrace democratic ideals, is a necessary condition for effective GCE. These arguments are all hampered by the same concern—they make explicitly normative claims regarding what GCE should do while failing to provide a cohesive framework under which GCE can be successfully integrated.

This poses two problems: First, if education is to be seen as a means to an end, as it is in GCE, then that end must be clearly delineated. Parents and educators alike are highly sensitive to educational jargon, meaning that the lack of a clear goal or outcome can engender hostility and opposition. Second, popular response aside, even if the *worldview* behind GCE is strong and cogent, the argument for GCE is weaker if it does not have coherent *first principles*. These notions of right and wrong are critical for obtaining buy-in from diverse and disparate actors. This likely causes the confusion and disparate means-ends theories found in the GCE literature.

Rather than constantly trying to reinvent the wheel, GCE scholars and advocates should consider what made GCE proliferate in the first place. Such a process would inevitably lead back to the two documents that arguably established the liberal international order: the Mont Pelerin Society's 1947 Statement of Aims, which can be credited with laying the groundwork for contemporary liberal multinationalism, and the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the Declaration), which postulates that "education [...] shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace." That is not to say that scholars are not already integrating these documents into their research. Many have found that

GCE and the Declaration have a symbiotic relationship—the Declaration is often <u>cited</u> as being the reason why GCE is necessary, and GCE is often <u>presented</u> as a tool that students can use to understand and evaluate the Declaration.

Nevertheless, these analyses have still not integrated the *normative* bases for these documents. That is what this essay aims to correct. First, I will sketch the historical relationship between the Bretton Woods Statement of Aims, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and GCE. Second, I will argue that GCE's contemporary normative incoherence is the result of a shift away from its first principles. Finally, I conclude with an assertion that GCE advocates who believe in the UN's original mission should base their reasoning in liberal multinationalism. GCE's innate liberalism is not controversial, but its historical and ideological development and normative strength have been understudied and undervalued. The case for GCE is an organically and fundamentally liberal one.

BRETTON WOODS, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GCE

GCE's innate liberalism is well-known, but scholarship regarding the historical and intellectual processes behind it is not abundant. GCE would not have been possible without the Mont Pelerin Society and UN's intellectual contributions. They designed the International Monetary Fund to be a liberal institution, and for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be a liberal document, though one moderated by social democratic ideas. A thorough examination of these contributions and developments is necessary for understanding why GCE has become normatively incoherent, as well as for reinforcing why GCE was initially well-received in the global community.

When the Mont Pelerin Society first met in Switzerland on April 1, 1947, their objective was to cultivate a new order for the postwar world. Their mission was <u>primarily</u> "intellectual" (nominally apolitical) and economic—free enterprise and private property rights were to be maintained at the Soviets' expense. This new order was to be created through the free exchange of ideas that "contribute to the preservation and improvement of the free society." Their Statement of Aims, though signed by laissez-faire economists, was not an endorsement of laissez-faire capitalism. Instead, it was meant to <u>encompass</u> both classical and progressive liberalism,[2] unifying the two forces against political oppression.

Despite the Statement's broadly economic language, the meeting's attendees knew that they would have to engage in politics sooner rather than later. Indeed, the meeting's inaugural address <u>acknowledged</u> the "problem" of democracy, noting that the new liberal order was simultaneously threatened by democracy—because voters could choose to annul their own economic rights and therefore deprive the

> *The new liberal order was simultaneously threatened by democracy—because voters could choose to annul their own economic rights and therefore deprive the world of the market forces needed for progress and prosperity—and dependent on democracy, because they viewed democracy as a necessary condition for individual liberty.*

world of the market forces needed for progress and prosperity—and dependent on democracy, because they viewed democracy as a necessary condition for individual liberty. The attendees were also concerned that well-meaning social justice endeavors supported by the general public could <u>disrupt</u> the fragile new system they were in the process of creating. Though perhaps unsettling to modern audiences, this perspective was contextually justified. The Mont Pelerin group was, understandably, terrified of the return of fascism, and there were signs that fascism would, as it had the first time, <u>arrive</u> under the banner of democracy.

The remedy to the extremes of both rank democracy and fascism, to the Mont Pelerin Society, was, in part, education. Though the Society made no comprehensive education policy proposal, its members'

thoughts on education would form the framework for the next half century in educational thought—particularly as it relates to GCE. Frank Knight, a founding Society member, justified education on the grounds that "human nature [...] must be molded in the individuals of each incoming generation, to fit the environment [...] as inherited from the past; and at the same time, must be equipped to improve it in both sectors." Later members, like Don Lavoie, would add that "a Humboldtian notion of *Bildung* [the German self-cultivation tradition] [...] is necessary, in his view, because '[a] democratic market society requires citizens capable of creative thinking, of working together with fellow citizens, of truly listening to alternative points of view." While the arguments of Milton Freidman and James Buchanan, disciples of the Mont Pelerin Society, about school vouchers are the best-known of the Society's educational dialogues, Laovie's arguments about character education and the philosophy of education remain influential as well. Indeed, Lavoie's interpretation of *Bildung* still influences GCE policy in Europe.

The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights built on the Mont Pelerin Society's conversations. Though the UN's conversations were mostly directed toward higher education, they were and are still relevant to GCE in light of the credit the Declaration receives for laying the normative and intellectual groundwork for GCE in the first place. All parties to the Declaration knew that the document they were creating, as well as the institutions that would emanate from the document's implementation, were fundamentally liberal. The document was, in fact, so liberal that many of the more moderate or progressive delegates and scholars were concerned that it would be a radical individualist manifesto rather than a workable statement of liberal principles. *Bildung* threw a wrench in those plans, since perspectives that were communitarian but still fundamentally liberal insofar as they defended natural equality and individual rights now had to be considered alongside older, individualist doctrines.

As such, the General Assembly, as well as those responsible for revising what would eventually become the Declaration, immediately began grappling with *Bildung*'s consequences on the relationship between an individual and their community—both local and global. No longer could one merely reaffirm Enlightenment-era individualism exempt from any duties or restrictions without some level of resistance. The op-portunities and challenges of a globalized world required a more thorough examination and reevaluation of the individual within it. Adding to the complexity was Bildung's commitment to a "freedom of science" rather than "academic freedom," which deeply concerned Anglo-American liberals who were insistent on a continuing need for individual choice and free expression in education.

The final document melded classic and modern understandings of educational rights by first declaring that education is a right. The Declaration acknowledged that "parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children," but that education *ought* to be "directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." Moreover, the Declaration also made prescriptive arguments about what forms of education governments ought to make available. It demanded free and compulsory elementary education, and prescribed higher and technical education on the basis of merit. These ideas and principles were to be funneled not only through formal classroom instruction, but also through access to and experience with the arts and cultural life.

Initially, liberal ideas were easily found in GCE, and, in some ways, they still proliferate widely. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime still encourages educators to prioritize human rights and the rule of law within GCE efforts in order to "[create] a culture of lawfulness in which citizens understand, participate in defining, and respect laws for the benefit of the whole of society." In addition, despite the fact that GCE's recognition of culturally diverse perspectives and traditions can vary widely by the country or educational program, there is still a general consensus that integrating education in cultures other than one's own into GCE is critically important. Though some leftwing scholars negatively regard the UN's role in developing GCE standards in line with its own ideologies and goals, these national and international-level institutions are critical in giving GCE programs legitimacy—a prerequisite for educational adequacy in a liberal democracy, much less a country with a nationalist orientation. When the name and weight of a nation-state or a multi-governmental organization is not conferred, it becomes a struggle to implement GCE at all. This has been the case in South Korea, where nongovernmental organizations have struggled to implement GCE due to a perceived lack of normative legitimacy.

In other words, when GCE was first introduced as a concept, it was successful because there were firm moral grounds for its development, and these grounds were fiscally and politically supported by powerful international organizations. But GCE's popularity is not exclusively or even primarily a function of UN or national government support. World War II had re-vitalized the public's faith in liberal and democratic institutions, and there was a movement within educa-tional thought to recenter liberal ideas and principles in the curriculum. The nationalistic enmity stemming from the war itself was transferred to Soviet Com-munism—a socioeconomic ideology rather than a par-ticular ethnicity or culture. The new commitment to human rights and cultural exchange was built on the "strength of the liberal internationalists' appeal to lib-eral ideals, which included an ideological commit-ment to democratic humanism." Liberals, particularly those within the UN and the Mont Pelerin Society, made an express commitment to use these principles within national education systems in order to resist Soviet expansion.

Ergo, the reason GCE proliferated is because its nor-mative commitments dovetailed with liberal education projects and programs already being developed, inclu-ding, but not limited to, international schools and in-ternational baccalaureate (IB) programs. These pro-grams are also arguably responsible for preserving tra-ditional, liberal GCE within public education. For most students, however, GCE has lost or is beginning to lose the liberal internationalism that made it a com-pelling pedagogical tool.

GCE's NORMATIVE PROBLEM

GCE's normative problem arguably began with Andreotti and De Souza's landmark edited volume, which features a collection of articles critiquing GCE's "neoliberal" paradigm from a materialist, postcolonial perspective. Though the scope of the articles included therein varies widely, the core arguments are as follows: first, postcolonial theory is, overall, a useful tool for analyzing GCE's impact on both education and international relations; second, that GCE is a modern, pacified, but equally destruc-tive form of Eurocentric imperialism, which fails to address the overconsumption and waste that char-acterize "neoliberal" social structure; and third, that scholars and practitioners alike should look to reframe GCE in a manner that both accounts for and emphasizes non-European traditions and cultures.

Other scholars soon built on these critiques. Some, building on the postcolonial critique of GCE, argued that GCE (even in light of its original mission) should focus on cultivating critical consciousness in young learners. Others viewed the reexamination of GCE as an opportunity to recenter GCE's pedagogical ap-proach on the pursuit of environmental justice. Others still asserted that "defamiliarization"—the process in which someone views what they have come to see as ordinary through an absurd or unfamiliar lens—could be used to advance a liberationist GCE. What these perspectives have in common is that they are all rooted in the same *normative* conception of what education *ought* to accomplish; namely, Paulo

The inaugural meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947. (Photo credit: Hoover Institution Library and Archive)
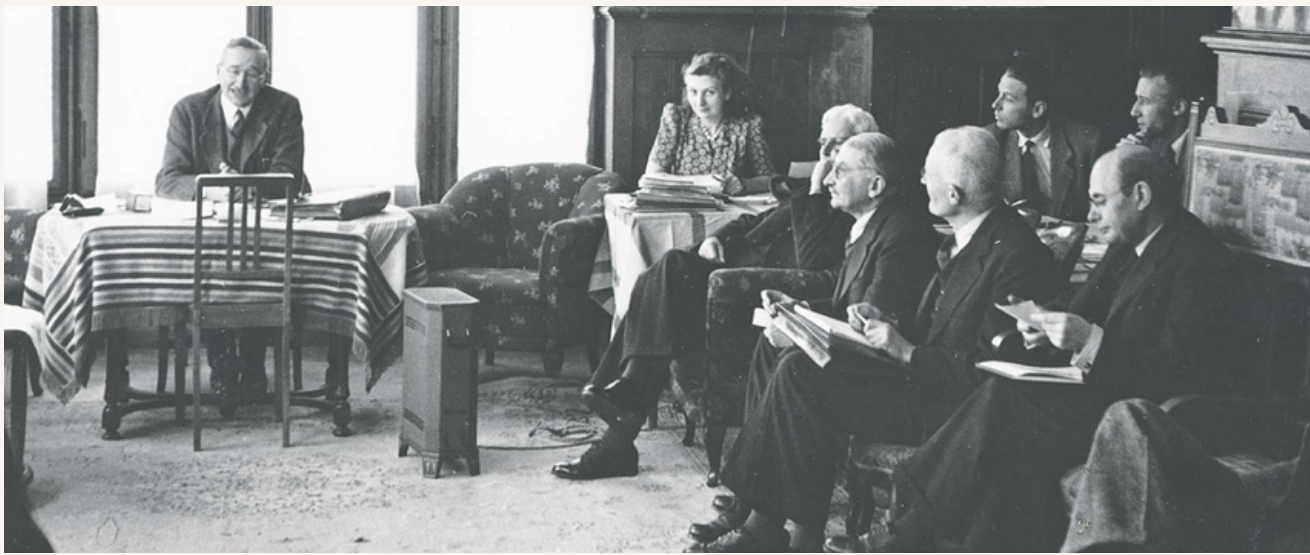
Freire's argument for critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy was built on a <u>very specific set</u> of social and theological tenets—Freire was a social Christian, and he imposed blame for all social divisions, the distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed, on capitalism. Ergo, the end of pedagogy was to enable individuals, both in their own right and jointly with their community, to remove their bonds of oppression and liberate themselves from the systems and practices that controlled them. Ironically, Freire was also greatly influenced by developmental nationalism. His methods were closely tied to Brazil, particularly his home state of Pernambuco, and it is thereby <u>difficult if not impossible to disentangle</u> critical pedagogy from its roots in Brazilian bourgeois peasant nationalism.

Arguments for natural equality, universal human rights, and the rule of law did not emerge in a vacuum. They are concomitant with a worldview that sees the individual as the basic unit of society, and that the institutions that ought to govern them are fair, just, and somewhat hierarchical. Liberal institutions, justified with normative liberal arguments, are incompatible with normative postcolonial arguments, as liberalism's innately hierarchical structures are incompatible with those that <u>perceive</u> a fundamental dichotomy between the oppressor and the oppressed. One cannot detach commonly affirmed liberal beliefs—like equality and human rights—from less popular ones—like market economics and Westernization—without accounting for the discrepancy as part of a developed, new normative theory. But the arguments offered by postcolonial scholars of GCE do not meet that bar. They affirm and reject liberal ideas without explanation in the same paragraph or paper.

Indeed, postcolonial critics have applied critical pedagogy to GCE while adopting different or even entirely contradictory normative viewpoints. Waghid and Meta, while <u>advocating</u> for "disrupting individualism"—which they argue would, in accordance with the South African Constitution, expand "the purpose of education beyond serving the market to include serving society by instilling in students a broad sense of values from both the humanities and the sciences"—simultaneously root their ideal GCE in liberal values like human rights, the rule of law, and natural equality. Misiasek <u>commits</u> the same error, attempting to integrate Freirian pedagogy within a worldview that embraces liberal cosmopolitanism. Bosio and Torres, as part of their post-critical construction of GCE meant to end neoliberalism and fos-

-ter a sense of global citizenship, also <u>endorse</u> many of the normative principles that undergird liberalism—namely, cultural pluralism, universal human rights, and international collaboration. The true normative roots of critical GCE lie in relationships—in the bonds that connect two (or more people) together, but the underlying principles regarding how these bonds came to be and why they should be valued above normative liberalism are almost never explained. The result is that these scholar-activists present as UN-skeptic left-liberals rather than true radicals. Scholars pillory what they decry as "neoliberalism" but then affirm historically and philosophically liberal values and beliefs—terms and the intellectual history behind them are now meaningless.

That is not to say that all arguments critical of GCE have this flaw. Kester, for instance, <u>acknowledges</u> that GCE's roots are in liberal theory, and suggests a peace education that, while still drawing some of its principles from liberal ideas, firmly rejects liberalism in practice as a system that ferments and allows arbitrary division and Western domination. This "non-dominative" pedagogy is to be rooted in democracy—not just as an institutional arrangement, but in a progressive sense of knowing oneself as an individual and within their community. But the preponderance of critical GCE scholarship makes anti-liberal normative assumptions without grounding them in first principles.

As such, GCE supporters have engaged very little with truly oppositional critiques. Instead, they have tried (unsuccessfully, as I contend) to fold the milder critiques in with the liberal framework that was already present. While the language of the rule of law and universal natural rights was preserved, many liberals <u>recentered</u> GCE's focus on sustainable development and social justice advocacy. Little normative justification is given for these shifts—only small gestures towards vacuous slogans that are presently politically popular, and vaguely signify discomfort with classical liberalism's traditional tenets. Insofar as they critique contemporary GCE's inability to proffer actionable items toward a specific end, critical arguments are rather persuasive.

The Global Citizenship Foundation, while maintaining its desire for a values-based order, <u>argued</u> that Freire's "pedagogy of hope" should inform and encourage GCE's pursuit of sustainable development. The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while nominally liberal and rights-based, has <u>centered</u>

its educational paradigm on equity, inclusion, sustainable development, and social justice advocacy. Many activists have also pushed for schools to root GCE in its sustainable development goals rather than the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United States and Canada have begun to reorient their GCE approaches from values-based nation-centric multiculturalism to broad youth civic engagement. This shift poses two problems: First, it disrupts GCE's legitimacy at the practitioner level by failing to empathetically engage with educators. Second, it essentially concedes the normative debate without accounting for GCE's rich intellectual and theoretical history.

GCE critics often cast modern education as being a new form of imperialism designed to mimic colonization insofar as it cements American political and economic dominance. Education, in this system, others the Global South and consciously attempts to immerse students in Eurocentric epistemology and values. These calls for change and action go almost entirely unnoticed. This is because the idea that "globalisation and hitherto privatisation […] disturb equal public schooling is not accurate historically; it is based on a past that never existed. Today more than ever, dedicated and agentic educators are willing to develop students' skills and personalities." Not only are educators willing and able partners in creating a more just world, they are also highly sensitive to how they are treated in the scholarly literature. When educators feel ignored or slighted, they will ignore or even contradict academic scholarship. Since most educators in the developed world favor liberal democracy, the eclectic mix of postcolonialism and left-liberalism has not penetrated classrooms to the degree that scholar-activists would hope.

This state of affairs presents both a problem and promise for GCE advocates. On one hand, by immediately giving way to postcolonial and illiberal critics, GCE advocates, who are still fundamentally liberal, have accepted the critique that liberal institutions and norms are essentially irredeemable. This, from an intellectual standpoint, not only silos GCE from its long and rich theoretical history, built from the Mont Pelerin Society and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but it results in the normative case being weaker. By bending to these attacks, pro-GCE liberals are essentially admitting that liberalism is a coercive and exploitative theory. But the very idea of GCE cannot be separated from liberalism. Without a firm liberal identity, GCE becomes, from a norma-

> *Liberals need not (and should not) abandon market economics, but the desire to enable participation in international markets should be tempered by a willingness to facilitate intercultural education and engagement at a community level.*

-tive perspective, an empty shell. After all, "the primacy of individual rights […] along with the plurality and diversity of ends that people seek in their pursuit of happiness, is a key element of a liberal political order."

On the other hand, liberals have a distinct opportunity to reclaim GCE and realign its normative liberalism in order to answer modern challenges. At some level, this will involve responding to critical mischaracterizations. A philosophically liberal education, such as GCE, is not, as many on the left would claim, about serving the market. Liberalism merely acknowledges, as political theorists and historians have for thousands of years, that nearly all forms of social organization are going to involve market dynamics. Instead, liberal educators seek to cultivate the virtues that underlie various communities and bring us together as humans under a common paradigm of liberty, autonomy, and respect. Liberals, too, seek to disrupt the exploitation and oppression of the past, and GCE is normatively meant to unite all of humanity under a common, principled banner—not to repeat past cycles of autocracy in the interests of one person or nation. Beyond what a liberal education is meant to do, liberals also have an opportunity to answer critiques related to GCE in and of itself.

A RETURN TO LIBERALISM FOR GCE

Answering these critiques, however, requires recognition that GCE's liberal origins are not fatally flawed. If anything, liberalism's shortcomings throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries were the fault of *liberals* rather than *liberalism*. The postcolonial argument that traditional GCE ignores non-Western traditions and philosophies is thoughtful, nuanced, and well-taken—even if the normative bases for those arguments are suspect. One of the more unfortunate developments within liberalism over the past several decades is its insistence on unnecessarily proving its critics right. Instead of allowing history, context, and institutions (like public education) to assist individuals in pursuing autonomy, justice, and the fulfillment of their obligations towards others, liberalism has become increasingly ontological. In other words, liberals have begun treating the free market as an end in and of itself rather than as a means to an end, or even simply part and parcel of the state of nature. This was never supposed to be GCE's purpose.

A reinvigorated, openly liberal GCE would unapologetically allow human rights, the rule of law, universal natural equality, and an affinity for pluralism to guide its development and implementation. Indeed, these ideas are not even necessarily Western, as numerous non-Western countries had major roles in the Declaration's drafting, and these contributions were built on a rich human rights tradition operating outside of Western boundaries. While economic benefits can and do occur as the result of a liberal education, job training should not be the normative focus of a liberal education. This was recognized by the attendees of the initial Mont Pelerin Society who, despite their inclinations towards economics, were firmly committed to societal improvement. Liberals need not (and should not) abandon market economics, but the desire to enable participation in international markets should be tempered by a willingness to facilitate intercultural education and engagement at a community level. Education (particularly cultural literacy programs like GCE) is meant to facilitate an individual's moral development and autonomy. Moreover, by working with and within established local, national, and international institutions, a liberal GCE can also accomplish the goals many postcolonial GCE scholars put forth—enhancing individual autonomy, creating a space where every person can reflect on their history, identity, and culture, and empowering people to answer injustices around the world.

To that end, proponents of GCE can re-embrace *Bildung*'s liberating, culturally-aware, and autonomy-focused components, as initially considered by Don Lavoie and the Mont Pelerin Society. Although once a central tenet of politically liberal educational thought, *Bildung* has frayed to the point where, when it is included in school curricula (which is far from always being the case), it is primarily devoted to discipline and cultural reproduction. A firmly liberal GCE program would integrate non-Western cultural ideas and practices as part of the broader curriculum. Any notion of global citizenship must include the cornucopia of traditions and practices that characterize our world, provided that those traditions facilitate authentic engagement and open communication. *Bildung*'s emphasis on self-improvement and personal, cultural cultivation would lay a foundation for a world of students who have the knowledge, understanding, ability, and empathy to address global concerns. Reincorporating the Declaration back into GCE programming and teacher training could be the catalyst in promoting this form of intellectual diversity, though additional study would be required to confirm any such suspicions. Regardless, the Declaration provides a clear normative framework for liberals to use when designing and implementing GCE programs. The document may be individualist, but it does not subvert justice concerns in the name of international markets. It is most interested in liberal democracy, pluralism, and awareness of other cultures and experiences.

If liberals, as their normative tenets would dictate, endorse a pluralistic global society, then GCE programs should ensure that they both understand the cultures that pupils are being introduced to and respect the customs and traditions being incorporated. These can include (though are certainly not limited to) introductions to non-Western forms of philosophy and culture, including indigenous and aboriginal history, neo-Confucianism, with its particular emphasis on shared moral knowledge and inherent human dignity, and an embrace of African culture and traditions. Through this process, a liberal GCE would foster respect for different cultures and offer a gentle introduction to a world that has become increasingly interconnected and cosmopolitan. This respect would, in turn, lead to a firm commitment to justice and the pursuit of human rights and liberties for people around the world who, in accordance with a liberal

"Liberals should also do more to assuage concerns that they, and therefore any education system they design, are interested in market systems prior to individual autonomy."

worldview, are unjustly deprived of what is theirs by nature. This commitment can and should be tempered by a given locality's unique historical and sociological characteristics, but the core skills and principles remain. In any case, any liberal answer to post-colonial critics of GCE would require reforms and improvements to the contemporary GCE infrastructure.

Some such improvements to GCE can already be seen in higher education. A study of a public administration class at George Washington University, through predicated in many ways on social justice, found that a pluralistic selection of literature increased students' willingness to discuss controversial subjects, which resulted in broader support for (if not a duty to support) free speech rights as well as increased openness to alternative viewpoints as long as those viewpoints were open to debate, correction, or modification. University experiments in civic engagement and social responsibility projects, mediated by liberalism, have also generated positive results. Though further research is needed to determine whether similar programs would be successful at the PK–12 level, these projects can provide GCE advocates a framework for what liberal GCE programs in the twenty-first century could entail. If nothing else,

they are an indication that normative liberalism is capable of using a variety of methods and pedagogical strategies to develop a rigorous and internationally-aware civics and citizenship curriculum.

Liberals should also do more to assuage concerns that they, and therefore any education system they design, are interested in market systems prior to individual autonomy. Indeed, this concern is not new—the debate emerged in the wake of the first Mont Pelerin Society meeting, in which Friedrich Hayek, taking the position that individual autonomy was a prerequisite to a market economy, contested with Walter Euken, who argued that individual freedom is subordinate to the order that a market economy creates. But liberals should champion a GCE situated in liberalism's true end—an end in which, through education, all people are autonomous, all people have access to justice, and all people have the latitude necessary to develop sophisticated, moderate, and equanimous social attitudes. Any effective, universal response to the global challenges that characterize the modern world will require such forms of respect, and a GCE curriculum that can instill it. This does not prohibit a defense of a market economy—if anything, it encourages it—but it would acknowledge that certain goods within human

behavior exist outside the market.

Importantly, "supporting global citizenship <u>doesn't require</u> a radical shift or transformation of the curriculum. Instead, teachers need to develop an awareness, leadership, humility, enthusiasm, and of course, a willingness to support it." Minor pedagogical shifts —like implementing <u>digital third spaces</u>, additional <u>experiential learning</u>, and an <u>increased awareness</u> of ethics, political context, and history—would serve a liberal GCE more effectively than rebuilding the institutions and strategies behind the pedagogical approach from the ground up. In any case, GCE programming ought to be crafted and subsequently redirected with a clear end in mind, as GCE is not an end in and of itself. Social justice and sustainable development are worthwhile objectives, but the advocacy surrounding them can be shallow and politically divisive. By tethering GCE in normative liberal principles that have historically unified and empowered much of the world, scholars and practitioners alike can ensure that their arguments and curricula respectively have a firm, moral basis behind them. Otherwise, GCE's normative incoherence (along with its political divisiveness) is likely to perpetuate. ∎

ENDNOTES

[1] Andreotti makes a distinction, which has since become commonplace, between "soft" global citizenship, which emphasizes global equality and human development, and "critical" global citizenship, which focuses on overcoming injustice, power imbalances, and restrictions on individual autonomy. I reject this dichotomy, as both classical and progressive liberalism, typically associated with "soft" global citizenship, also seek to promote individual autonomy, and rid the world of injustice. The "universalism" Andreotti describes, which they associate with a set notion of how people should live or should be, is instead about *principles*—beliefs regarding people's rights, worth, and inherent dignity.

[2] I am making a slight distinction, for brevity, between classical liberalism, which is commonly associated with a historical argument for a market economy and a rights-based philosophy, and progressive liberalism, which accepts many of classical liberalism's basic tenets, but is additionally concerned with social equality, cultural pluralism, internationalism, and redistribution. The *liberalism* therein—the belief in human rights, natural equality, inherent human dignity, and the rule of law—is present in both theories and is at the core of arguments favoring GCE. These ideas are hundreds of years old and are at the heart of any contemporary liberal dialogue.

Garion Frankel *is a PhD student in PK-12 Education Administration at Texas A&M University, from which he also has a Master of Public Administration. He is a Young Voices contributor and was previously an education reporter for* Chalkboard Review.

PARTIES, PRIMARIES, AND POLARIZATION

By Tyler Mruczinski
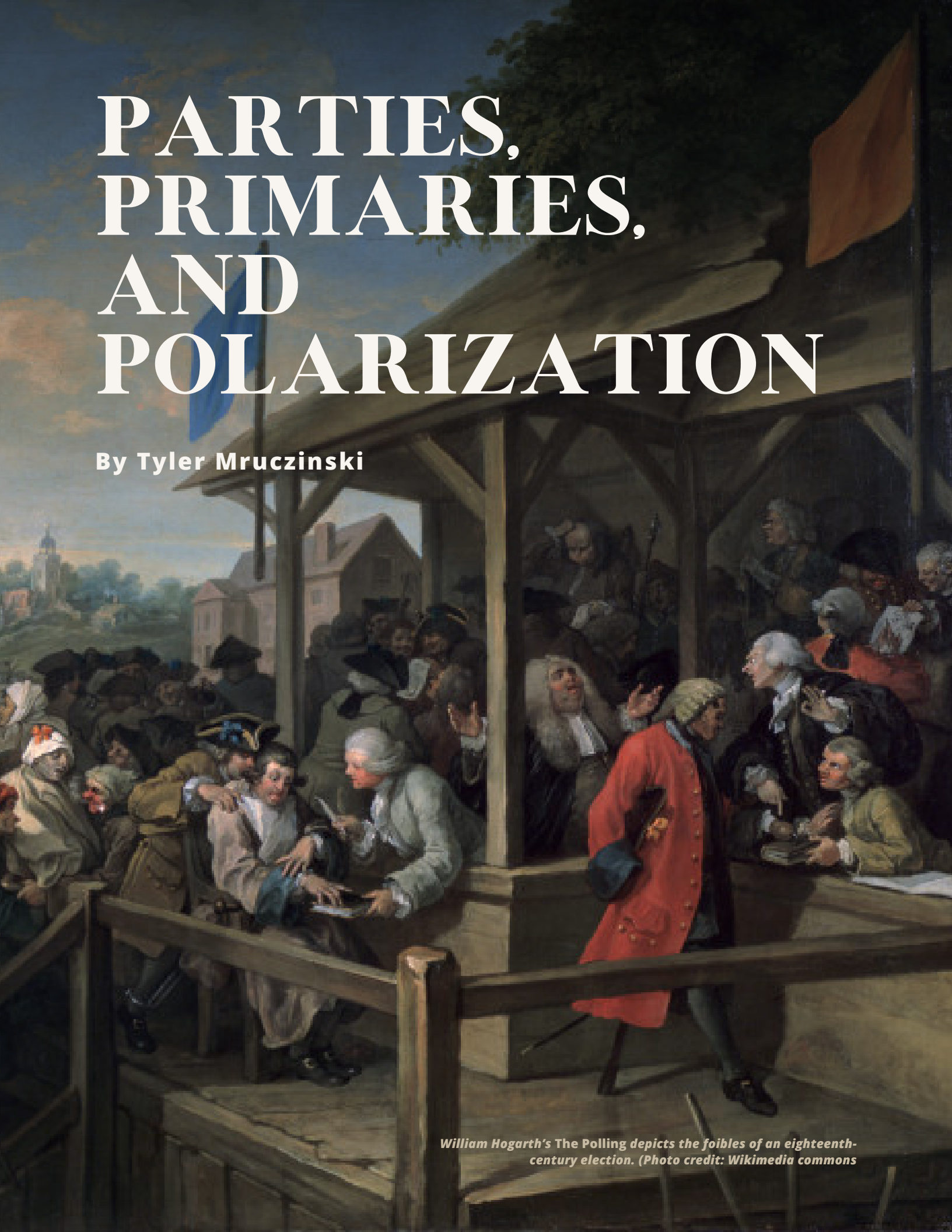
As the primaries continue and Super Tuesday draws nearer, it becomes increasingly important to understand how we arrived at the current state of American primaries. In this landscape, uninformed and unrepresentative voters in a handful of states select the two candidates to lead the most powerful nation on earth. In response to this, we will offer a proposal to reform these processes. It is essential for Americans to know that our system has not always operated this way, and understanding how we got to this point is key for charting a new course.

Political parties have existed since the beginning of the republic, and the Founding generation realized both the utility of parties within a democratic society and the danger they posed when organized from the bottom up rather than the top down. This top-down republican leadership is what the Founding generation referred to as the "natural aristocracy." John Adams, as moderate and independent-spirited a man as any, defined the natural aristocrat as anyone who, having superiority in education, wealth, stature, genius, learning, beauty, or motions, is able to influence and direct his politically equal fellow citizens' choice from among democratic options. Adams said,

Pick up, the first 100 men you meet, and make a Republick. Every Man will have an equal Vote. But when deliberations and discussions are opened it will be found that 25, by their Talents, Virtues being equal, will be able to carry 50 Votes. Every one of these 25, is an Aristocrat, in my Sense of the Word; whether he obtains his one Vote in Addition to his own, by his Birth Fortune, Figure, Eloquence, Science, learning, Craft Cunning, or even his Character for good fellowship and a bon vivant. [...] Surely no authority can be more expressly in point to prove the existence of Inequalities, not of rights, but of moral intellectual and physical inqualities in Families, descents and Generations. If a descent from, pious, virtuous, wealthy litterary or scientific Ancestors is a letter of recommendation, or introduction in a Mans his favour, and enables him to influence only one vote in Addition to his own, he is an Aristocrat, for a democrat can have but one Vote. Aaron Burr had 100,000 Votes from the single Circumstance of his descent from President Burr and President Edwards.

Adams's reference to the democrat's creed of "one man, one vote" makes it clear that he is not talking about the kind of "establishment elite" or nefarious "globalist uniparty" feared and regurgitated by far-right partisans. Instead, Adams is making a common classical-republican claim: that the majority of the people, from whom sovereignty derived, could not be expected to be fully informed or attentive to exigencies required for a functioning and free democratic republic. Taking this premise as true, a patriotic "cadre" of sorts was required to benevolently guide civil-political culture and discussions, but a cadre from which the people were totally free to choose by their suffrage from among competing factions and interests. An example of this can be found in the framing and ratification of the Constitution. As scholar of the early republic, Joseph Ellis, has written in _The Quartet: Orchestrating the Second American Revolution_, a small group of "elite" nationalists were able to introduce into the public discussion the need for a modified constitution establishing a strong federal government. Likewise, an "elite" of opponents spread reasons for rejecting a new constitution throughout the public. The people were then left free, through their suffrage, to decide the matter, but not without the influence of the aforementioned "elitist" camps. Ellis says,

founding elite were driven by motives that were more political than economic, chiefly the desire to expand the meaning of the American Revolution so that it could function on a larger, indeed national, scale. The great conflict, as I see it, was not between "aristocracy" and "democracy," whatever those elusive categories might mean, but rather between "nationalists" and "confederationists," which is shorthand for those who believed that the principles of the American Revolution could flourish in a much larger political theater and those who did not. Finally, my version of the story regards the successful collaboration of this small cadre not as a betrayal of the core convictions of the American Revolution, but rather as a quite brilliant rescue.

This idea of competition among the elites as popular government in practice seeped into American party organization in various forms, all of them progressively better than the last. When Madison, Hamilton, Henry Knox, and John Jay were fulfilling their roles as patriotic elites, they did so without any popular mandate and initially in backchannel coded letters. Following the end of Washington's presidency, congressional caucuses consisting of the people's representatives chose party nominees in secret. The Jackson Era saw these secretive party caucuses abolished as the "People's President," Andrew Jackson,

was swept into power as a reformer, partly owing to the fact that he was the killer of the "caucus curse," "the tried patriot and incorruptible man" who stood against "barter and bargain" for the presidency because "it should be derived from the people." To replace "King Caucus," national party conventions were organized. These public and democratic gatherings became extra-constitutional institutions where delegates hashed out the meaning of the Constitution and the future of the United States. As these delegates were officers and lieutenants of state and county parties, delegations became more localized. This localization made it harder to select party candidates for the presidency, as it was now requisite that candidates be acceptable to delegates' state and regional concerns. This had a positive impact, resulting in candidates who were more representative of the whole nation—a necessity for extensive republican government.

Additionally, there were constitutional benefits to the new mode of selection. The presidents were not only answerable to the people but also to members of the party. The party leaders were often members of Congress or former members, which made the president dependent upon those who held the pen and the purse. Lincoln recognized this fact of American politics. This meant that a strong check was put on the power of the one-man executive branch. Under this system, an "imperial" presidency was almost unthinkable. In their classic study of the evolution of legislative and judicial relations with the executive branch, *Presidential Power: Unchecked and Unbalanced*, Matthew Crenson and Benjamin Ginsberg demonstrate that even under the effects of the centralizing crisis that was the Civil War—which saw the largest expansion of presidential war power to date and the later amendments to the Constitution, which expanded the power of the central government at the expense of the states (thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth Amendments)—the relation between he who executes the laws and those who make the laws underwent little permanent change. Once hostilities stopped, Congress resumed its primacy in the federal government.

Party nomination continued satisfactorily this way for over eighty years. Notwithstanding that, the "barter and bargain" against which the Jacksonians railed was found to have appeared once again in a milder form, particularly within the Republican Party. "Rotten boroughs" played an increasingly decisive role in nominating Republican presidential candidates as

delegates from the Jim Crow South, where there were hardly any Republican voters, were created or bribed to add strength to favored candidates on the floor of the convention. The image of smoky back rooms where fat cats and party bosses like "Boss" Tweed decide who to run, originates from this era of candidate nomination and holds some truth.

The time was right for another benign evolution in the selection of presidential nominees, and the Progressive Era provided a solution. The revealing cartoons of Thomas Nast and others seeded political revolt among the masses, who demanded change. The year 1912 saw the first significant use of the presidential primary as Theodore Roosevelt faced off against William Howard Taft. Great and astounding new technologies made the campaign truly national. Theodore Roosevelt employed a professional campaign staff that delivered live and constant telegraphed news from around the country. Roosevelt would be told minute by minute the content of speeches Taft made, and then he would rebut them on the other side of the country. From the beginning, however, there were inherent tensions in the new system, subtly apparent in the feud between Roosevelt and Taft. Part of this conflict was whether the primaries were to be a necessary expedient in the moderate progression of American democracy or whether

Caricature of Boss Tweed and election fraud, by Thomas Nast. (Photo credit: Wikimedia commons)

"THAT'S WHAT'S THE MATTER."
Boss Tweed. "As long as I count the Votes, what are you going to do about it? say?"

they were a revolutionary, populist phenomenon. Taft believed the primaries were meant to give the people influence, but not direct control, over the party selection. His view of primaries was much like Madison's view of republican government in <u>Federalist 10</u>; the point was to hear the expressions of the party faithful and "refine and enlarge" their views. Roosevelt's view was that the primaries were a part of a larger battle against "<u>the boss, of crooked politicians behind the boss and people who are owned by the bosses</u>," as well as other "reactionary" forces. The rowdy campaign speeches and public disagreements among party leaders—heretofore reserved for polite cold shoulders or "leaked" letters or thoughts to the press—now became open and, like a bad wound, inflamed. In turn, party voters became polarized. The reformers could never have predicted that this would unleash candidate-centered demagoguery and extremism into American politics. Much like Donald Trump today, Roosevelt eviscerated his opponent as a tool of party bosses (Trump's "deep state" or "uniparty") and "rigging" (Trump verbatim) the election against him.[1] Party unity discipline was shattered, and the Republicans were trounced in the subsequent general election. Despite all that, the experiment was not a complete failure. As <u>Corcoran and Kendall</u> argue in their in-depth study of the 1912 presidential primaries,

> Advocates of a more democratic electoral process had reason to believe that the Progressive cause of presidential primaries was advanced in 1912. Roosevelt and La Follette supporters could be pleased that Taft's machine-engineered renomination was a Pyrrhic victory. Under the old system, Taft almost certainly would have been smoothly renominated and re-elected. Yet the 1912 campaign was hardly a victory for direct popular control of the nominating process. The primary "winners," Roosevelt and Clark, were both denied nomination at their party conventions. Wilson's "progressive" candidacy was also a victory for old-style state machine politics and vote-trading at the national convention. Although a party would never again reject the clear mandate of the primaries after 1912, the first primaries revealed tendencies that reformers had not anticipated.

As Corcoran and Kendall note above, the quirks of the system were recognized and subsequently fixed. States that chose to adopt primaries generally adopted "preference" primaries in which party members could express approval or disapproval for <u>certain candidates but did not tie the hands of the</u>

conventions. People were generally satisfied with this arrangement because it added the opportunity for registered partisans to influence the future of their party's symbolism and platform at moments where it really mattered (such as in 1944, 1952, and 1964 for the Republicans), while at all other times deferring to the direction of party bosses and professionals.

This delicate peace was shattered by the miscalculations of Democrat party leaders in 1968. It had been a year of violence, breakdown of law, and loss of trust in civil institutions. It was fertile soil for radicalism, and the climate in Chicago provided the opportunity for it to sprout into revolution. There was a disconnect between the elite and party establishment and the emerging generation of Democrats. The reporter <u>Harrison Salisbury</u> described the "gap between the hot reality in Chicago and the cool of the air-conditioned offices," the "children" versus Daley's "blue-helmets." Those very terms evoke images of extremism. Harrison used martial terms in describing the arrayed forces: "mustered," "brutality," "charge." What had caused this? The nomination process had once again failed. Hubert Humphrey, <u>despite not having contested a single primary</u>, was selected by the party bosses. The liberal, antiwar base felt unheard by the "air-conditioned-office" men. They saw violence as the only way to express their dissatisfaction. To reconcile this and keep radicalism at bay, the Democratic National Convention formed the <u>McGovern-Fraser Commission</u> to formulate new rules governing the selection of Presidential nominees. The commission adopted resolutions that were binding for state parties. These resolutions entailed 1) a mandated adoption of a primary for every state Democratic party (only fifteen states had Democratic primaries in use by 1968); 2) abolition of fees and filings that served to "compromise full and meaningful participation by inhibiting or preventing a Democrat from exercising his influence in the delegate selection process"; 3) affirmative action for the seating of women, young Democrats, and racial minorities; and 4) <u>direct democracy in the selection of party delegates</u> by rank-and-file party members for choosing presidential preference delegates to the Democratic National Convention. Democrats functioned under the guidelines of the commission for the first time in 1972. Republicans followed suit four years later under a modified form.

While these were good and democratic ideals, the reform has totally failed to satisfactorily achieve its

goals. The problem lies in the commission's <u>misguided notion</u> that "there is no one selection system ideal for all states" so that it was not "desirable to lay down uniform rules for delegate selection in the guidelines." Fifty-one years on, what have been the results of this decentralized system? Trust in government has fallen from an almost all-time high of 77 percent in the mid-to-late 1960s to a dangerous 20 percent in 2022. A noticeable drop-off <u>began</u> when the McGovern-Fraser Commission's proposed rules changes went into effect. In a similar way, party weakening <u>accelerated</u> since 1972 with a steady increase in the numbers of Americans identifying as independents. This is actually bad for the health of a democratic society. While these individuals no longer <u>identify</u> with a party, they are still more polarized. Parties act as a glue that holds individuals together. They provide an institutional space for them to express their anger, concerns, and desires with likeminded people in a manner that conforms with civil society, democratic etiquette, and respect for the rights of others. So-called elites (party bosses, policymakers, interest groups) then provide direction for party members to direct their energy and emotions toward compatible goals in a peaceful way through the ballot box. Without the moderating effect of strong national party infrastructure and party "elites" (super-delegates, elected officials, elder statesmen, party bosses, etc.), <u>voters are taken in by insurgent dogmatists and demagogue candidates</u> who then direct their energies and inflame their wounds. This is despite the fact that those candidates have less experience, connections, or institutional know-how to reach substantive policy goals. The result is gridlocked or dysfunctional government and lost opportunities to improve the welfare of the people and nation. Increasingly polarized citizens then lose further trust in the possibility of good government and so increasingly turn to more insurgent and radical candidates. And the cycle continues until an eventual implosion. Even when moderate establishment candidates do win, the party is <u>still weakened</u> after expensive, divisive primaries; over time, it is probable that the party base <u>will still become</u> more polarized or radical because extremists will still have a platform in a party primary.

So how do we fix this? There are two options, both of which lead to the same result. Either party bosses and establishments voluntarily institute a one-day national primary for the selection of their nominees for president, or federal legislation establishes a one-day national primary. The benefits of a one-day national primary are these: it removes the inequitable influence of often non-representative "front-loaded" primaries; it removes the power of dark money special interest groups in campaigns; it expands access to the ballot box by ending caucuses and making all states equal in potential importance; it ensures proportional winning of convention delegates; and, finally, it encourages coalition building, as candidates will have to appeal to a different regions of the country, and, with the possibility or reality of no candidate having a majority of delegates going into convention, it will force them to be as broadly appealing as possible. As I mentioned earlier, front-loaded primaries, such as those in Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina, disproportionately impact the candidate pool, with early wins creating momentum and garnering

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heightened media attention. This spotlight can lead to neglect of potentially more qualified candidates, fostering a lack of information about them. Consequently, voters in later states may feel compelled to choose candidates with perceived momentum, inadvertently limiting the diversity of options and influencing the election outcome. All this is contrary to what John Adams earlier called the democrat's principle that one man "can have but one vote."

Directly connected to the problem of front-loading is the power special interests hold in primaries. Candidates need large amounts of cash and fast if they wish to have a chance at a respectable showing early on, or even to qualify for the debates. This leads to dark money, special interests, often <u>far removed</u> from

the policy preferences of the median voter, having great leverage over potential candidates. Candidates are then forced to choose between being indebted to partisan special interests or a likely failed campaign before voting even begins. Again, this reverberates into either further polarization or the electorate feeling unrepresented, both of which destabilize our free system of government. A national primary will not end the problem of dark money entirely, but it will weaken its impact by providing candidates with more time to build a grassroots base of small donors and increasing their leverage against corporate super PACs.

The elimination of caucuses will increase ballot box access and voting equality. Out of all the forms of candidate selection, caucuses are the <u>least representative and most disenfranchising</u>. They have the lowest turnout, often averaging around 1 percent to 3 percent of eligible voters because of the physical stamina required to participate. The elderly, working individuals, and the disabled cannot always attend, and members of the military overseas or stationed at forts and bases in other parts of the country, as well as students away at college, are denied a voice because caucuses do not use normative secret balloting. Caucus goers have often been found to be significantly more polarized than similar voters in states that hold secret ballot primaries. A theorized reason is that the lower turnout in caucuses makes it easier for factions to "capture" a greater share of the vote. Ending caucuses would allow more participation thereby diluting the strength of factions and extremists. Finally, a proportional primary election system (in which all states vote on the same day) will ensure that if a candidate receives enough delegates to be declared the nominee, he or she would need to have been acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the party. If no candidate receives a majority of delegates, the nomination process would move to the convention, where different factions, party bosses, and candidates will check and balance each to produce a candidate that can unify the party. This is the same principle James Madison expressed in Federalist No. 51 when he <u>wrote</u> the following:

> It is of great importance in a republic, not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers; but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part. Different interests necessarily exist in different classes of citizens. If a majority be united by a common interest, the rights of the minority will be insecure […] in the federal republic of the United States. […] the society itself will be broken into so many parts, interests and classes of citizens, that the rights of individuals or of the minority, will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority.

A national primary is a Madisonian idea. As we approach what is sure to be a divisive primary season for Republicans and another close general election, it behooves us to candidly reflect on the utility of this idea. Do we want a small fraction of the base of either party to wield disproportionate influence over who the rest of the American citizenry can choose to be their President? We must remember that the President is the only national representative of the American people, the only government officer voted on by all eligible voters in all fifty states. It is therefore undemocratic for such a <u>small</u> and <u>increasingly extreme</u> group of voters to act as guardians of the presidential chair simply by the accident of state set primary dates that allowed for the <u>propulsion</u> of ideologues. The way to solve this is by widening the pool of voters so as to make "<u>ambition counteract ambition</u>" until "the private interest of every individual, may be a centinel over the public rights." The more voters there are, the wider the array of prevalent political interests, the harder it becomes for any one ideological faction to capture the reins of power. As we vote in order to govern ourselves, let us ever be doubtful of the ability of a few of us to govern the many others. ∎

Endnote

[1] Roosevelt lost the New York primary; similarly when Trump lost Iowa to Ted Cruz in 2016, he <u>claimed it was due to fraud</u>.

Tyler Mruczinski is a Senior at Immaculata University studying Political Science and Pre-Law. He plans to attend law school in the Fall for a Dual Major in Law (JD) and American Government (MA). He is also currently a Fellow for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives' Legislative Fellowship Program, working in the state capitol in Harrisburg.

THE UNSOLVED PUZZLES OF

WILLMOORE KENDALL

By Chris R. Morgan
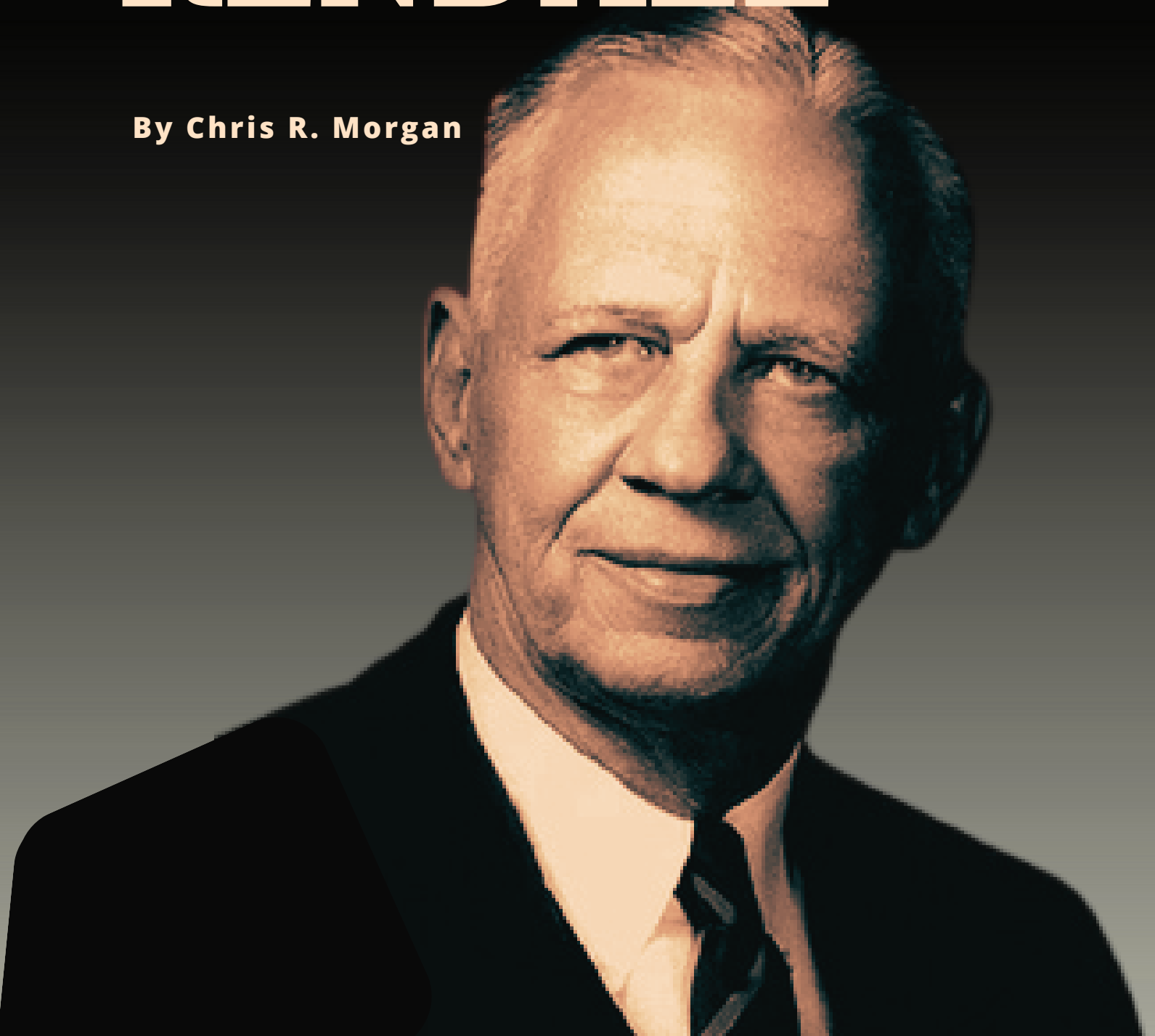
Willmoore Kendall always seemed more folk hero than thinker. This is evident enough when reading the work of his defenders, who usually open their pieces with a quick rehash of the man's "larger-than-life" presence. We are reminded of his contentious personal relations, such as those between his colleagues at Yale, which got so bad that the university effectively paid him to leave; of his prairie-boy-genius upbringing that saw him earning a BA in Romance Languages at the age of eighteen; of his work in the US intelligence services for which he wrote manuals for waging "psychological warfare" in China and Czechoslovakia; of his eccentric extracurricular antics such as (according to Jeffrey Hart) managing to talk a judge out of penalizing him for speeding on the New Jersey Turnpike without a license; and of his inflammatory and almost compulsive approach to debate, among other things.

These items are always recounted with a touch of glee, but not without some defensiveness as well. This, after all, is not why we are presumably reading about this person, who contributed significantly to American political thought and American conservative political thought in particular. Thus, we must then wade into the reflecting pool of his ideas: of orthodoxy, of legislative supremacy, of rule by the majority, and of the "deliberate sense of the community." He was not a "Calhounist" as Harry Jaffa so obsessively accused him, nor was he a raving egghead demagogue as Jeet Heer has lately come to conjure him. He was a substantial and singular defender of the singular and singularly conservative political system of the very *plural* United States of America.

Willmoore Kendall, in other words, would cut an impressive figure as part of the Hall of Conservative Sages. I can see the tableau now: the tall thin man sitting at his desk, surrounded by volumes of Locke, Rousseau, *The Federalist Papers*, and a pile of aggressively thumbed-through editions of Clinton Rossiter, penning one of his innumerable letters or essays, wearing a tweed suit and a raccoon-skin cap. What his animatronic likeness would say once intellectual tourists reached him, I could not guess. Maybe that quip about how Americans live out their political traditions "in their hip." Or maybe something from one of his acerbic "Liberal Line" columns in *National Review*. More likely it would be some withering remark about any other member of the Hall. Not that it matters, because Kendall's position in conservatism is so touchy and unusual that it is not easy to find a solid place. He would be tucked away in some corner, by the custodial

closet most likely, where only the lost or saddest visitors would find him.

Willmoore Kendall did think of himself as a conservative, and he was within his rights to think so. He was a mentor to its greatest publicist: William F. Buckley, Jr. As a result, he was a guiding presence in the early years of *National Review*. He held sentiments that were not out of place among conservatives of the mid-twentieth century: he thought communism the greatest threat to world order and had no qualms with American support of "rightwing dictatorships" in fighting it, he gave no quarter to notions of equality, and he was at best dismissive of the effects of segregation in the South. His essays included several attempts to define conservatism, conservative responses to liberal proposals, and polemics against competing versions of conservatism that he deemed fraudulent.

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But even with those credentials, Kendall falls short. There was something temporal, even incidental, about his thinking on conservatism. Once it reached a certain threshold it simply dissolved. Even Buckley, whose early writings reflected the style and preoccupations of Kendall almost a little too well, had to, as they say, evolve. Then there is the larger matter that when you take everything Kendall wrote about conservatism—which is pretty much *everything* he wrote—it does not add up to anything even approaching a coherent ideology. This maybe leads the reader to wonder, why bother writing about him at all? Fair, all things considered.

On a purely intellectual basis, Willmoore Kendall is a compelling figure. He was a sharp thinker, committed entirely to explaining American politics to Americans. He wrote in a prose style that was, to borrow Dwight Macdonald's famed adjective of Kendall,

"wild," combining cracker-barrel colloquialisms, polemical pyrotechnics, and sophisticated, if dense, analytical rigor. He could be righteous, he could be deliberately shocking, and he could even be funny—a rare thing among professed conservatives even today. Kendall could charm a reader into thinking they were witness to an obvious brilliance that approached genius, which tended to wear off once it was clear no one was less disabused of that notion than Kendall himself. Kendall is interesting in the way that people you never want to meet are interesting. Such thinkers are valuable either a) in how their insights, in spite of or because of their uniqueness, are eccentric or plain wrong; or b) in how the language of their time and place obscure broader, more timeless points of which not even the thinkers themselves were aware. I wish to argue the latter, but first I must address the former.

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The arc of Kendall's life is perhaps one of the most oddly shaped of anyone, beginning with a sharp incline. He was born in 1909 in Konawa, Oklahoma to a brilliant blind Methodist minister, also named Willmoore, whom he revered. His upbringing in the newly minted American state (one of its first senators being the fiercely independent Thomas Gore, grand-father of Gore Vidal) was nothing short of idyllic, marked by his father's preaching, baseball, and Boy Scouts. The sepia-toned Americana of his early life is perhaps the most significant influence on his thought.

Kendall stood out nearly as much as he fit in. To say he was precocious would be putting it mildly. By 1918, Kendall was entering high school. He entered Northwestern University at age thirteen before transferring to the University of Tulsa. He was the youngest college student in America at the time and was a minor celebrity for it. From ages thirteen to fifteen he worked as a reporter for the *Tulsa Tribune*. At twenty-three he arrived at Oxford and spent much of the 1930s traveling Europe, most significantly in Spain as a foreign correspondent during the Spanish Civil War. Then followed a series of teaching positions in the United States, work in the fledgling CIA, and finally his storied, tumultuous tenure as assistant professor of Political Science at Yale University from 1947 to 1961.

In politics Kendall started off very much as his father's son: a New Deal liberal. He showed early admiration for the work of Thorstein Veblen and Walter Lippman. He drifted toward Trotskyism at college, desiring to become a "socialist publicist." His rightward tilt began during the Spanish Civil War and during his service in the CIA. "Much of Kendall's

The University of Tulsa McFarlin Library in Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Photo credit: Wikimedia commons)

criticism of liberalism grew out of his work in the intelligence field," Jeet Heer writes. "He felt that the CIA was dominated by liberals who focused on the minute problems of each individual country or region they studied, had no broader sense of geopolitics, and were too inclined to fight communism by pushing American allies to adopt social democratic reforms."

Kendall's career was always colored by an anti-elitist and majoritarian hue, the tenor of his essays having fully calcified as early as 1939: "My point is that though Science [...] offers no pronouncements with regard to values, our leading publicists continue to talk as though it did. The effect of their debates is therefore to hide—from the debaters and listeners alike—the role of values in the formation of social policy, and to perpetuate a situation in which political discussion is the monopoly of the scientific elite."

The capitalization of sacred and profane terms—*Science, World Communism, Civil Rights, Liberal, Conservative*—along with notions of deception, willful or otherwise, from a minority opposition are also subsequent recurring themes.

It was as a conservative, though, that Kendall's vision felt most complete and was expressed most forcefully. He spoke of having a "messianic urge" to tell and retell the truth at which he finally arrived. Indeed, though his America-centric conservatism had no use for Burke, and he (rightly) criticized Russell Kirk and others for fetishizing him, he nonetheless sought to be America's Prophet in the Burkean mold—though by the time he reached the University of Dallas near the end of his life, he revised his stature from Burke to Moses. Even so, the grandeur seems out of proportion with the results, for over the course of the 1950s and 1960s Kendall's once steep arc starts to bend southward. Not all at once but to a still noticeable degree.

As far as I can tell, Kendall had few critics from the left in his lifetime, and his critics from the right tend to be as scathing as his defenders are elegiac. Joshua Tait's 2018 essay at *The University Bookman* is a refreshing addition to rightward Kendall criticism that splits the difference and breaks with the folk rehash-and-demystify formula. While not discounting Kendall's merits out of hand, Tait's piece ultimately concludes that Kendall's folk status is daunting for a good enough reason. Kendall's conservatism was, Tait writes, "sophisticated and deeply patriotic. He wed constitutionalism and majoritarianism, downplaying substantive rights. He was anti-liberal in the old sense

of the word, believing societies must maintain a public orthodoxy." Yet at the same time, "Kendall was self-sabotaging at nearly every turn. He left many fragments of work [...] but nothing major or even coherent. In part this was because Kendall thought in public, considering and casting off theses in print. He was also influenced mid-career by Eric Voegelin and Leo Strauss, which led him to revise and re-revise his own thinking."

To the regret of his admirers, Kendall never seemed capable of writing a book. Nor could he manage to form his essays into a unified tapestry as Kirk had done with his or as Buckley had done with his persona. Instead, what's left in 1963's *The Conservative Affirmation* and in the messier posthumous 1971 collection *Kendall Contra Mundum* is something like an assembly-required plaything.

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The centerpiece to Kendall's conservative Erector Set was his theory of the "two majorities," which addressed the tension in which American voters "give an apparent majority mandate to the President to apply principles 'x, y, and z,' and a simultaneous (demonstrable) majority-mandate to the Congress to keep him from applying them." The presidential mandate favors "enlightened" and "internationalist" leadership, it appeals to the intelligentsia and the civil service. By contrast, the congressional mandate is "pork barrel" and "nationalist"; it is favored by the constituents each congressman represents. Kendall's "messianic" aim, then, was to defend the congressional majoritarians against attacks laid by the presidential majoritarians of being "selfish," "obstructionist," "bigoted," and "irrational."

Out of this tension, the presidential majoritarians became Liberal and the congressional majoritarians, Conservative. Liberalism was always the force imposing from without, conservatism with the community whose way of life was under siege: "Nothing can be more certain than that the Founders bequeathed to us a form of government that was purely representative [...] that is, for electoral 'mandates' emanating from popular majorities. [...] The Liberals intend to overthrow that traditional form of government, have a carefully-worked-out program for overthrowing it, and labor diligently, year-in-year-out, to seize the strategic points they must seize to accomplish its overthrow."

More than that, liberalism "looks to the overthrow of an established social order" guided by the principle of "egalitarianism" as distinguished from the Declaration's equality principle, which it stands over "in a relation like that of a caricature to a portrait, or a parody to a poem. It says that men are not merely created equal [...] but rather ought, that is have a right, to be *made* equal. That is to say equalized, and equalized precisely by government action." Liberals, whether civil rights activists, Christian pacifists, or milquetoast reformers like Hubert Humphrey, are "revolutionaries" at heart who "refuse to take 'No' for an answer."

That the working title for *The Conservative Affirmation* was *What is Conservatism, and Other Anti-Liberal Essays* is quite telling of the book's most consistent theme. Kendall may not have spent the most time polemicizing the transgressions of liberals (he dedicates quite a number of pages to the transgressions of Clinton Rossiter, who uniquely set him off), but the power of those broadsides tends to overshadow whatever conservative doctrine he was trying to push. At times it reminds one of Pascal's *Provincial Letters* attacking the heresies and errors of the Jesuits. "The way to beat the Communists," concludes Kendall's sardonic review of Chester Bowles's *The*

New Dimensions of Peace, "is to accept leveling as the historic imperative of our age, prove that we can do it better, and assert proudly that we thought of it first. In short, the way to beat Communism is to be more Communist than the Communists."

Over time, Kendall, especially after his Strauss- and Voegelin-influenced reassessment, would talk up conservative principles of a Christian-based morality and of "the West," sometimes (as I will show) in grave terms, but that tends to take a backseat to the dirty business of resisting malignant thought. Kendall was a loud proponent of HUAC and of Joseph McCarthy well after the Senator's decline. Liberal-minded Americans were vulnerable if not already in the sway of World Communism. Communists, Kendall wrote, "must shift the mind of an entire people from one set of convictions to another."

> That explains why the Communists concentrate first on the elite group of the country they seek to subvert. It molds and sets public opinion, so that anything cast upon its waters is indeed likely to come back a hundredfold. First the writers, the scientists, the professors, the teachers, the artists. If they can be brought around, they can be counted on to force all other doors, and so carry Communist influence into all walks of life.

U.S. Senator Joe McCarthy of Wisconsin (right), presents at the McCarthy-Army hearings of the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations on June 9, 1954. (Photo credit: Wikimedia commons)

The temporality of Kendall's writing cannot be overlooked. Try as we might to conjure "McCarthyism" at even the faintest instance of emerging right-wing populism, McCarthy himself is the perfect ghost of the post-Roosevelt order, infused as it was by a triumphal liberalism. "In the United States at this time," Lionel Trilling wrote in _The Liberal Imagination_, "is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition." By contrast, "the conservative impulse and the reactionary impulse" are reduced to "action or irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas." I have not read anything of Kendall's that mentioned Trilling, Richard Hofstadter, or Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. by name, but Kendall did everything he could to flex those "irritable mental gestures" and to fuse it with the constitutional order as he saw it.

This is a conservatism of someone who died as the Summer of Love was just underway, and so did not live to see the swelling of the antiwar movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, the rise of the militant Weathermen against the more deliberative SDS, the rise and fall of Nixon, the rise of Reagan, the takeover of Congress by the "Watergate babies," the weak presidencies of Ford and Carter, _Roe v. Wade_, the failed Equal Rights Amendment, and the gradual rightwing turn of the Supreme Court. To any of these, Kendall might have had something interesting to say, but also not all that distinguishable from or as accessible as what was then being said by Buckley or Kirk, or for that matter Kristol, Podhoretz, or Moynihan.

At every turn of the conservative movement, Kendall's instinct was to turn against it, loudly. "Kendall destroyed nearly every relationship he had," Tait writes. "He fell out with _National Review_ over foreign policy, support for Barry Goldwater, and the nature of conservatism." Kendall's defenders tend to see this as proof of his being one step ahead of his peers. Kendall made an "affirmation," Gregory Wolfe wrote, "at a time when his fellow intellectuals abandoned themselves to a solipsistic fantasy world which affirmed nothing." Yet it is more accurate to say that Kendall was one step beside them. Kendall wrote of "some terrible anarchic thing way down inside me, that always puts me, instinctively, on the side of the pillow-throwers against the umpire, on the side of the freedom-riders (even though I disagree with them) against the Mississippi sheriff, on the side of George Washington against George III—and therefore on the side of the let-'em-speak contingent against the cen-

-sors and silencers."

Kendall-as-outsider thinker was always more compelling than Kendall-as-conservative sage. There was nothing sagacious about him. An outsider stands out not by his profession as one but by how poorly he fits in. Kendall did not want to simply fit in, but to _lead_ the conservative movement, only to find himself continuously in exile. His quirky Americana style, obvious brilliance, fragmentary body of work, and mercurial tendencies have much in common with another Western outsider with a folk-heroic aura: Daniel Johnston.

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A Kendall that is relevant to contemporary America is made possible by following two-and-a-half steps. Step one is to separate him from the conservative movement to which he clung for the better part of his career. Step one-point-five is to consider his use of "Liberal" and "Conservative" as archaisms that obscure broader issues. Step two is to narrow our view of his writings to those related to freedom of speech.

Kendall was a committed disenchanter of freedom of speech and of the civic worship of the Bill of Rights as a whole. He did this through a hyper-technical reading of the Bill, which he deemed an "afterthought," that saw no more "rights" than that of "peaceable assembly and petition for redress of grievances." Everything else is a carefully crafted set of congressional precepts Madison thought would entice Federalist votes. This, too, was replicated and then abandoned by conservatives. Justice Antonin Scalia's arch-conservative textual deference to the Constitution did not prevent broad, even permissive, readings in First Amendment cases. The broader conservative movement as a whole places paramount importance on freedom of speech and of religion, which Kendall denied existed in the way we commonly perceive them.

But Kendall went one further by exploring the implications of this mentality for the community. The Kendallian community does not accept as self-evident the notion that ideas, regardless of soundness or merit, should be brought to the public forum simply because "pursuit of truth" is a noble goal. Such a pursuit turns society into "a debating-club" that subordinates "all other considerations, all other goods, all other goals" to that perpetual and open-ended pursuit. Such a society, then, would deteriorate into a

paradoxical dilemma where every idea and no idea are tolerated.

The Kendallian community, however, would recognize, even tolerate, a minority of leisure truth-seekers, which is not the same thing as *empowering* them. If a member of the community wants to air a contrary opinion, he or she must persuade his or her fellow members and hopefully marshal a majority to his or her side of things. This must be done with the understanding that "orthodoxy" is "first and foremost the frame of reference within which the exchange of ideas and opinions is to go forward." But, Kendall cautions, a challenger of orthodoxy

> must expect barriers to be placed in his way, and must not be astonished if he is punished, at least in the short term, by what are fashionably called "deprivations"; he must, indeed, recognize that the barriers and deprivations are a necessary part of the organized procedure by which truth is pursued. Access to the channels of communication that represent the community's central ritual (the learned journals, that is to say) is something that the entrant wins.

This and the preceding summary are from "Conservatism and the 'Open Society' " in *The Conservative Affirmation*. Two chapters earlier in "Freedom of Speech in America," however, the procedural veneer is entirely absent: "One begins to suspect that the true American tradition is less that of Fourth of July orations and our constitutional law textbooks, with their cluck-clucking over so-called preferred freedoms, than, quite simply, that of riding someone out of town on a rail."

We have gotten, as Kendall might say, to the heart of the matter. A heart that <u>Murray Rothbard</u> saw quite clearly, writing that Kendall "is an *ur-democrat*, a Jacobin impatient of any restraints on his beloved community. He hates bureaucracy, but not as we do, because it is tyrannical; he hates it because it has usurped control from the popular masses." He is, in sum, "the philosopher *extraordinaire* of the lynch mob." And watching as the internet creates a digital "debating-club" of competing orthodoxies, he could also be seen as the philosopher of "cancel culture." The mentality echoes decades later in the well-known *xkcd* <u>strip</u>: "If you're yelled at, boycotted, have your show cancelled, or get banned from an internet community, your free speech rights aren't being violated. It's just that people think you're an asshole, and

they're showing you the door."

A less glib assessment of Kendall's contemporary importance might be to describe him as a modern philosopher of political force. That which he described in his works, and advocated for from a conservative stance, is not limited to a single ideology; it is simply to describe how a free people assert control over their freedom and maintain order. It is an Americanized restatement of Rousseau's most striking paradox of members of the general will being

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"forced to be free," and it is no mistake that Kendall translated *The Social Contract* and cited Rousseau at all stages of his career. His status as a philosopher of power puts him in unusual but more amenable company.

"Challenging the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of viewpoints. It is not a discourse on the universal, but the impassioned claim by the colonized that their world is fundamentally different. The colonial world is a Manichaean world." So wrote Frantz Fanon in <u>*The Wretched of the Earth*</u>. Fanon's landmark book, published two years before *The Conservative Affirmation*, explains how violent resistance against colonial rule is made inevitable by the dehumanizing effects of imperial power. On the surface it has nothing to do with Kendall's work, having been written an ocean and two continents apart by a clinical psychiatrist and collaborator with Algerian militants. But a broader examination shows some

thematic, and at times sometimes stylistic, overlap: "The violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world, which tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked the systems of reference of the country's economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress."

Kendall's work, like Fanon's, conveys a Manichaean worldview with each side separated by sharp "lines" of battle; one side is dominating or attempting to dominate the other through cruel or extralegal means, both sides are past the point where negotiations can achieve anything. Conflict—even, perhaps especially, violent conflict—is a matter of *when* rather than *if*. Fanon's writing took the view of the disempowered retaking what's rightfully theirs; Kendall's took the view of the empowered defending it. Fanon's view held the West as the prime enemy; Kendall held the West as the prime good. But switch *colonial* with *Liberal* and you have a close verbal equivalent of the split-screen in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*. From an essay in *Kendall Contra Mundum*:

> Those proposals, insofar as they involve the premise that we, Western man, can be blackmailed into a one-world despotism by the slogan "Federate or Perish," are for one thing, a libel, since they do not do us justice, and for another thing, a lie, because they deny the facts of history of Western man, who has never refused, when the highest values are at stake, to die for them. We suspect the man who so libels us, and so lies to us, of judging us by himself. We suspect him of being

a man who, having nothing to die for, can only babble about survival. We suspect him, in a word, of being a Liberal.

At the same time, this is unfair to Fanon, whose ideas, articulated over a series of books that have remained consistently in print, coherently convey what is, what *ought to be*, and what steps are required to take you out of one condition and into the other. Fanon, moreover, understood who the enemy was, having treated them alongside their victims. No such simplicity arises from Kendall's work, where the enemy is inventively duplicitous and friends are never who they seem. Communists are wolves, liberals are their sheepskins, and "conservatives" are shepherds operating at various levels of willful ineptitude. Kendall was a thinker in motion, a reactionary in the most literal sense of the word, balancing those opposing yet particularly American stances of optimism and distrust. This aptitude made him compelling as a teacher as much as a legend. Though as a writer he offers not so much a system as a series of insoluble constitutional and philosophical puzzles, perfectly fitted to a collective American mind as hopeful and as apprehensive as his own. ∎

This is a modified version of an essay that originally appeared in Jacobite.

Chris R. Morgan *writes from New Jersey. His Twitter is <u>here</u> and his Substack is <u>here</u>..*

A STALE CRITIQUE OF MODERNITY

A *Review of John Gray's* The New Leviathans

By Joseph Stieb

John Gray is one of contemporary liberalism's most incisive critics. Unfortunately, *The New Leviathans* descends into a strange, meandering diatribe that adds little to his considerable intellectual legacy.

Gray's bewildered readers have to piece together his argument from disjointed segments of the book. His thesis, so far as I can tell, is that modern liberal states have become "new Leviathans" that do not simply protect citizens' rights and lives but try "to secure meaning in life for their subjects." Politics has been reduced to a Schmittian struggle of rival groups seeking to "capture the power of the state in a new war of all against all" and engage in "an unrelenting struggle for the control of thought and language." Giving no evidence or examples, he asserts that "Western societies have dismantled liberal freedoms" and renounced the liberal value of tolerance.

Grey's evidence for these dramatic claims seems to be the rise of "woke" ideologies on campus. He laments that "education inculcates conformity with the ruling progressive ideology. The arts are judged by whether they serve approved political goals. Dissidents from orthodoxies on race, gender, and empire find their careers terminated and their public lives erased."

These trends certainly intensified in the 2010s, as numerous critics have already contended. There is a type of "hyper-liberalism," visible in both progressivism and neo-liberalism, that seeks at all costs to "emancipate human beings from identities that have been inherited from the past" and free them to "make of themselves whatever they wish." He wisely notes that "human beings can never be entirely self-defined.

If their identity is to be more than a private fantasy, they must somehow induce others to accept it."

Grey is right to challenge some of liberalism's excesses and assumptions, as he has done throughout his career. However, he adds little insight into how and why these ideas ascended nor much evidence that liberalism has become defunct or irrelevant. He is maddeningly vague about who today's modern "hyper-liberals" are. He also ignores that most of "woke" ideology is confined to progressive activists and segments of academia, that it remains hotly contested among liberals and rather unpopular among the public, and that this ideological fever may be fading.

Grey endorses a more tragic political ethos that accepts there will be no teleological global triumph for liberal ideas, as too many liberals believed after the Cold War ended. The world will remain one of "disparate regimes interacting with one another in a condition of global anarchy," including states like China and Russia that will follow their own historical paths. This offers a healthy dose of realism for liberal crusaders, but other scholars have developed these critiques far more effectively.

Gray often undermines his own style as a hard-nosed truth-teller with comic hyperbole. At one point he declares, "The liberal West is possessed by an idea of freedom. Any curb on human will is condemned as a mode of repression." This ignores that citizens of liberal societies accept dozens of reasonable limits on their freedoms and that part of the point of a liberal social contract is to continually debate the boundaries of liberty. US society may have an imbalanced approach to rights and responsibilities, but this book's many exaggerations add more heat than light to this conversation.

The book's haphazard structure is as frustrating as its hazy and histrionic arguments. Just as the reader is

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getting a foothold on an interesting idea, the book veers toward another topic, inducing the constant question, "Why am I reading this?" He devotes about one-third of the book to mini-biographies of intellectuals who became victims of Soviet or Nazi totalitarianism. As evocative as these stories are, he does not connect them to his argument. In fact, bringing up these accounts undermines his argument that modern liberalism is a new authoritarianism by reinforcing the horrors of actual tyranny. Later in the book, he deviates from critiquing liberal individualism into meditations on H. P. Lovecraft and Freudian psychology.

This book could have found value if it had expanded its tantalizing but inchoate analysis of Hobbes. Gray treats Hobbes as the archetypical liberal who believed the purpose of government was "to protect human beings from one another," not to offer salvation, guar-

-antee prosperity, or remake humanity. In a fascinating passage, he notes that Locke believed that human beings were ultimately the property of God while the more materialist Hobbes held that they were property only of themselves. This could have been the start of a compelling analysis of Hobbes's influence on modern liberalism, but Grey abandons the thread.

The New Leviathans embodies two pitfalls of intellectual prominence. The first is the tendency to equate reflexive pessimism with substantive critique. The second is that prominent senior academics can get someone to print almost anything they write, no matter how half-baked, creating the moral hazard of producing shoddy, underdeveloped work that no junior scholar could ever dream of publishing.

Gray's scholarship remains important for critics and defenders of liberalism alike. In his fascinating book, *Two Faces of Liberalism*, he develops the idea of a value-pluralistic modus vivendi liberalism that enables people with competing conceptions of a good life to coexist. But readers interested in postliberal ideas should look elsewhere. As flawed as the work of figures like Patrick Deneen may be, they at least make coherent arguments, in contrast to this nearly incomprehensible book. ▪

Joseph Stieb is an Assistant Professor of National Security Affairs at the United States Naval War College and the Foreign Affairs Editor of The Vital Center.

Mitt Romney at CPAC in Orlando, FL.
Photo credit: Gage Skidmore via **Wikimedia commons**

A CENTRIST IN THE ARENA

By Jeffery Tyler Syck

As a general rule, biographies of still breathing contemporaries are a dull affair. They tiptoe around controversy, withhold crucial information, and lack the general mystique that death gives all statesmen. McKay Coppins's recently released book, <u>Romney: A Reckoning</u>, is an exception to this rule. On the surface, the book is simply a fun read—mixing amusing morsels of political gossip (such as the fitness routines of sitting United States Senators) with hard boiled commentary on our contemporary political crisis. But at heart, this biography is an intimate, and sometimes blunt, portrait of an ambitious politician struggling to remain true to his centrist principles.

Throughout his long career, one accusation has ceaselessly plagued Mitt Romney—that he is a "flip-flopper." Those who follow politics have no doubt heard these attacks, which typically paint Romney as a political weathervane who changes views based on what stance will best promote his career. In the book Romney offers his own defense of this critique: "Foolish consistency was not a virtue. Changing your mind could be good." Coppins adds, "He [Romney] didn't see most policy disputes in clearly black-and-white terms" (p. 83). In short, Romney has never much believed that there is much point in sticking to a stance simply because you used to hold that view. We are always being presented with new information, and only an extremist would not allow their politics to reflect this.

There is, however, another reason that Mitt Romney so often seems to alter his political views—one that is at once more honorable and far harder to explain. First, though, it is important to establish the guiding principles of Romney's political life. Throughout all of his campaigns and shifting policy positions, at heart Romney is a centrist conservative. Coppins describes this attitude early on in the book, declaring that "Romney was not an ideologue. He prided himself on this fact. Though he was a Republican, he had no patience for Rush Limbaugh and never read *National Review*. If he adhered to any kind of conservatism at all, it was of the small c variety […] He saw himself as a partisan of pragmatism" (p. 68) In this respect, Romney has all the hallmarks of a conservative centrist—including a fundamental belief that politics should be gradual, moderate, and pragmatic. The problem Romney soon discovered upon entering political life is that centrist politics are not rewarded in the American political system. In fact, they are actively discouraged by political institutions and electorates that demand a certain level of ideological purity from their candidates.

At this point Romney was faced with a choice all aspirants to high office must one day make: Do I compromise on my own beliefs to attain political power or do I sit on the sidelines pushing for my views as a private citizen? As we all know, Romney chose a life in the arena. Thus, to an extent his critics

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are right that Romney is a political weathervane. He does not, however, alter his policy stances merely to gain power; rather, he seeks to gradually shift politics toward his own, out-of-favor centrism.

In the most shocking instance of Romeny's willingness to compromise, he abandoned the firm view of his Mormon faith in order to defend a woman's right to choose an abortion while he was campaigning to be governor of Massachusetts, only to become ardently pro-life the second he started campaigning for the Republican nomination for president. Such a change of stance can be easy enough to bear—after all Romney had no real chance of moving the needle on abortion policy as the governor of such a socially liberal state—but Coppins makes clear that at several intervals Romney made compromises that betrayed his core beliefs and damaged the cause of conservative centrism. The most obvious example is Romney's accepting of Donald Trump into the Republican fold throughout his 2012 presidential campaign—courting the reality star's endorsement and permitting him to campaign on behalf of the nominee (p. 166). To say that Romney is responsible for the rise of Donald Trump would be disingenuous, and yet in hindsight, it is clear that he played an important role in elevating the eccentric New York billionaire to the forefront of American politics.

The pressing philosophic question that emerges from this book is whether Romney's chameleon strategy to promote conservative centrism is the work of an honorable man doing his best in a fallen world or the product of spiritual corruption. Coppins seems to favor the idea of Romney as a flawed but genuinely virtuous man, a view that is bolstered by Romney's one-man stand against the populists in his own party. Though an equally plausible explanation of Romney's behavior is that throughout his earlier career, the Senator has continually sacrificed principle upon the altar of power in a way that is disturbing to any honest man.

In the final analysis, though, Romney seems to resemble the Roman statesman Cicero more than any duplicitous Crassus or Wolsey. Cicero was doggedly dedicated to the Republic and battled against the extremist forces of the left and right to try and preserve the country that he loved. In the process, he was forced to do a great deal of political gymnastics—supporting the populists and the aristocrats in turn so that he could deal with the most pressing threat. In the end, Cicero failed in his mission and the republic collapsed. Similarly, Romney has failed to make conservative centrism an important part of American politics. Though he deserves all the praise in the world for trying. ■

Jeffery Tyler Syck is the founding editor of The Vital Center *and an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Pikeville in his native Kentucky.*

Narcissus

The grass and trees and grove
Appear not half so real
As what the waters of
The pool to his eyes reveal.

The rocks and birds and ground,
Bright sky and thickets dim
Become one face, one sound
To echo his love to him.

After Bruegel's *De Kindermoord Te Bethlehem*

In armor colored like an angry sky
Some horsemen hired for mercenary pay
Stare from their mounts upon a morning's work,
Where innocence cannot outlive the day.

A captain dressed in scarlet in the foreground
Looks to his right in gesture, his head bent
Toward a faceless comrade, letting him turn
His bearded face away from the event.

A father fallen on his knees prays mercy
From men deaf to the language of the weak.
Infrequent snowflakes fall on pointed rooftops.
The heavens otherwise seem not to speak.

Thomas Banks lives in North Carolina and teaches online at The House of Humane Letters. His writing has appeared in First Things, Quadrant, Modern Age, The European Conservative, *and other publications.*

Moscow in Winter from the Sparrow Hills *by Ivan Constantinovich Aivazovsky. Oil on canvas, 1872. (Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons)*