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Cultural Vandalism: Lust to Rule, Road to Ruin

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ABSTRACT

The historical dynamism and resilience of Western civilization bespeaks both the Christian faith that laid its foundations and its ability to transform the families, institutions, and cultures of the world into which it grew. As faith wanes within its realm, cultural revolutionaries vie for control over the estate and the distribution of its assets. The prospect of recovery or renewal of the West depends on the character and courage of its heirs to repent and restore a depleted heritage.

Unity and uniformity have been blended in our minds ... Here one has to remember Procrustes, the legendary Greek robber and sadist who flung his victim onto a bed. Those who were too short were stretched and hammered until they filled it; those who were too long were 'cut to size.' Procrustes is the forerunner of modern tyranny. – Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn¹

I FIRST CONSIDERATIONS: BEARING WITNESS

In 2007 the political philosopher Father James Schall published a

¹ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Leftism: From de Sade and Marx to Hitler and Marcuse* (Arlington House, 1974) 19, 20.

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close textual analysis of a lecture given by a former college professor. Like another lecture given three decades earlier, its aftershocks reverberated for weeks if not years.

On 12 September 2006, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the assembled faculty at Regensburg, a university which, like the civilization it represents, was originally ‘called forth not by itself nor from the state, but from the heart of the Church.’² Described as an appeal ‘for freedom of conscience in religious matters and a reasoned debate,’ the Regensburg Lecture was intended, in part, to recall western civilization to the centrality of that faith which had launched Europe on its historical trajectory of converting tribes into nations, spreading legal and political reform, and releasing “the genie of limitless possibility” by implementing the creation mandate (Gen 1:28) through technological innovation, economic revolution, general literacy, the rise of modern science and medicine, hospitals, public libraries, institutional liberty and self-government.³ As Christopher Dawson noted decades earlier:

Christianity has always been a culturally creative force. It came first into a world which was overcivilized, where the social soil was becoming exhausted and the burden of empire and law was becoming too heavy for human nature to bear. And it transformed and renewed this civilization ... by revealing the existence of a new spiritual dimension and bringing the light of hope to those

² James V Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture* (St Augustine’s Press, 2007) 79.

³ Kenneth Minogue, *Politics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 1995) 48. Niall Ferguson, Tom Holland, Charles Murray, Marcello Pera, and other religious skeptics regard Christianity as essential to the West. See Jonathon van Maren, ‘Grave Men Facing a Grave Faith’, *Convivium* (Web Article, 25 May 2021)

who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.⁴

Foundational to this transformation, as Father Schall wrote elsewhere, is the Gospel's Great Commission (Matt 28:20-22): 'No doubt, the inner dynamism of Christianity was to "go forth and teach all nations:"'⁵

David Goldman, in his book, *It's Not the End of the World: It's Just the End of You*, put it this way: 'Hilaire Belloc's famous quip – "Europe is the faith, and the faith is Europe" – is precisely correct.'

Europe is where Old Testament, New Testament, Greek, and Roman traditions melded with the so-called barbarians coming off of the Eurasian continent. The fusion did not happen overnight, but it did happen. Europe's unity was hammered out in thought from the Fathers of the Church to Aquinas. The Reformation was not so much an argument against this thesis, but about its origins. Luther's problem with Aristotle was a harbinger of divisions to come.⁶

At the center of this sea change lay a spiritual understanding of both God and man. Contrary to modern notions, the Christian view, as Schall observed, is that man 'is intended to a supernatural end' and 'seeks what is properly the inner life of the Godhead as his final good.'⁷

⁴ Christopher Dawson, 'Christian Culture as a Culture of Hope' in Gerald J Russello (ed), *Christianity and European Culture: Selections from the Work of Christopher Dawson* (Catholic University of America, 1998) 49-50.

⁵ James V Schall, *Remembering Belloc* (St Augustine's Press, 2013) 155.

⁶ Ibid 153 (citations omitted). This Germanic contribution was marginalised through the "grand narrative" of the Great Books curriculum – what M Stanton Evans called the 'liberal history lesson' – following the First World War. See David Gress, *From Plato to NATO: The Idea of the West and Its Opponents* (Free Press, 1998); M Stanton Evans, *The Theme Is Freedom* (Regnery, 1994).

⁷ Schall (n 2) 91.

The Russian sociologist Pitirim Sorokin argued that ‘Christianity raises man to the highest level of sanctification, and protects him unconditionally against any use as a mere means to an end.’ Yet the material superfluity of Christendom’s flowering in the High Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation aroused hedonism as well as a utilitarian ethic that reflected an increasingly humanistic, Sensate culture.⁸

This faith stands in marked contrast to a relativistic skepticism which marginalises its practice and asserts the primacy of will (voluntarism): an attitude that ‘nothing objective exists to distinguish one view from another except power or choice.’⁹ Apart from clear provisions for justice, the operation of a sovereign will – whether by one, a few, many, or a state – is apt to degenerate into despotism.¹⁰

Different perspectives on liturgy – the character of worship – and the place of the classical heritage engendered rifts. Pope Benedict contends that, historically, ‘Biblical faith, in the Hellenistic period, encountered the best of Greek thought at a deep level,’ which resulted in a mutual enrichment that culminated in an ‘inner rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek philosophical inquiry’ in Scholastic philosophy. This medieval synthesis was ‘countered by a call for a dehellenisation of Christianity’ that arose within the Reformation and developed through a series of three stages which, he argued, led to the positivist reduction of science to ‘the interplay of mathematical and

⁸ Pitirim A Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age: The Social and Cultural Outlook* (Dutton, 1941) 139.

⁹ Schall (n 2) 91.

¹⁰ See Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (University of Chicago Press, 1951) 44-46; see also: St Augustine, *City of God*, IV, 3-4.

empirical elements' and the exclusion of 'the question of God.'¹¹ Man himself is then reduced to 'the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms.'¹² As Karl Marx declared: 'All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.'¹³ Indeed, all the fixed stars of the old order are falling. As Pope Benedict concluded: 'In this way ... ethics and religion lose their power to create a community and become a completely personal matter.'¹⁴ Social atomisation invites the imposition of controls over populations rendered at once detached yet dependent, restive yet submissive.¹⁵

James Kurth, a Presbyterian elder, takes a different tack: 'the central and fundamental issues involved the way that the Christian believer reached a state of salvation and the roles that the priestly hierarchy and the parish community played in the process.' The Reformers were persuaded that 'the believer can achieve a greater knowledge of God ... through reading of the Holy Scriptures.'¹⁶

Even so, Kurth agrees that a declension has occurred. A subsequent "Protestant Deformation" takes too far the rejection of hierarchy and community in other domains of life. Although free markets and liberal democracy are valuable byproducts of the Reformation, 'the free market could not be so free, nor the liberal democracy so liberal, that

¹¹ Schall (n 2) 142. For a discussion of positivism, see 'Politics of the Mind' in Paul Valéry, *The Collected Works of Paul Valery* (Pantheon Books, 1962) vol 10, 106.

¹² Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic: Including A Free Man's Worship* (George Allen & Unwin, 1976).

¹³ Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, ch 1.

¹⁴ Schall (n 2) 143.

¹⁵ See, eg, Christopher Dart, 'The Sixties Scoop Explained', *CBC* (Web Article).

¹⁶ Originally a lecture at the 2001 meeting of the Philadelphia Society. James Kurth, *The American Way of Empire: How America Won a World – But Lost Her Way* (Washington Books, 2019) 58, 59.

they became anarchy.¹⁷ Institutions must be ordered according to some principle, such as the written contract and the written constitution. The question that confronts us today is: How may we defend these institutions – and the liberty they protect – against the siren calls of rival claimants to authority? Against the deceptive inculcation of ideologies that – like Irving Janis’s groupthink¹⁸ – coerce conformity?¹⁹

The historical divisions which undercut Christian unity – represented in part by the medieval Battle of the Universals – reflect an unresolved epistemological and cosmological tension that is nested within the beating heart of the West.²⁰ This conflict of worldviews shades into rationalism and voluntarism at the extremes.

The challenge issued by the German Pope may be likened to that of the earlier Reformer, Martin Luther. Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, a product of the same venerable academic tradition, detected the Christian university’s roots in Biblical precedent:

Luther, the man who offered comfort to his prince, was no isolated individual like Thomas Paine; he was the rightful spokesman of the City of God, the guardian of the opened and re-opened Bible, the trusted interpreter of Holy Scripture, one of the ordained seventy interpreters of the old Church, with the power of binding and loosing, but with the authority to open and close a public discussion in matters of national interest. The German professor was always careful to keep as part of his

¹⁷ Ibid 62.

¹⁸ Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

¹⁹ These practices may be described as “an establishment of religion” in contravention of the American Constitution. Steven Alan Samson, ‘Binding Leviathan: The Case for Institutional Liberty’ (2021) (Mar-Apr) *The Market for Ideas* 28.

²⁰ On realism vs nominalism, see Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (Belknap Press, 2014) ch 23.

title the addition, 'Public Professor,' in order to make clear his political sovereignty ... The salvation-character of scholarship, utterly foreign to the rest of the world, is the religious key to the political building erected by the Reformation.²¹

Perhaps the closest recent parallel to the Regensburg Lecture may be found in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's 1978 Harvard Address, in which the exiled Soviet dissident diagnosed the self-inflicted wounds of a West which had, in recent centuries, turned to materialism from 'the moral heritage of Christian centuries with their great reserves of mercy and sacrifice.' The consequences of this lapse have been suicidal: 'The two so-called world wars (they were by far not on a world scale, not yet) constituted the internal self-destruction of the small progressive West which has thus prepared its own end.'²²

In the face of mortal danger Solzhenitsyn challenged his audience: 'How is it possible to lose to such an extent the will to defend oneself?' Citing Karl Marx's assertion that 'communism is naturalized humanism,' Solzhenitsyn said he saw 'the same stones in the foundations of an eroded humanism and of any type of socialism.' Even so, the materialism of the West was no match for that of the Communist bloc:

The interrelationship is such, moreover, that the current of materialism which is farthest to the left, and is hence the most consistent, always proves to be stronger, more attractive, and victorious. Humanism which has lost its Christian heritage cannot prevail in this competition. Thus during the past centuries

²¹ Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* (William Morrow, 1938) 397-399.

²² Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 'A World Split Apart' (Speech, Harvard University, 8 June 1978). See also: James Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism* (John Day, 1964).

and especially in recent decades, as the process became more acute, the alignment of forces was as follows: Liberalism was inevitably pushed aside by radicalism, radicalism had to surrender to socialism, and socialism could not stand up to communism. The Communist regime in the East could endure and grow due to the enthusiastic support from an enormous number of Western intellectuals who (feeling the kinship!) refused to see communism's crimes, and when they no longer could do so, they tried to justify these crimes. The problem persists: In our Eastern countries, communism has suffered a complete ideological defeat; it is zero and less than zero. And yet Western intellectuals still look at it with considerable interest and empathy, and this is precisely what makes it so immensely difficult for the West to withstand the East.²³

Today's West is hard-pressed to make a full-throated defense of freedom. Michael Polanyi, Paul Valéry, José Ortega y Gasset, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, Nicholas Berdyaev, Gabriel Marcel, and many others made note of this same deficiency generations earlier and attributed it to a shallow philosophical positivism that reduced man and science to strictly natural processes. These critics understood that science is

²³ Ibid. 'Marxism owes its remarkable power to survive every criticism to the fact that it is not a truth-directed but power-directed system of thought.': Roger Scruton, *A Political Philosophy* (Continuum, 2006) 149. On Western intellectuals who sympathised with Communism, see Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba* (Harper Colophon, 1983).

an offshoot of the complex Christian civilization which gave it life.²⁴ Once plucked from its cultural roots, science diminishes into a mere technicism that is unable to sustain the whole civilized enterprise. Scientists themselves are increasingly products of the prevailing positivism. When Ortega wrote *The Revolt of the Masses* in 1930 he described the type of man coming to predominate as ‘a barbarian appearing on the stage through the trap-door, a “vertical invader.”’²⁵ Ortega was concerned with the rise of a new primitivism, not simply C P Snow’s later idea of a rift between two cultures: science and the humanities. Like Polanyi and Valéry, he believed that modern men were becoming divorced from the civilization that nurtured them.

A civilized person should be equipped, like Robinson Crusoe, to rebuild civilization. It is not simply a matter of having the right answers but knowing the right questions to ask. We struggle with a widening gap between what Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn called *scita* and *scienda*. *Scita* is the body of knowledge generally available to the people and their representatives. *Scienda*, however, is the knowledge necessary to make sound decisions. With the reliance – even dependency – of credulous leaders on narrow expertise, ‘a new and outright humiliating fideism is being bred in the very shadow of rationality and scientism.’ Formulaic thinking enjoys an advantage in the scrum of intellectual

²⁴ Marcel attributed reductionism to a ‘depreciatory resentment’ against the integrity of the real world. Gabriel Marcel, *Man Against Mass Society* (Gateway, 1962) 156. G K Chesterton, with typical irony, spoke up for the idea of ‘science for science’s sake.’ Pure science is flexible; it can correct its mistakes and weaknesses. But when applied to society it is made concrete. A single moment from an ongoing process of scientific development is then preserved and turned into a social reality. G K Chesterton, ‘The Inefficiency of Science’ (1929) (November) *North American Review* 587, 588-589; see also Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (Avon, 1967).

²⁵ José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (W W Norton, 1932) 87.

one-upmanship and in the interest of preserving power.

The way to avoid a development which spells catastrophe for our freedom lies in the creation of sacrosanct domains beyond the grasp of power-hungry centralist forces, areas where the individual or limited groups can act freely, because there *scita* and *scienda* are still correlated – in the family, the small enterprise, the village, the borough, the county.²⁶

The attraction that communism held in Solzhenitsyn's day – the demonstration effect of a powerful myth – is also true of present-day social justice movements. Absent from any consideration, however, is the Christian imagination that originally envisioned the West's civilizational enterprise and the powerful thrust which still carries it forward.²⁷

II NEHEMIAH'S JOB: ENTREPRENEURIAL REBUILDING²⁸

The economic historian David Landes described 'the Church as custodian of knowledge and school for technicians' and attributed western inventiveness – eyeglasses, mechanical clocks, printing presses – to four factors: the Judeo-Christian respect for manual labor, its subordination of nature to man, its sense of linear time, and the market of free enterprise. 'Success bred imitation and emulation.'²⁹

²⁶ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, 'Scita Et Scienda: The Dwarfing of Modern Man' (1974) 3(10) *Imprimis* 1.

²⁷ See Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (Thomas Nelson, 2011). Christendom is the West's unacknowledged bedrock.

²⁸ The core of this section was published in Romania at *Profit*, 7 June 2021. The title is a hat tip to Albert Jay Nock's essay, 'Isaiah's Job'.

²⁹ David S Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (W W Norton, 1998) 58-59.

There resulted a great release of energy which enhanced human flourishing and brought about social changes of the sort Rosenstock-Huessy noted: the peace of the land, the free choice of a profession, philanthropy, freedom of the mind.³⁰ The traditional “hieratic monopoly” of Latin – a source of power to clergy and rulers alike – was broken once the Bible was translated into the vernacular languages.³¹ Both literacy and liberty became widespread regardless of class and gender, placing government by consent within reach, along with challenges to traditional sources of authority. Recordkeeping flourished, as did popular literature, much of it explicitly Christian. Westerners became ‘passionately curious about other peoples and societies.’ Social mobility increased both vertically and laterally. As Landes exclaimed enthusiastically: ‘*Literate mothers matter.*’³²

Rosenstock-Huessy similarly described the missionary calling of the West as it radiated outward from the nucleus of a loose-knit Frankish/Saxon empire through a series of clerical, then increasingly secular, revolutions – German, English, French, and Russian – that traversed the continent, then the world. It is a civilization originally fashioned out of the European wilderness and the ruins of imperial Rome.³³

In ‘The European Miracle,’ the economic historian Ralph Raico draws upon the work of Peter Bauer, David Landes, Norman Cantor, Helmut Schoeck, and Harold J Berman to discern the reasons for the West’s

³⁰ Rosenstock-Huessy (n 21) 30-32.

³¹ A now-secularised intellectual class or clerisy has persisted. Although its roots are in the Church and monasteries, it betrays political ambitions. A century ago Julien Benda regretted the loss of a universal language: ‘All humanity including the “clerks,” have become laymen. All Europe, including Erasmus, has followed Luther.’: Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals (La Trahison des Clercs)*, tr Richard Aldington (W W Norton, 1969).

³² Landes (n 29) 32, 52, 178. Italics in the original.

³³ Rosenstock-Huessy (n 21) 496.

success, noting especially its model of civil society and its relative absence of institutionalised envy.³⁴

The key to western development is to be found in the fact that, while Europe constituted a single civilization – Latin Christendom – it was at the same time radically decentralized. In contrast to other cultures – especially China, India, and the Islamic world – Europe comprised a system of divided and, hence, competing powers and jurisdictions.³⁵

The West's great wellspring was a visionary and voluntary Christian missionary enterprise that began by reclaiming arable land, salvaging the remnants of its spiritual and secular antecedents, and crafting new inventions and institutions as practical embodiments of faith, hope, and charity. As Rosenstock-Huessy concluded in *Out of Revolution*, 'the unique experiment of the Western World consists in regenerating a former world.'

No nation, no cities, yet an emperor, was the paradoxical situation a thousand years ago ... The unique experiment of the Western World consists in rebuilding a former world ... It was European civilization as a whole which was called upon to represent the idea of the ancient city-state! The civilized nations are sectors of *one* city. The concept of a universal civilization opposing a multitude of local economic units was the emperor's gift to the European tribes.³⁶

³⁴ One form is redistribution of wealth; another is rent-seeking: a pay-to-play scheme that, like toll castles, enriches the gatekeeper. See Jonathan R T Hughes, *The Governmental Habit Redux* (Princeton University Press, 1991) 1-12.

³⁵ Ralph Raico, 'The Theory of Economic Development and the European Miracle' in Peter J Boettke (ed), *The Collapse of Development Planning* (New York University Press, 1994). See Niall Ferguson on the 'open access pattern' that arose among the elites in medieval England and Western Europe: Niall Ferguson, *The Great Degeneration: How Institutions Decay and Economies Die* (Penguin, 2013) 24-25.

³⁶ Rosenstock-Huessy (n 22) 488-89.

The kings of early Christendom were bound by oath to uphold the inherited body of laws that held their kingdoms together.³⁷ Medieval Europe was decentralised, yet a common legal order spread through most of it.³⁸ The condominium of church and state divided sovereignty and decentralised it with respect to territories as well as functions.³⁹ Civil liberty and self-government requires checks and balances to protect private initiative and free enterprise because ‘every political power tends to reduce everything that is external to it, and powerful objective obstacles are needed to prevent it from succeeding.’⁴⁰ The rule of law within regimes of divided, delegated, and responsible power is an essential underpinning of Adam Smith’s invisible hand and Friedrich Hayek’s idea of spontaneous order.

Today’s shrinking world bound by mass communication networks provokes and amplifies demands for simple authoritarian solutions to life’s injustices and inconveniences. Yet we should consider: Why has a relative absence of external oversight historically prevailed where the Christian ethic of moral self-government is widely practiced? Does political, economic, and moral self-discipline require elaborate central command structures or a population force-fitted into ideological straitjackets – perhaps a Procrustean bed – that turn citizens into subjects?⁴¹ To the contrary: Politics, the art of persuasion, flourishes best in the absence of despotism, the technology of coercion. Rather than dictate outcomes in advance, governments that respect free

³⁷ Minogue (n 3) 26-27.

³⁸ See Ruben Alvarado, *A Common Law: Western Civilization and the Law of Nations* (WordBridge, 1999).

³⁹ Joseph Lecler, *The Two Sovereignities: A Study of the Relationship Between Church and State* (Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1952) 10.

⁴⁰ Raico (n 35).

⁴¹ See Steven Alan Samson, ‘Ideological Straitjackets Turn Citizens into Subjects’, *Townhall Finance* (Web Article, 28 October 2020).

inquiry, liberty of expression, and entrepreneurship have enabled innovation to flourish. As a result, the face of the world has changed within the span of an ordinary lifetime.

The West's current neglect of its moral – even more than its physical – infrastructure weakens the resilience required for nations, families, and individuals to recover from life's calamities.⁴² An intrusive regulatory state that fosters dependency provokes public exasperation. Here we find parallels with the French Revolution.⁴³ In *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad characterised civilization as a thin veneer.⁴⁴ It is a common resource which must be renewed and defended every generation.

How each rising generation is educated is truly a matter of national security, but this does not make education the unique and specific responsibility of the state. Paradoxically, the state must depend upon virtues it is not well-equipped to instill. As the Christian political philosopher J Budziszewski puts it: 'Through *subsidiarity*, the government honors virtue and protects its teachers, but without trying to take their place.'⁴⁵ A healthy civil society nurtures a variety of institutions, including the voluntary associations described by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*.⁴⁶

⁴² Aaron Wildavsky balances anticipation (prepared and alert) and resilience (sufficient resources held in reserve). Aaron Wildavsky, 'If Regulation Is Right, Is It Also Safe?' in Tibor R Machan and M Bruce Johnson (eds), *Rights and Regulation: Ethical, Political, and Economic Issues* (Pacific Institute for Public Policy Research, 1983) xv-xvii.

⁴³ Thomas Molnar, *The Counter-Revolution* (Funk & Wagnalls, 1969) 6-8.

⁴⁴ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Warbler Classics, 2020).

⁴⁵ J Budziszewski, *The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man* (Spence, 1999) 70.

⁴⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, tr, ed Harvey C Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (University of Chicago Press, 2000) 489-492.

When Francis Lieber delivered his inaugural lecture at Columbia in 1859, he summarised the role of Christianity in the change from ancient to modern times:

How else can we explain these patent facts, that modern states with liberty have a far longer existence – where is the England of antiquity counting a thousand years from her Alfred, and still free? – that liberty and wealth in modern nations have advanced together, which the ancients considered axiomatically impossible; that modern liberty may not only advance with advancing civilization and culture, but requires them; that, occasionally at least, modern states pass through periods of lawlessness without succumbing ... that the moderns have found the means of combining national vigor with the protection of individual rights; and that by international law a ‘system of states,’ as Europe has been called, can exist whose members are entire sovereign nations? Much of all this is, owing to the spread and development of Christianity.⁴⁷

The West – enriched by a high view of fallen human nature⁴⁸ – is now being actively and openly challenged by its progeny in favor of what Roger Scruton called a ‘culture of repudiation’ that mimics the fervor of the Christian faith but attacks its credibility.⁴⁹ Wayne Allen concluded:

The twentieth century has rightly been called the ‘Age of Ideology,’ and it might well be the last stage of modernity in its struggle with postmodern nihilism, which will kill man’s

⁴⁷ Francis Lieber, *Miscellaneous Writings: Reminiscences, Addresses, and Essays* (J B Lippincott, 1880) vol I, 382-83.

⁴⁸ Psalm 8:4-6; 1 Cor 6:3. Immanuel Kant referred to ‘the crooked timber of humanity’ out of which ‘no straight thing was ever made.’

⁴⁹ 2 Tim 3:5. See: Roger Scruton, *The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat* (ISI Books, 2002) 68-83.

reverence for reason entirely. Every event, each person, all actions require reconstruction in terms of the ideology if it is to maintain its status as a science (of Nature or History).⁵⁰

One of the great ironies of the modern mindset is its subsistence on the memory and accumulated moral capital of a Christian civilization which, in its youth, built locally financed cathedrals to the glory of God.⁵¹ Today that capital is in short supply and the old verities are nearly forgotten.⁵² The past half-century's much-lamented fiscal crisis of the state, however, is not due so much to insolvency as by overextending the state beyond its competence, depleting rather than replenishing the stock from which it draws. The result – as with earlier civilizations⁵³ – is profligate borrowing against future diminishing returns and throwing off all constitutional restraints, impoverishing services, and intensifying compulsion. The problem is not strictly financial. It is philosophical, theological, and – as a practical consequence – demographic.⁵⁴ Even so, the culture of the West is still aided by powerful binding forces, such as belief and trust, which belong to the fiduciary life of a Western world originally shaped by the fine arts and philosophy of Greece, the architecture and law of Rome, and then bound together by the faith, morality, and prophetic

⁵⁰ Wayne Allen, 'The Rock of Ages,' manuscript copy of a book review of Ronald J Rychlak, *Hitler, the War and the Pope* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000) published as 'Pius XII and the Culture Wars' (2001) (October) *Culture Wars* 42-44.

⁵¹ See Francis A Schaeffer, *Death in the City* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1969).

⁵² See Runyard Kipling, 'Gods of the Copybook Headings'..

⁵³ Dawson (n 4) 49-50.

⁵⁴ On the demographic decline, see Steven Alan Samson, 'The Grapes of Parnassos' (Presentation, Liberty University, 16 April 2007).

traditions of Judaism and Christianity.⁵⁵

Near the end of a book published in 1908, *The Servile State*, Hilaire Belloc wrote: ‘There is a complex knot of forces underlying any nation once Christian; a smoldering of the old fires.’⁵⁶ The default culture of the West is still recognisably – if sentimentally – Christian. The historian Willis Glover sees a ‘historical continuity of modern humanism with the Christian faith’ and adds: ‘It would be hard to name a time when people were so consciously concerned with the problem of meaning.’⁵⁷ As the West loses the religious bond that generated its culture, careful attention should be given to reclaiming and rebuilding this moral and spiritual infrastructure.

In ancient Judea Nehemiah’s job as governor was to rebuild the ancient walls of Jerusalem. Today it is the job of imaginative leaders to stand in the gap against a festering cynicism provoked by breaches of public trust and to restore the enterprising vision which inspires citizens to move mountains.

⁵⁵ Culture crystallises out of an original *cultus*. ‘Religion’ derives from *re-ligare*, to bind. Man is, Alfred Korzybski observed, a time-binder. Nicholas Berdyaev understood the weakness of Christianity’s cultural byproducts when plucked from their roots. Marx and Nietzsche signified ‘the end and destruction of humanism; both aroused forces which it was far from the creative mind to set in motion.’ Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World* (University of Michigan Press, 1935) 31; see also Marcello Pera, *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians: The Religious Roots of Free Societies* (Encounter Books, 2011).

⁵⁶ Hilaire Belloc, *The Servile State* (Liberty Classics, 1977) 198.

⁵⁷ Willis B Glover, *Biblical Origins of Modern Secular Culture: An Essay in the Interpretation of Western History* (Mercer University Press, 1984) 15.

III MORAL INVERSION

The arc of the West's deflection from its original impetus may be discerned in Rosenstock-Huessy's observation that, although the Church was universal and the economy parochial a thousand years earlier, the balance in the ledger had so shifted from the spiritual to the mundane that, by his day, the economy was universal and the Church increasingly parochial, even marginalised, despite fervent outbursts of popular religious expression. The Church planted networks of monasteries, built great universities and cathedrals, but lost some of its missionary zeal along the way. A secularising West then divided science from faith and devolved into Vanity Fair.

The prolonged shattering of Christendom from the Reformation to the Thirty Years War – followed by Enlightenment skepticism, the French Revolution, and the Great Wars of recent memory – plunged the West into a congeries of moral crises that threaten to dissolve the religious and cultural bonds that once animated it.⁵⁸ The philosopher Michael Polanyi has described the moral inversion that resulted:

I do not think that the discredit which the ideal of exact scientific knowledge had cast on the grounds of moral convictions would by itself have much damaged these convictions. The self-destructive tendencies of the modern mind arose only when the influence of scientific skepticism was combined with a fervor that swept modern man in the opposite direction. Only when a new passion for moral progress was fused with modern scientific skepticism did the typical state of the modern mind emerge.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Harper, 1964) 231-235.

⁵⁹ Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Anchor, 1967) 57.

Michael Oakeshott agreed with Polanyi's analysis and characterised the elevation of technical over practical knowledge as 'rationalism in politics.' Technical knowledge is 'susceptible of precise formulation.'

The Rationalist holds that the only element of *knowledge* involved in any human activity is technical knowledge. ... The sovereignty of 'reason,' for the Rationalist, means the sovereignty of technique. The heart of the matter is the pre-occupation of the Rationalist with certainty.⁶⁰

Practical knowledge, by contrast, exists only in use. The two types differ in how they are transmitted. Technical knowledge can be both taught and learned in the simplest sense. 'On the other hand, practical knowledge' – whether the artistry of a pianist, the style of a chess-player, or the judgment of a scientist – 'can neither be taught nor learned, but only imparted and acquired' through guidance and practice.⁶¹

Oakeshott attributed the uprooting of practical social and moral conventions to the intellectual arrogance of Rationalists – positivists, behaviorists, reductionists – who have 'no sense of the cumulation of experience, only of the readiness of experience when it has been converted into a formula: the past is significant for him only as an encumbrance.' Oakeshott referred to this as 'idolatry.'⁶² Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) called it a 'mutilation of reason.'⁶³ What passes for 'a higher morality is merely morality reduced to a technique, to be acquired by training in an ideology rather than an

⁶⁰ Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Liberty Fund, 1991) 15-16.

⁶¹ Ibid 15.

⁶² Ibid 6.

⁶³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Culture* (Ignatius Press, 2005) 43.

education in behavior.’⁶⁴ Much of the Rationalist’s ‘political activity consists in bringing the social, political, legal, and institutional inheritance of his society before the tribunal of his intellect.’⁶⁵ The Enlightenment’s ‘republic of letters’ set the precedent.⁶⁶

Oakeshott’s colleague, Kenneth Minogue, regarded Marxism as a brilliant ‘vulgarization of long-standing religious/philosophical themes.’⁶⁷ It is a template for the newer ideologies that promise liberation from oppression. All such ideologies borrow their power and persuasion from a resemblance, however vague and distorted, to the Gospel message of deliverance from sin and death. All substitute the strong arm of man for ‘the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes’ (Rom 1:16). This makes Marxism perhaps the perfect solvent for undermining the moral and practical foundations of a self-governing civil society. Minogue offers a three-part recipe for concocting a new ideology: first, a revelation that ‘the past is a history of the oppression of some abstract class of person;’ second, ‘the duty of the present is thus to mobilize the oppressed class in the *struggle* against the oppressive system;’ and, third, ‘the aim of this struggle is to attain a fully just society, a process generally called liberation.’⁶⁸

So effective is this formula that it has captured the imagination and devotion of elite opinion leaders and much of the German-modeled

⁶⁴ Oakeshott (n 60) 6, 40.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 8. Jacques Ellul concluded that the ambitious intellectual ‘can no longer be anything but materialist.’ Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom* (Seabury, 1967) 111.

⁶⁶ Molnar (n 43) 6-8.

⁶⁷ Scruton (n 23) 149.

⁶⁸ Minogue (n 3) 103. Italics in original. See also Kenneth Minogue, *Alien Powers: The Pure Theory of Ideology* (St Martin’s Press, 1985).

administrative apparatus established by early Progressive reformers.⁶⁹ This new republic of letters – a politically-influential clerisy – displays a missionary zeal to correct historical injustices and imbalances while remaining self-interestedly secure in the perquisites and privileges of power and social status. Universities and media channel Herbert Marcuse’s “repressive tolerance” as they determinedly purge views, values, and speakers that run contrary to the new orthodoxies. ‘When social justice meets political correctness, the old liberal idea that relations between individuals are a purely personal matter is overridden. There is a right thing to do, and the state will make sure it is done.’⁷⁰

The cutting edge of this cultural revolution today takes many forms and assumes many identities, among which are cancel culture, intersectionality, and wokeness.⁷¹ Cancel culture is a non-judicial form of ostracism for which a ‘liberating tolerance ... would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left.’⁷² Intersectionality is the convergence of multiple group identities embodying different shadings of privilege or oppression. Wokeness refers to a state of awareness of the pervasive reach of an oppressive system.

⁶⁹ Thomas C Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics & American Economics in the Progressive Era* (Princeton University Press, 2016) ix-xiv, 10-16, 187-191.

⁷⁰ Kenneth Minogue, *The Servile Mind: How Democracy Erodes the Moral Life* (Encounter, 2010).

⁷¹ Just as politics is downstream from culture, according to Andrew Breitbart, the cultural revolution spawns its own “radical chic,” groupies, and “groupthink.” See Tom Wolfe, *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers* (Bantam, 1971). Compassion for victims, however, has Biblical roots.

⁷² Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore Jr and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Beacon, 1969) 109.

IV A LONG MARCH INTO THE INSTITUTIONS

The appearance of speech codes, language police, and other sectarian expressions of identity politics on campus, in the media, at public facilities, and on the streets represents the leading edge of a decades-long subversion of the defensive and reproductive systems of western civilization.⁷³ An earlier phase of this ‘long march through the institutions’ was inspired by the strategic vision of the early Italian Communist leader, Antonio Gramsci.

Power, in Gramsci’s observation, is exercised by privileged groups or classes in two ways: through domination, force, or coercion; and through something called ‘hegemony,’ which means the ideological supremacy of a system of values that supports the class or group interests of the predominant classes or groups ...⁷⁴

Gramsci believed that it is necessary first to delegitimise the dominant belief systems of the predominant groups and to create a ‘counter-hegemony’ (ie, a new system of values for subordinate groups) before the marginalised can be empowered.⁷⁵

Here we come to an irony. The hegemony Gramsci wished to vanquish a century ago is shifting leftward, raising a paradoxical question: What happens when the system itself is run by people who adhere to a

⁷³ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn developed the concepts of identitarianism and uniformitarianism – two expressions of a mass society – in *Liberty or Equality* (Caxton Printers, 1952) and *Leftism: From de Sade and Marx to Hitler and Marcuse* (Arlington House Publishers, 1974).

⁷⁴ John Fonte, ‘Why There Is a Culture War’ [2000] (December) *Policy Review*. See Steven Alan Samson, ‘A Strategy of Subversion’ (2020) (Mar-Apr) *The Market for Ideas* 22.

⁷⁵ Ibid. See also Dante Germino, *Antonio Gramsci: Architect of a New Politics* (Louisiana State University Press, 1990) 30.

woke ideology or counter-hegemony? Fifty years ago campus radicals warned against being “co-opted” by the system. Today, they have co-opted much of that same system, making the West vulnerable to an internal takeover through Ortega’s vertical trapdoor. As Tom Flanagan describes it:

Wokeism is clearly on the march and in some areas appears ascendant, having permeated nearly all levels and institutions of society – including where it might be least expected, like the US military. Among Western elites it has become nearly impossible not to practise or at least profess wokeness. When seen as shorthand for Progressive identity politics, woke influence on politics, policy, culture, society, and the economy has already been enormous and, from the standpoint of conservatives, libertarians, and constitutionalists, deeply disturbing.⁷⁶

An earlier parallel to today’s ideological fervor may be found in the lead up to the War Between the States. Francis Lieber assessed that era’s “rationalism in politics” as a bid to rule or ruin:

Too frequently does tyranny creep in as popular despotism. A process, perhaps, still more remarkable, and yet frequently exhibited in history, is that by which despotism steals into power by opposition to power. It is a very common mistake of the unwary to consider opposition to power as an indication of love of liberty.⁷⁷

The Polanyi scholar Mark Mitchell examines an ideological intersection – and moral inversion – of a Nietzschean will-to-power

⁷⁶ Tom Flanagan, ‘Progressive Identity Politics: The New Gnosticism’ *C2C Journal* (Web Article, 9 July 2021).

⁷⁷ Francis Lieber, *Manual of Political Ethics Designed Chiefly for the Use of Colleges and Students at Law* (Charles C Little and James Brown, 1838) pt I, 390.

with a secularised moral perfectionism:

Once a society has had a deep and sustained encounter with Christianity, it is not easy to remove the Christian residue even if the dogmas of the faith are rejected. Dogmatism outlasts dogma. The idea of heavenly perfection is far more seductive for a post-Christian people than for a people that has always been pagan.⁷⁸

The political agenda behind this ‘culture of repudiation’ merits public scrutiny rather than a curt dismissal. Subversive ideologies espoused by activists and echoed by intellectual elites exhibit all the characteristics of authoritarian religious cults.

Russian bolshevism, replacing eastern Christendom by the grim religiosity of Marx, produced a caricature ... [It] forces us brutally into a parody of the monastic life amidst fellow monks and fellow nuns who hate their habit and sigh under the ferocious tyranny of their pseudo-abbot. This evil distortion of an otherwise Christian ideal is more satanic than wanton, a thoroughly pagan and diabolic opposition to Christian existence.⁷⁹

Karl Marx’s political apocalypse is a faith – a power religion – that fuses Hegelianism and Socialism.⁸⁰ This helps account for its resemblance to the ancient heresy of Gnosticism. Like Gnosticism, Marxism’s doctrinal compendium is an image of Christianity: not so much a mirror as a mirage. For example, its version of original sin or the Fall of Man is not rebellion against God but the institution of private property. Salvation is a re-creation of the communist idyll but

⁷⁸ Mark T Mitchell, *Power and Purity: The Unholy Marriage That Spawned America’s Social Justice Warriors* (Regnery Gateway, 2020) 40.

⁷⁹ Francis Start Campbell, *The Menace of the Herd or Procrustes at Large* (Bruce, 1943) 283. See Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Origins of Russian Communism* (University of Michigan Press, 1960) ch 7.

⁸⁰ Scruton (n 23) 149.

no longer in its aboriginal form.

Nearly a century ago Hans Jonas and Eric Voegelin began probing ancient Gnosticism for insights into modern philosophies and mass movements. The implications of a Gnostic perfectionism should be evident in the following passage:

For the Gnostics, man's alienation from the world is to be deepened and brought to a head, for the extrication of the individual self which can only thus gain itself. The world (not the alienation from it) must be overcome; and a world degraded to a power system can only become overcome through power. The power of the world is overcome, on the one hand, by the power of the Savior who breaks into its closed system from without, and, on the other hand, through the power of the 'knowledge' brought by him ...⁸¹

This reads like a revolutionary manifesto: push the dialectic to a crisis point, then defeat the oppressors through a messianic movement. Drawing on both Jonas and Voegelin, Tom Flanagan finds in "Progressive identity politics" a common purpose that ties recent "woke" movements with the older Progressivism: destruction of the political order.⁸²

VII COUNTER-HEGEMONY IN PORTLAND

In America today, social justice movements such as Antifa and Black Lives Matter ('BLM') provide many of the shock troops in the culture war that has raged for years. According to an account by the journalist Christopher Rufo:

⁸¹ Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Delta, 1968) 221.

⁸² Flanagan (n 76).

After George Floyd's death, Portland's radicals attacked police officers and laid siege to federal buildings. They armed themselves with rocks, bottles, shields, knives, guns, bricks, lasers, boards, explosives, gasoline, barricades, spike strips, brass knuckles, and Molotov cocktails. A year later, many downtown businesses remain closed, and insurance companies have either raised premiums or refused to issue policies because of the ongoing risk of property destruction.⁸³

The rioters were granted a "free pass" from local authorities as well as the governor. This raises a rather non-academic question: If Arnold Toynbee's 'challenge and response' theory of civilization has any merit, how would he evaluate the health and status of a civilization that responds merely by shrugging off the question?

During the prolonged COVID-19 lockdowns, the ability of organisers to lead riots in open defiance of the law had a chilling effect on the citizenry by suspending ordinary life – leaving people in a state of frustrated helplessness or generalised fear.⁸⁴ As Angelo Codevilla observed of the politicisation of the pandemic:

Like all infections, it is deadly to those weakened severely by other causes. It did not transform American life by killing people, but by the fears about it that our oligarchy packaged and purveyed. *Fortuna*, as Machiavelli reminds us, is inherently submissive to whoever bends her to his wishes. The fears and the strictures they enabled were not about health – if only because those who purveyed and imposed them did not apply them to

⁸³ Christopher F Rufo, 'The Child Soldiers of Portland', *City Journal* (Web Article, Spring 2021). See also Jamie Goldberg, 'Insurers Balk At Covering Portland Businesses', *OregonLive* (Web Article, 12 December 2021)

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* See Steven Alan Samson, 'Interposition: Magistrates as Shields Against Tyranny' [2020] 11 *Western Australian Jurist* 301, 38.

themselves. They were about power over others.⁸⁵

Much of the responsibility for months of mayhem in full public view rests with public authorities and the powerful interests that defer to, defend, and even deploy these latter-day Red Guards.⁸⁶ It is difficult to penetrate the fog that surrounds events because organisations such as Antifa and BLM operate within a shadowy legal netherworld.⁸⁷ The following observations come from another journalist, Andy Ngo, whose reports from Portland Oregon have inspired repeated death threats against him:

One of the most effective ways we've seen law enforcement agencies brought to their knees is through frivolous lawsuits bankrolled by endless donors. 'Lawfare' refers to the act of abusing the legal system to achieve goals.

There exist large networks of attorneys and legal groups who bring endless lawsuits in an attempt to defund, cripple, and embarrass police.

Politicians in the city are terrified of political and media for holding antifa and far-left protestors accountable. The local and national media are staunchly on the side of antifa, regardless of their violence against police and property.⁸⁸

Ngo identifies specific donors, such as the National Lawyers Guild, which has ties to the American Communist Party. Tax-exempt

⁸⁵ Angelo Codevilla, 'Clarity in Trump's Wake', *American Greatness* (Web Article, 19 January 2021).

⁸⁶ On woke politics in Portland, Oregon, see Andy Ngo, *Unmasked: Inside Antifa's Plan to Destroy Democracy* (Center Street, 2021).

⁸⁷ See Stephen R Soukup, *The Dictatorship of Woke Capital: How Political Correctness Captured Big Business* (Encounter, 2021) 165; Tyler O'Neil, 'Report Shows Online Ties Linking HuffPost, the Guardian, and SPLC to Antifa', *PJ Media* (Web Article, 21 May 2019).

⁸⁸ Ngo (n 86) 59, 60-61.

foundations are another likely, if indirect, source of financial support.⁸⁹ Christopher Rufo focuses attention on local public schools and, by implication, parts of America's massive curriculum industry that together strive to convert schoolchildren into social justice warriors. Consider the following vignettes. Personal names are omitted.

Portland Public Schools has institutionalized the philosophy of social justice and codified political activism into every aspect of the bureaucracy. In the district's 2019 *Racial Equity and Social Justice Plan*, the administration pledged to make 'antiracism' the district's 'North Star' and to create 'an education system that intentionally disrupts – and builds leaders to disrupt – systems of oppression.' The superintendent hired a new equity czar and announced a 'Five-Year Racial Equity Plan,' which promises a dizzying array of acronyms and academic catchphrases like 'intersectionality' and 'targeted universalism.'

It's hard to overstate how entrenched the political ideology now is in the school system. A veteran elementary school teacher who described herself as a longtime liberal told me that the district's 'antiracist journey' began with good intentions a decade ago. But over time, the leadership has hardened 'antiracist' principles into dogma. Today, she and other teachers must submit to mandatory antiracism training each week.

[A lead teacher] hosted an exercise resembling Orwell's Two Minutes Hate, in which minority teachers were allowed 90 seconds to berate their white colleagues. During the exercise, [she] denounced one of her white female colleagues by screaming, 'You make me feel unsafe, you make me feel unsafe' repeatedly for 90 seconds. Afterward, [she] boasted on Facebook that she had publicly humiliated a racist, despite providing no evidence of racism or misconduct. It was a pure display of racial dominance.

⁸⁹ See William H McIlhany II, *The Tax-Exempt Foundations* (Arlington House, 1980).

[High school] students take two semesters of critical race theory – studying white fragility, intersectionality, ‘whiteness as property,’ ‘the permanence of racism,’ ‘collective organizing,’ and ‘being an activist,’ with an eye toward training them to ‘do [their] part in dismantling white supremacy.’

The next step is obvious. Children, endowed with conviction in their own moral purity, head to the front lines.⁹⁰

VI DIVIDE AND RULE TACTICS

The toxic political environment within all levels of the American system is a continuation of what Aaron Wildavsky called ‘the revolt against the masses.’⁹¹ Contrary to Americans’ historical expectation of domestic politics, the freewheeling use of subversion, disinformation, and other tools of statecraft by both public officials and private interests is designed – as it is on the international stage – to burnish the reputation of leaders, promote factional ambitions, subdue the electorate, and weaken rival bases of power.⁹² Kenneth Minogue saw the same pattern at work in the hazardous court politics of Renaissance Europe:

⁹⁰ Rufo (n 83). Making children – whose consciences are not fully developed – complicit in such public acts of disrespect and scapegoating should strike sensible parents and citizens as a form of child abuse. See René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, tr James G Williams (Orbis Books, 2001) 7-18 on scandal (Matt 18:6).

⁹¹ Aaron Wildavsky, *The Revolt Against the Masses: And Other Essays on Politics and Public Policy* (Transaction, 2003) 29-51; see also Angelo Codevilla, ‘What Is Trump to Us?’, *American Greatness*.

⁹² On such disinformation tactics of *glasnost* and “framing,” see Ion Mihai Pacepa and Ronald J Rychlak, *Disinformation: Former Spy Chief Reveals Secret Strategies for Undermining Freedom, Attacking Religion, and Promoting Terrorism* (WND Books, 2013) 13, 44-48. On their use in statecraft, internationally and domestically, see Angelo M Codevilla, *A Student’s Guide to International Relations* (ISI Books, 2010) 64-67.

Rule was a moral relationship. Kings engaged in the activity called 'policy' (which involved ruthlessness and dissembling) in relation to outside magnates, but in principle, at least, they had no need for 'policy' towards their peoples. With emerging modernity, however, it became necessary to practice 'policy' in managing their own turbulent subjects.⁹³

Cultural revolutions are totalitarian in nature – discrediting or purging anyone who resists the new orthodoxy. Otto Scott's 1974 insight into France's Woke Enlightenment could be written today:

The old regime did have one overriding problem that was unique, even unprecedented. French intellectuals, middle and upper classes had grown ashamed of their country, history, and institutions ... The men of the Enlightenment rummaged through the trashbins and graves of the past to rediscover every crime and atrocity and placed all the blame at the doorsteps of Christianity and hereditary privilege ... [They] raked and clawed mostly their own ancestors, the men who had helped clear and civilize Europe, as though the entire population was descended from criminals.⁹⁴

The French Revolution was the seminal event of modern times. How we view the utopian, even messianic, enthusiasm of philosophes, aristocrats, and revolutionaries who favored destroying the old order – root and branch – is apt to colour our attitudes toward their latter-day counterparts.⁹⁵ The Revolution's savagery, devastation, and continuing grip on the Western imagination defies description. Coiled within its vital center was a Pandora's box filled with the incipient forms of all the ideologies, identities, and iniquities that now strut

⁹³ Minogue (n 3) 38.

⁹⁴ Otto Scott, *Robespierre: The Voice of Virtue* (Mason & Lipscomb, 1974) 6-7.

⁹⁵ See Molnar (n 43) 3-41.

across the stage.⁹⁶ Twentieth century total war had its most crucial precedent in the eighteenth.

Nevertheless, the outcry for justice grows out of real grievances which have too long been allowed to fester. ‘Europe is not aging gracefully,’ asserts Pascal Bruckner. ‘Brooding over past crimes (slavery, imperialism, fascism, communism), Europe sees its history as a series of murders and depredations that culminated in two global conflicts.’⁹⁷ In *American Awakening*, Joshua Mitchell notes that citizens of both Europe and America are similarly:

[H]aunted by the historical wounds their nations have authored – in America, the wound of slavery; and in Europe, the wounds of colonialism. At the moment when America and Europe lost their cultivated ignorance” of these historical wounds and the need to “make all things new” was highlighting, to what healing power could the transgressors appeal? More than half a century after the echo of slavery screamed out for attention in America and the wound of colonialism in Europe became fully visible, the answer given by identity politics is that *no healing power whatsoever* is available to them.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ See Steven Alan Samson, ‘The Crisis of Our Age: A Retrospective Glance’ (2020) (Nov-Dec) *The Market for Ideas* 26.

⁹⁷ Pascal Bruckner, ‘Europe’s Guilty Conscience’, *City Journal* (Web Article, Summer 2010).

⁹⁸ Joshua Mitchell, *American Awakening: Identity Politics and Other Afflictions of Our Time* (Encounter, 2020) 44. A timely reminder is in order. Aeschylus’s account of the taming of the Furies (*Erinyes*) into the *Eumenides* is one of the landmarks of the ancient Greek literature.

VII GREASING THE SKIDS⁹⁹

The atavistic travesty of blaming present generations for complicity in the sins of their ancestors, class, race, or other scapegoat is an assault on the Biblical ethic of forgiveness. This politicisation of history is deliberately libelous, manipulative, and subversive. It demands open-ended confessions of complicity with crimes against humanity and endless apologies. And for what purpose – other than expressing hatred and asserting unbridled moral authority? Roger Scruton attributed such scapegoating to envy: ‘In the worldview of the resentful success is not a proof of virtue but, on the contrary, a call to retribution. That explains why totalitarian ideologies invariably divide human beings into innocent and guilty groups.’¹⁰⁰

Cultural revolutionaries thrive on a disregard for constitutional restraints. Frederic Bastiat’s concept of legal plunder – the ability of some to use the collective force of government ‘to exploit the person, liberty, and property of others’¹⁰¹ – enables us to understand how businessmen as well as public officials may be extorted into accepting one-sided political bargains as the price for doing business. Non-negotiable demands are designed to disrupt ordinary politics,

⁹⁹ An expression from the Pacific Northwest logging industry referring to the practice of lubricating log “skids” with oil or dairy products “so that the logs would slide easily” along and down the skid road. *Oregonian* (Portland), January 3, 1890.

¹⁰⁰ Scruton (n 23) 151-152.

¹⁰¹ Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law* (Foundation for Economic Education). See Steven Alan Samson, ‘Government Regulation: From Independence to Dependency: Part One’ [2013] 4 *The Western Australian Jurist* 117.

keep opponents off-balance, and elicit appeals for appeasement.¹⁰² John Calvin recognised the moral hazard that arises when people are induced to act contrary to their conscience. It is an assault on their integrity. The imposition of such laws, taxes, and executive orders with impunity is designed to overwhelm, humiliate, or neutralise any opposition.¹⁰³ Calvin's point is illustrated by the complicity of the city fathers – 'bearing false witness' – in Queen Jezebel's unscrupulous intrigues to acquire Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21). As David Chilton put it: 'Guilt produces *passivity*, and makes a man *programmed for defeat*.'¹⁰⁴

To a considerable degree our lives are shaped by the manipulation of such basic motivators as guilt, pity, desire, fear, lust, jealousy, addiction, resentment, hatred, envy, and rage. The sociologist Frank Furedi cites Alvin Gouldner's claim that schools and universities provide an 'institutional basis for the *mass* production of the New Class ... The expansion of education works towards the insulation of parental cultural influence from their children.'¹⁰⁵

One of the ways in which children become culturally distanced from the values of their parents is through their 'linguistic conversion' to a form of speech that reflects the values of the

¹⁰² The legalisation of abortion through lawfare and judicial activism served as a stalking horse for a wide-ranging social change agenda, implemented anonymously through the subsidization of family planning, sex education, sex change surgery, and countless other cutting-edge cultural change operations. Not only does this fit Bastiat's description of legal plunder, it also embodies the moralistic and interventionist side of Woodrow Wilson's liberal internationalism. See Steven Alan Samson, 'An Imperium of Rights: Consequences of Our Cultural Revolution' [2016] 7 *The Western Australian Jurist* 171.

¹⁰³ This arrogant style of politics is epitomised by the Rabshakeh's boasts and Sennacherib's threats in 2 Kings 18-19. See, eg, Matthew Lee, 'Biden rescinds abortion restrictions on US foreign aid', *A P News* (Web Article, 29 January 2021).

¹⁰⁴ David Chilton, *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt-Manipulators* (Institute for Christian Economics, 1981). Italics in original.

¹⁰⁵ Frank Furedi, *First World War: No End in Sight* (Bloomsbury, 2014) 211.

new class. What Gouldner characterized as the ‘culture of critical speech’ of the new classes ‘de-authorizes all speech grounded in traditional social authority, which authorizes itself ... as the standard of *all* ‘serious’ speech ... Gouldner’s analysis anticipates the institutionalization of speech codes and the policing of language in the decades to follow. It also provides important insights into the vitriol that often surrounds disputes about words, the conservative reaction to what is described as political correctness and the counter-calls for the censoring of ‘offensive’ speech.¹⁰⁶

These “campus missionaries” and opinion leaders exude intellectual disdain towards the middle and working classes,¹⁰⁷ yet they profess a self-contradictory ‘synthesis of the anti-instrumental romantic revolt against rationalism as well as the affirmation of professional and expert authority.’¹⁰⁸ The aging counterculture that Theodore Roszak celebrated in the late 1960s is now a touchstone for the ruling ambitions – what Augustine called the *libido dominandi* – of the high tech, media, professional, and educational sectors that shape today’s fashions and ideas.

We should ask: *cui bono*? The skids of this transformation were greased generations ago by cultural revolutionaries who renewed a long-running insurgency against Christian institutions. As H G Wells remarked of his novel, *Anticipations*: ‘The book was designed to undermine ... monogamy, faith in God & respectability, all under the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid 212.

¹⁰⁷ John McDermott, ‘Campus Missionaries: The Lying on of Culture’, *Nation*, 10 March 1969; see Salena Zito and Brad Todd, *The Great Revolt; Inside the Populist Coalition Reshaping American Politics* (Crown Forum, 2018).

¹⁰⁸ Furedi (n 105). Propagandists do not “believe” their ideologies; they are simply instruments for mobilising people and enhancing the power of a party or state. Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes* (Vintage, 1965) 196-97.

guise of speculation about motor cars and electrical heating.¹⁰⁹ Wells was far from alone in this ambition. By that time, politics was already degenerating into vast redistribution schemes through which wealth and power floated ever higher beyond the reach of ordinary citizens. The subsequent ruination of the working and middle classes should be a matter of grave concern rather than dismissive disdain by gentrified liberals.¹¹⁰

VIII INVERTEBRATE WEST: A SOFT TARGET

Widespread property ownership, free enterprise, general literacy, and popular suffrage are among the boons of western civilization that give individuals and families a place to stand and the footing to launch bold ventures, live their lives freely, and govern themselves. Yet the early Progressives rejected individualism and made a moralistic distinction between property rights and human rights. More than any single issue, the right to property may be the primary target of the cultural revolution.¹¹¹

Progressive or reform liberalism has long been the ideological default setting for America's politicised intellectual class, a modern secular clerisy that helps craft public opinion and presides over the administrative state. Given the sheer diversity of the country, Woodrow Wilson 'welcomed administrative governance. The people could still

¹⁰⁹ Fred Siegel, *The Revolt Against the Masses: How Liberalism Has Undermined the Middle Class* (Encounter, 2013) 5.

¹¹⁰ See Steven Alan Samson, 'Revolt of the Disdained: America's 2016 Presidential Election' [2018] 9 *The Western Australian Jurist* 33; and 'Revolt of the Disdained: Sovereignty or Servitude', *Townhall Finance* (Web Article, 27 January 2020).

¹¹¹ From the beginning of the American colonies, the state has played a role in land tenure, but the Fifth Amendment takings clause has been stretched way beyond its original purpose. See Charles Murray, *By the People: Rebuilding Liberty Without Permission* (Crown Forum, 2015) 44-48.

have their republic, but much legislative power would be shifted out of an elected body and into the hands of the right sort of people.¹¹²

The machinery of the modern state enables political moralists, as Minogue called them, to reconstruct society, economy, or culture in ways that increase their influence. Edmund Burke recognised its forebears in revolutionary France:

To them, the will, the wish, the want, the liberty, the toil, the blood of individuals is as nothing. Individuality is left out of their scheme of Government. The state is all in all. Every thing is referred to the production of force; afterwards every thing is trusted to the use of it. It is military in it's principle, in it's maxims, in it's spirit, and in all it's movements. The state has dominion and conquest for it's sole objects; dominion over minds by proselytism, over bodies by arms.¹¹³

The old Progressive Ascendancy, like its liberal counterpart today, disingenuously proclaimed liberty while seeking to hamstring independent institutions and close off all refuges from its ministrations. People molded by generations of often-contradictory social reform schemes – from temperance and public education to eugenics and beyond – deserve more respect. In 1913, the Rev Frederick T Gates, the head of the Rockefeller-financed General Education Board, condescendingly spoke of his 'dream' to improve residents' lives in impoverished Appalachia while keeping them in humble circumstances: 'the people yield themselves with perfect docility ... while we work our

¹¹² Philip Hamburger, *The Administrative Threat* (Encounter Books, 2007) 55. Wilson once told a British envoy: 'I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men.' Walter A McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State* (Houghton Mifflin, 1997) 131.

¹¹³ Edmund Burke, *Select Works of Edmund Burke* (Liberty Fund, 1999) vol 3, 182. For a recent illustration, see Olivier Bault, 'Polish Academic Sentenced in Germany for His Work on Homosexuality in the Church', *Visegrad Post* (Web Article, 5 August 2021).

own good will upon a grateful and responsive rural folk.¹¹⁴

The sociologist Edward A Ross, who wrote *Social Control*, believed that society should shape and regulate the individual,¹¹⁵ a task that required a new mandarin class. By 1939, the civil service was repurposed into the vanguard of a new social science-shaped administrative state.¹¹⁶ Under the *Executive Reorganization Act* that year, an ‘administrative presidency’ was conceived as an ally of ‘programmatically liberalism,’¹¹⁷ which today manages policy and operations over a society of clients and dependents.¹¹⁸ Any contrary political agenda earns such furious resistance that character assassination by anonymous trolls and public ambushes by colleagues are considered fair play.

Once administration is detached from ownership and effective oversight, or – as with Garrett Hardin’s ‘tragedy of the commons’¹¹⁹ – the use of public property is detached from accountability, we suspend the rationale for the constitutional philosophy of limited government

¹¹⁴ Frederick T Gates, *The Country School of Tomorrow* (Occasional Papers No 1, General Education Board, 1913) 6. For a substantial excerpt, see Steven Alan Samson, ‘Crossed Swords: Entanglements Between Church and State in America’ (University of Oregon dissertation, 1984) ch 11, n 68; Steven Alan Samson, ‘Penetrating the Fog of Culture War’ (2021) (Jul-Aug) *The Market for Ideas* 30. It recalls the Fabian banner: ‘Remould it nearer to the heart’s desire.’ Lyndon Johnson later expressed his desire more crudely. See Kevin D Williamson, *The Dependency Agenda* (Encounter Books, 2012) 1.

¹¹⁵ Leonard (n 69) 23; see also Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Race* (Basic, 2013); Murray N Rothbard, *The Progressive Era*, ed Patrick Newman (Mises Institute, 2017).

¹¹⁶ Sidney M Milkis, *The President and the Parties: The Transformation of the American Party System Since the New Deal* (Oxford University Press, 1993) 146.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ See Murray (n 111) 63-78, 176-83 on ‘An Extralegal State Within a State’ and ‘The Bankrupt Premises of the Regulatory State.’

¹¹⁹ G. Hardin, ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ (1968) 162 (3859) *Science* 1243.

animated by consent of the governed.¹²⁰ A panoply of sophisticated and often deceptive means of action is readily severed from the moral and constitutional ends meant to guide them. As Freud recognised, the ambiguity of our motives, including suppressed aggression and the absence of clear lines of responsibility, generates an ambivalence which can inspire a stressful, often dissociative or objectless, sense of uncertainty and even guilt.¹²¹ A guilty conscience may be triggered and manipulated by others, as shown by P T Bauer in 'Western Guilt and Third World Poverty'¹²² as well as René Girard's studies of mimetic desire, envy, rivalry, and scapegoating.¹²³

These observations accord with Hans Selye's definition of stress as 'the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change.' The intensification of the pace of change has both a physically debilitating and demoralising effect.¹²⁴ When deliberately orchestrated, it serves some lower purpose, such as softening defenses or breaking down resistance. Marshall McLuhan tallied the consequences: 'Mental breakdown of varying degrees is the very common result of uprooting and inundation with new information and endless new patterns of information.'¹²⁵

Victims of disaster, dislocation, combat, bereavement, and other traumas bear witness to the toll such intense stressors exact on body

¹²⁰ See James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution* (Indiana University Press, 1960) 71-76.

¹²¹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, tr James Strachey (Norton, 1961) 78-80.

¹²² P T Bauer, *Equality, the Third World and Economic Delusion* (Harvard University Press, 1981) 66-85.

¹²³ Girard maintains that humanism, humanitarianism, and the concern for victims 'develop first on Christian soil.' Girard (n 90) 163. Rather, the whole Biblical tradition deplores the treacherous murders of Abel, Dinah's suitor, Naboth, and countless others.

¹²⁴ Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life* (McGraw-Hill, 1970).

¹²⁵ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Signet, 1964) 31.

and soul alike. Viktor Frankl, a concentration camp survivor, based his ‘logotherapy’ on confronting the brutality of that experience and the subsequent bitterness and disillusionment which follow.¹²⁶ Similarly, the philosopher Karl Jaspers assessed the levels and layers associated with the guilt – political, moral, metaphysical, in some cases criminal – of having been the citizen of a nation-state ruled by a criminal regime.¹²⁷ Complicity in crime demoralises entire countries. An inability to resist a criminal regime often emasculates potential opposition leaders.¹²⁸ This is why acts of interposition by leaders – often in tragic defiance of political loyalties¹²⁹ – offer the prospect of a fresh start once enjoyed by the Dutch provinces and the American colonies.¹³⁰

We live in a global village, touched by events in distant places. Our imaginative landscape has been radically reshaped within living memory. As Neil Postman put it: ‘Introduce speed-of-light transmission of images and you make a cultural revolution ... Here is ideology without words, and all the more powerful for their absence.’¹³¹ The media dominate the collective sensorium through sheer bandwidth. Postmodernists condemn conventional culture as a prison house. Satirists dismiss its mores with mockery and condescension. Deconstructionists pioneered effective strategies of

¹²⁶ Viktor E Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (Washington Square Press, 1963).

¹²⁷ Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, tr E B Ashton (Capricorn, 1961).

¹²⁸ Continued influence of the convergence theory – a gradual merger of the West and the Soviet bloc – is evident in stolen Soviet documents. See Pavel Stroilov, *Behind the Desert Storm* (Price World, 2011); Vladimir Bukovsky, *Judgment in Moscow: Soviet Crimes and Western Complicity* (Ninth of November Press, 2019), especially ch 6.

¹²⁹ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, tr Patrick Gregory (Johns Hopkins, 1977) 290-97.

¹³⁰ Steven Alan Samson, ‘Interposition: Magistrates as Shields Against Tyranny’ [2020] 11 *Western Australian Jurist* 301.

¹³¹ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (Penguin, 1985) 158.

cultural subversion by discrediting traditional mores.¹³² A television script writer may play up popular expectations and then, as in a sting operation, give them a novel twist. Postmodern literary tropes tend to be “subversive” and “transgressive.”¹³³ Sometimes excused as “playful,” they may have the serious effect of undermining language and meaning.¹³⁴ The public abuse of language presages the abuse of power.¹³⁵

The underlying purpose of such pretexts is to suspend people’s sense of reality. This is especially evident when “talking heads” on television may describe an event with same catchphrases, *verbatim*. Public discussion is degenerating into verbal guerrilla warfare.¹³⁶ The resulting polarisation resembles an inverted bell curve. It is intended to exclude any middle ground.

A century ago, the publicist Edward Bernays skillfully marketed liberal and leftwing ideas while echoing the depth psychology of his uncle, Sigmund Freud.¹³⁷ In 1928, he wrote: ‘The American motion picture

¹³² Here are three illustrations: Michel Foucault: ‘All my analyses are against the idea of universal necessities.’ Richard Rorty: ‘My sort of philosopher wants to get rid of the idea that the world or the self has an intrinsic nature.’ Frank Lentricchia’s objective: ‘spot, confront, and work against the political horrors of one’s time.’ See Stephen R C Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault* (Connor Court, 2019) 2, 3.

¹³³ Philip Rieff calls it ‘the romance of creative sacrilege’ and attributes it to Friedrich Nietzsche. ‘But there is another movement in modernity: that nothing is transgressive and no price need be paid. I have called this movement therapeutic.’ Philip Rieff, *The Crisis of the Officer Class: The Decline of the Tragic Sensibility*, ed Alan Woolfolk (University of Virginia Press, 2007) 3-4.

¹³⁴ See, eg, Zachariah Montgomery, *Poison Drops in the Federal Senate. The School Question from a Parental and Non-Partisan Stand-Point* (Gibson Bros, 1886) 38-42 on the redefinition of words.

¹³⁵ Joseph Pieper, *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power*, tr Lothar Kraus (Ignatius, 1992).

¹³⁶ See, eg, A D Robles, *Social Justice Pharisees: Woke Church Tactics and How to Refute Them* (Morgan James, 2021).

¹³⁷ See Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (IG Publishing, 2005), which is a simplified, public relations version of Walter Lippmann’s ‘the manufacture of consent.’

is the greatest unconscious carrier of propaganda in the world today. It is a great distributor for ideas and opinions. The motion picture can standardize the ideas and habits of a nation.’ This suggests America’s *lingua franca* may be found in a media-generated popular culture that takes shape at the intersection of commerce, entertainment, education, and ideology.

Ion Mihai Pacepa, who rose to the top of the Communist Romanian security apparatus, defected in 1978 and later exposed the ‘science of *disinformation*’ which, historically, drew on earlier Czarist practices. In *Disinformation*, he cited observations by the French Marquis de Custine, who sized up the Russian Court: ‘Russian despotism not only counts ideas and sentiments for nothing but remakes facts; it wages war on evidence and triumphs in the battle.’¹³⁸ Perhaps that made it a premodern version of postmodernism. As Stephen R C Hicks puts it: ‘Deconstruction, Stanley Fish confesses happily, “relieves me of the obligation to be right ... and demands only that I be interesting”.’¹³⁹ Cultural revolution requires rhetorical smoke screens.

Given the reductionism that converts every consideration into a material relationship, it is no wonder that disillusioned ideologues may only be left with their cynicism. The Communist playwright, Bertolt Brecht, complained of a so-called worker’s paradise turning on the very people in whose name it operated:

After the uprising of the 17th June
The Secretary of the Writers Union
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
Stating that the people

¹³⁸ Pacepa and Rychlak (n 92) 37.

¹³⁹ Hicks (n 132) 2. Note Arte Johnson’s meme – “very interesting” – on the 1960s television show, *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In*.

Had forfeited the confidence of the government
And could win it back only
By redoubled efforts. Would it not be easier
In that case for the government
To dissolve the people
And elect another?¹⁴⁰

Electing another people – turning citizens into subjects – is a plausible way of describing the endgame of all forms of this project. As the influence of Christianity over it diminishes, liberalism as a governing philosophy divorces itself from the sources of its attraction and becomes more unrealistic in its aims – increasingly compelled to extend its sway and remold people by coercive means.

As the scope of government continues to grow, so does the size of its appetite. In 1995 Kenneth Minogue asked: ‘Can Politics Survive?’

Political moralism ... takes the independence of citizens not as a guarantee of freedom but as a barrier to the project of moralizing the world. Independent individuals disposing of their own property as they please are identified with selfishness and taken to be the cause of poverty. A socially just world is thought to require a rational distribution of the goods which pour so abundantly forth in a modern society. But states whose constitutional authority is limited to ruling by law are imperfect instruments for the immense task of rational distribution, and of the resulting necessity of rectifying the attitudes on which injustice is founded. The entity called ‘the state’ could, however, become adequate to this formidable task if it were to change its character ...

Moralizing the human condition is only possible if we can make the world correspond to some conception of social justice.

¹⁴⁰ Bertolt Brecht’s “The Solution,” written with reference to protests in 1953 but left unpublished. <<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-solution/>>.

But it turns out that we can only transcend the inequalities of the past if we institute precisely the form of social order – a despotism – which Western civilization has immemorially found incompatible with its free and independent customs. The promise is justice, the price is freedom.¹⁴¹

IX PROGRESSIVISM: THE MARXISM OF THE RENT-SEEKING CLASS¹⁴²

As the voice of America's political class, Progressives now justify advancing fluid, often contradictory, interests which enhance the power and privileges of their most well-connected clientele while effectively marginalising and even jettisoning many of the principles articulated during their salad days. Members of its intellectual wing have 'a very large, vested interest in certain beliefs, which underlie various programs from which they benefit enormously.' As Thomas Sowell points out in *Preferential Policies*, 'this is common around the world, that the elites benefit from preferential programs.'¹⁴³ Christopher Lasch's assessment of their appetite is equally harsh:

Control has become their obsession. In their drive to insulate themselves against risk and contingency – against the unpredictable hazards that afflict human life – the thinking classes have seceded not just from the common world around them but

¹⁴¹ Minogue (n 3) 112-113.

¹⁴² The title was suggested by the characterisation of John C Calhoun as "The Marx of the Master Class." Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition: And the Men Who Made It* (Vintage, 1974) 86-117.

¹⁴³ Jason L Riley, *Maverick: A Biography of Thomas Sowell* (Basic, 2021) 225. See Thomas Sowell, *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective* (William Morrow, 1990) 103-115.

from reality itself.¹⁴⁴

The culture wars that have convulsed America since the sixties are best understood as a form of class warfare, in which an enlightened elite (as it thinks of itself) seeks not so much to impose its values on the majority (a majority perceived as incorrigibly racist, sexist, provincial, and xenophobic), much less to persuade the majority by means of rational political debate, as to create parallel or “alternative” institutions in which it will no longer be necessary to confront the unenlightened at all.¹⁴⁵

The opportunistic quality of progressive liberalism’s appeal is striking. Its meliorative redistribution programs degenerate into a scramble for power, benefits, and status through elaborate political turnstile operations. This process of nest-feathering or feeding at the public trough is called “rent-seeking” by economists. Bastiat simply called it legal plunder and remarked on its tendency to become universal.¹⁴⁶

It is easy to breach the West’s intellectual defenses and sack its citadels when its credentialed trustees are so ready to sell the pass to the enemy.¹⁴⁷ Lip service paid to democratic values merely deflects attention from an oligarchic rule that is rarely acknowledged as such.¹⁴⁸ In *Alien Powers*, Minogue wrote: ‘Ideology’s encounter

¹⁴⁴ Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (W W Norton, 1996) 20.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 2-21. Lasch neglects the legal and political offensives that at times threaten “rule or ruin.”

¹⁴⁶ Bastiat (n 101).

¹⁴⁷ Kenneth Minogue, ‘How Civilizations Fall’ (2001) (April) *New Criterion*. See Jacob Neusner and Noam M M Neusner, *The Price of Excellence: Universities in Conflict during the Cold War Era* (Continuum, 1995), especially ch 4:II; David Gelernter, *America-Lite: How Imperial Academia Dismantled Our Culture (and Ushered in the Obamacrats)* (Encounter, 2012).

¹⁴⁸ Angelo Codevilla, *The Ruling Class: How They Corrupted America and What We Can Do About It* (Beaufort Books, 2010); Joel Kotkin, *The New Class Conflict* (Telos, 2014).

with democracy has been a tragic one, and the actual destruction of democracy in ideological states directly reflects the logic of ideology.¹⁴⁹ David Guaspari observed:

An ideologist in power has been given the task of reshaping the human condition and a corresponding claim on enormous power. That power, he argues, will not be misused because it belongs to, and is applied on behalf of, the oppressed class being liberated. While the vanguard is teaching the masses – and until they’ve learned their lessons, the vanguard are stewards of that power – politics has no point, thanks to what Minogue calls ‘Talmon’s Fork,’ after the Israeli historian Jacob Leib Talmon: ‘Either a democratic vote elects the enlightened to power, or it does not. If so, it is unnecessary. If not, it is pernicious.’¹⁵⁰

In other hands, such “reshaping” might be criticized as patriarchy, privilege, hegemony, or racism.

In *Authority and the Liberal Tradition*, Robert Heineman advances a thesis which may be summarised: ‘Contemporary American liberalism is incapable of supporting for any sustained period of time a government that acts with firmness and coherent direction.’¹⁵¹ Liberalism promoted a ‘tremendous expansion of government within the past several decades,’ resulting in a ‘government lacking in authority

¹⁴⁹ Minogue (n 68) 281. Alexis de Tocqueville noted the incompatibility of democracy and socialism.

¹⁵⁰ David Guaspari, ‘Ideologists Amok’ (2021) (June) *New Criterion* 8. In a mid-twentieth-century series of books, J L Talmon traced the history of political messianism and totalitarian democracy back to the French Revolution and the subsequent Romantic period.

¹⁵¹ Robert Heineman, *Authority and the Liberal Tradition: From Hobbes to Rorty* (Transaction, 2nd ed, 1994) 1. The same has been said of France before the deluge: ‘On the threshold of the Revolution France was a civilized and reasonable prosperous country but hopelessly weak in her fibers.’: Molnar (n 43) 22.

and direction.¹⁵² Our political *means* (the sophisticated apparatus and *process* of government) outstrip the political *ends* (the *substantive* human purposes) they are supposed to serve. Many political programs are cynical, jury-rigged Procrustean beds designed to enhance power and score political points. We often meet this arrogant “can-do” mentality in modern literature, such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and C S Lewis’s *That Hideous Strength*.

Liberalism favors the *expansion of government* as a political strategy but lacks a guiding purpose for doing so, giving rise to what Theodore Lowi called ‘Interest-group liberalism’ because the state lacks the capacity to support *any* coherent, substantive policy for a sustained period. Government oversteps its bounds because it *lacks a guiding and constraining purpose*. As public respect for authority declines, ‘government must turn to *coercion* and *material inducement* to achieve its ends,¹⁵³ perpetuating a vicious circle. In practice, programs, budgets, the electorate, and even government entities are held hostage by rent-seekers – partisan shakedown artists – until one side or another achieves its ends, whether it be greater power or more largesse.

Another implication is that *Government may not act with firmness and coherent direction* because it has been retooled to promote the *ad hoc* purposes of those who control and those who receive largesse. Instead of embracing a focused and disciplined political vision, its activities are *diffuse* and chiefly concern the distribution of the spoils. Thus, the national treasury – increasingly raided to underwrite a rapidly growing national debt – becomes a political slush fund serving whatever interests are successfully able to divert its resources to their own purposes.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Heineman (n 151) 1.

¹⁵³ *Ibid* 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid* 177.

To summarise: ‘The expansion of governmental activity is a direct consequence of the inability of public officials to withstand the demands made of them’ – a description of political weakness rather than strength.¹⁵⁵ Such weakness is made even more dangerous by the sophisticated array of means – or ends used as means – available to enforce the elite’s increasingly irresponsible will. It was not settled science that brought lockdowns and riots in 2020 but a combination of political opportunism, manipulation of fear, and the public’s lifelong conditioning to obey authority. The sheer stasis of the system repels any meaningful attempts at reform. Franz Kafka anticipated this plight in his parable, *The Couriers*:

They were offered the choice between becoming kings or the couriers of kings. The way children would, they all wanted to be couriers. Therefore there are only couriers who hurry about the world, shouting to each other – since there are no kings – messages that have become meaningless. They would like to put an end to this miserable life of theirs but they dare not because of their oaths of service.¹⁵⁶

X FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The West is beset by cultural revolutions. What is on offer is akin to nirvana or nothingness: a Great Reset through global governance, a neo-Marxist cancel culture, or a Chinese-style social credit system¹⁵⁷ which would leave people in a state of dependency with no hope of cleaning

¹⁵⁵ An illustration of that weakness may be found in the conclusion of Grant McConnell, *Steel and the Presidency – 1962* (W W Norton, 1963).

¹⁵⁶ Walter Kaufmann (ed), *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (Meridian, 1956) 130.

¹⁵⁷ The Chinese Communist regime is introducing the utilitarian, soft-power “social credit” system to fine-tune its control: Thomas F Farr, ‘China’s Second Cultural Revolution’, *First Things* (Web Article, 16 January 2021).

the slate or making a fresh start.¹⁵⁸

Either by active assent or acquiescence at each stage, the old order's guardians betrayed their trust by acceding to subterfuges which battered down people's psychological defenses. Initially, the public memory began to fade with the decline of local associations and subtle reinterpretations of the common faith. Then came concentrations of power in public education and a highly centralised administrative state, together with a decline in local and family autonomy.¹⁵⁹ These were followed by a shrinkage of skilled labor jobs, apprenticeships, civic and community clubs, and traditional outlets for conveying the wealth of personal wisdom and experience through nurturing, teaching, and testing. Finally, people neglected to produce progeny to be their heirs. Given modernity's capacity for producing endless distraction, sins of omission may sometimes be absent-minded.

Far more worrisome is a species of cultural vandalism reminiscent of earlier bouts of revolutionary nihilism in Russia and Germany.¹⁶⁰ Negligence has consequences. If the West has indeed surrendered its birthright, it will take character and *courage* to repent and rebuild a depleted heritage.

¹⁵⁸ Wells envisioned a "New World Order;" Rousseau a totalitarian general will, Bentham a Panopticon. Immigrants from Communist countries are struck by the resemblances between what they see in the West today and what they experienced in their home countries. See, eg, Giulio Meotti, 'If You Do Not Have Free Speech You Are Not Free': Refugees from Communism Horrified at America' *Gatestone Institute* (Web Article, 18 July 2021); Oleg Atbashian, *Shakedown Socialism* (Greenleaf Press, 2010); Daily Wire News, 'Survivor of Mao's China: Critical Race Theory "Is Racist;" China Used "Wokeness" To Install Communism' *Daily Wire* (Web Article, 12 June 2021).

¹⁵⁹ See, eg, Lincoln Brown, 'A Minnesota School Board Tells Students to Keep Secrets After "Equity Audit" Survey', *PJ Media* (Web Article, 23 July 2021).

¹⁶⁰ For a glance at the nihilism of the New Left, see Kuehnelt-Leddihn (n 1) ch 19; on Russian nihilism, see James H Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (Basic Books, 1980); on the inner contradictions of the New Left thought systems, see Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death* (IVP, 1973) 140-147.