Reignition

NICK LAND'S WRITINGS (2011-)



Tome II

The Dark Enlightenment: Neoreactionaries Head for the Exit

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BLOCK 1 - DARK ENLIGHTENMENT

The Dark Enlightenment (Part 1)

Neo-reactionaries head for the exit

Enlightenment is not only a state, but an event, and a process. As the designation for an historical episode, concentrated in northern Europe during the 18th century, it is a leading candidate for the 'true name' of modernity, capturing its origin and essence ('Renaissance' and 'Industrial Revolution' are others). Between 'enlightenment' and 'progressive enlightenment' there is only an elusive difference, because illumination takes time – and feeds on itself, because

enlightenment is self-confirming, its revelations 'self-evident', and because a retrograde, or reactionary, 'dark enlightenment' amounts almost to intrinsic contradiction. To become enlightened, in this historical sense, is to recognize, and then to pursue, a guiding light.

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

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

Of course, plenty of people already think they know what reactionary modernism looks like, and amidst the current collapse back into the 1930s their concerns are only likely to grow. Basically, it's what the 'F' word is for, at least in its progressive usage. A flight from democracy under these circumstances conforms so perfectly to

expectations that it eludes specific recognition, appearing merely as an atavism, or confirmation of dire repetition.

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

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

> *The dread of democracy by libertarians and classical liberals is justified. Libertarianism really is incompatible with democracy. Most libertarians have made it clear which of the two they prefer. The only question that remains to be settled is why anyone should pay attention to libertarians.*

Lind and the 'neo-reactionaries' seem to be in broad agreement that democracy is not only (or even) a *system*, but rather a *vector*, with an unmistakable direction. Democracy and 'progressive democracy' are synonymous, and indistinguishable from the expansion of the state. Whilst 'extreme right wing' governments have, on rare occasions,

momentarily arrested this process, its reversal lies beyond the bounds of democratic possibility. Since winning elections is overwhelmingly a matter of vote buying, and society's informational organs (education and media) are no more resistant to bribery than the electorate, a thrifty politician is simply an incompetent politician, and the democratic variant of Darwinism quickly eliminates such misfits from the gene pool. This is a reality that the left applauds, the establishment right grumpily accepts, and the libertarian right has ineffectively railed against. Increasingly, however, libertarians have ceased to care whether anyone is 'pay[ing them] attention' – they have been looking for something else entirely: an exit.

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

For the hardcore neo-reactionaries, democracy is not merely doomed, it is doom itself. Fleeing it approaches an ultimate

imperative. The subterranean current that propels such anti-politics is recognizably Hobbesian, a coherent dark enlightenment, devoid from its beginning of any Rousseauistic enthusiasm for popular expression. Predisposed, in any case, to perceive the politically awakened masses as a howling irrational mob, it conceives the dynamics of democratization as fundamentally degenerative: systematically consolidating and exacerbating private vices, resentments, and deficiencies until they reach the level of collective criminality and comprehensive social corruption. The democratic politician and the electorate are bound together by a circuit of reciprocal incitement, in which each side drives the other to ever more shameless extremities of hooting, prancing cannibalism, until the only alternative to shouting is being eaten.

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

Hoppe advocates an anarcho-capitalist 'private law society', but between monarchy and democracy he does not hesitate (and his

argument is strictly Hobbesian):

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

Political agents invested with transient authority by multi-party democratic systems have an overwhelming (and demonstrably irresistible) incentive to plunder society with the greatest possible rapidity and comprehensiveness. Anything they neglect to steal – or 'leave on the table' – is likely to be inherited by political successors

who are not only unconnected, but actually opposed, and who can therefore be expected to utilize all available resources to the detriment of their foes. Whatever is left behind becomes a weapon in your enemy's hand. Best, then, to destroy what cannot be stolen. From the perspective of a democratic politician, any type of social good that is neither directly appropriable nor attributable to (their own) partisan policy is sheer waste, and counts for nothing, whilst even the most grievous social misfortune – so long as it can be assigned to a prior administration or postponed until a subsequent one – figures in rational calculations as an obvious blessing. The long-range techno-economic improvements and associated accumulation of cultural capital that constituted social progress in its old (Whig) sense are in nobody's political interest. Once democracy flourishes, they face the immediate threat of extinction.

Civilization, as a process, is indistinguishable from diminishing time-preference (or declining concern for the present in comparison to the future). Democracy, which both in theory and evident historical fact accentuates time-preference to the point of convulsive feeding-frenzy, is thus as close to a precise negation of civilization as anything could be, short of instantaneous social collapse into murderous barbarism or zombie apocalypse (which it eventually leads to). As the democratic virus burns through society, painstakingly accumulated habits and attitudes of forward-thinking, prudential, human and industrial investment, are replaced by a

sterile, orgiastic consumerism, financial incontinence, and a 'reality television' political circus. Tomorrow might belong to the other team, so it's best to eat it all now.

Winston Churchill, who remarked in neo-reactionary style that "the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter" is better known for suggesting "that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried." Whilst never exactly conceding that "OK, democracy sucks (in fact, it *really* sucks), but what's the alternative?" the implication is obvious. The general tenor of this sensibility is attractive to modern conservatives, because it resonates with their wry, disillusioned acceptance of relentless civilizational deterioration, and with the associated intellectual apprehension of capitalism as an unappetizing but ineliminable default social arrangement, which remains after all catastrophic or merely impractical alternatives have been discarded. The market economy, on this understanding, is no more than a spontaneous survival strategy that stitches itself together amidst the ruins of a politically devastated world. Things will probably just get worse forever. So it goes.

So, what is the alternative? (There's certainly no point trawling through the 1930s for one.) "Can you imagine a 21st-century post-demotist society? One that saw itself as recovering from democracy, much as Eastern Europe sees itself as recovering from Communism?"

asks supreme Sith Lord of the neo-reactionaries, Mencius Moldbug. "Well, I suppose that makes one of us."

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

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

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

> *To a neocameralist, a state is a business which owns a country. A state should be managed, like any other large business, by dividing logical ownership into negotiable shares, each of which yields a precise fraction of the state's profit. (A well-run state is very profitable.) Each share has one vote, and the shareholders elect a board, which hires and fires managers.*
>
> *This business's customers are its residents. A profitably-managed neocameralist state will, like any business, serve its customers efficiently and effectively. Misgovernment equals mismanagement.*

Firstly, it is essential to squash the democratic myth that a state 'belongs' to the citizenry. The point of neo-cameralism is to buy out the real stakeholders in sovereign power, not to perpetuate sentimental lies about mass enfranchisement. Unless ownership of the state is formally transferred into the hands of its actual rulers, the neo-cameral transition will simply not take place, power will remain in the shadows, and the democratic farce will continue.

So, secondly, the ruling class must be plausibly identified. It should be noted immediately, in contradistinction to Marxist principles of social analysis, that this is not the 'capitalist bourgeoisie'. Logically, it cannot be. The power of the business class is already clearly formalized, in monetary terms, so the identification of capital with

political power is perfectly redundant. It is necessary to ask, rather, *who do capitalists pay for political favors*, how much these favors are potentially worth, and how the authority to grant them is distributed. This requires, with a minimum of moral irritation, that the entire social landscape of political bribery ('lobbying') is exactly mapped, and the administrative, legislative, judicial, media, and academic privileges accessed by such bribes are converted into fungible shares. Insofar as voters are worth bribing, there is no need to entirely exclude them from this calculation, although their portion of sovereignty will be estimated with appropriate derision. The conclusion of this exercise is the mapping of a ruling entity that is the truly dominant instance of the democratic polity. Moldbug calls it *the Cathedral*.

The formalization of political powers, thirdly, allows for the possibility of effective government. Once the universe of democratic corruption is converted into a (freely transferable) shareholding in *gov-corp.* the owners of the state can initiate rational corporate governance, beginning with the appointment of a CEO. As with any business, the interests of the state are now precisely formalized as the maximization of long-term shareholder value. There is no longer any need for residents (clients) to take any interest in politics whatsoever. In fact, to do so would be to exhibit semi-criminal proclivities. If *gov-corp* doesn't deliver acceptable value for its taxes (sovereign rent), they can notify its customer service function, and

if necessary take their custom elsewhere. *Gov-corp* would concentrate upon running an efficient, attractive, vital, clean, and secure country, of a kind that is able to draw customers. No voice, free exit.

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

In European classical antiquity, democracy was recognized as a familiar phase of cyclical political development, fundamentally decadent in nature, and preliminary to a slide into tyranny. Today this classical understanding is thoroughly lost, and replaced by a global democratic ideology, entirely lacking in critical self-reflection, that

is asserted not as a credible social-scientific thesis, or even as a spontaneous popular aspiration, but rather as a religious creed, of a specific, historically identifiable kind:

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

> *walking up to it and denouncing it as evil is about as likely to work as suing Shub-Niggurath in small-claims court.*

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

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

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

Thomas Jefferson

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

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

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

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

More on voting with your feet (and the incandescent genius of Moldbug), next …
Added Note (March 7):
Don't trust the attribution of the 'Benjamin Franklin' quote, above. According to Barry Popik, the saying was probably invented by James Bovard, in 1992. (Bovard remarks elsewhere: "There are few more dangerous errors in political thinking than to equate democracy with liberty.")

March 2, 2012

The Dark Enlightenment (Part 2)

The arc of history is long, but it bends towards zombie apocalypse

> David Graeber: *It strikes me that if one is going to pursue this to its logical conclusion, the only way to have a genuinely democratic society would also be to abolish capitalism in this state.*
>
> Marina Sitrin: *We can't have democracy with capitalism… Democracy and capitalism don't work together.*
>
> (Here, via John J. Miller)

> *That's always the trouble with history. It always looks like it's over. But it never is.*
>
> (Mencius Moldbug)

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

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

> *Most people, including most Americans, would be surprised to learn that the word "democracy" does not appear in the Declaration of Independence (1776) or the Constitution of the United States of America (1789). They would also be shocked to learn the reason for the absence of the word democracy in the founding documents of the U.S.A. Contrary to what propaganda has led the public to believe, America's*

> *Founding Fathers were skeptical and anxious about democracy. They were aware of the evils that accompany a tyranny of the majority. The Framers of the Constitution went to great lengths to ensure that the federal government was not based on the will of the majority and was not, therefore, democratic.*
>
> *If the Framers of the Constitution did not embrace democracy, what did they adhere to? To a man, the Framers agreed that the purpose of government was to secure citizens in John Locke's trilogy of the rights to life, liberty and property.*

He elaborates:

> *The Constitution is primarily a structural and procedural document that itemizes who is to exercise power and how they are to exercise it. A great deal of stress is placed on the separation of powers and the checks and balances in the system. These were not a Cartesian construct or formula aimed at social engineering, but a shield to protect the people from the government. In short, the Constitution was designed to govern the government, not the people.*
>
> *The Bill of Rights establishes the rights of the people against infringements by the State. The only thing that the*

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

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

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

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

Robin Hanson (gently) notes:

> *Yes many trends have been positive for a century or so, and yes this suggests they will continue to rise for a century or so. But no this does not mean that students are empirically or morally wrong for thinking it "utopian fantasy" that one could "end poverty, disease, tyranny, and war" by joining a modern-day Kennedy's political quest. Why? Because positive recent*

> *trends in these areas were not much* caused *by such political movements! They were mostly caused by our getting rich from the industrial revolution, an event that political movements tended, if anything, to try to hold back on average.*

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

Quasi-libertarian responses to the outbreak accept this implicitly. Given a population deeply infected by the zombie virus and shambling into cannibalistic social collapse, the preferred option is quarantine. It is not communicative isolation that is essential, but a functional dis-solidarization of society that tightens feedback loops and exposes people with maximum intensity to the consequences

of their own actions. Social solidarity, in precise contrast, is the parasite's friend. By cropping out all high-frequency feedback mechanisms (such as market signals), and replacing them with sluggish, infra-red loops that pass through a centralized forum of 'general will', a radically democratized society insulates parasitism from what it does, transforming local, painfully dysfunctional, intolerable, and thus urgently corrected behavior patterns into global, numbed, and chronic socio-political pathologies.

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

As enlightened zombie-tolerance flourishes in the shelter of the democratic mega-parasite, a small remnant of reactionaries, attentive to the effects of real incentives, raise the formulaic question: "You do realize that these policies lead inevitably to a

massive expansion of the zombie population?" The dominant vector of history presupposes that such nuisance objections are marginalized, ignored, and — wherever possible – silenced through social ostracism. The remnant either fortifies the basement, whilst stocking up on dried food, ammunition, and silver coins, or accelerates the application process for a second passport, and starts packing its bags.

If all of this seems to be coming unmoored from historical concreteness, there's a conveniently topical remedy: a little digressive channel-hopping over to Greece. As a microcosmic model for the death of the West, playing out in real time, the Greek story is hypnotic. It describes a 2,500 year arc that is far from neat, but irresistibly dramatic, from proto-democracy to accomplished zombie apocalypse. Its pre-eminent virtue is that it perfectly illustrates the democratic mechanism *in extremis*, separating individuals and local populations from the consequences of their decisions by scrambling their behavior through large-scale, centralized re-distribution systems. You decide what you do, but then vote on the consequences. How could anyone say 'no' to that?

No surprise that over 30 years of EU membership Greeks have been eagerly cooperating with a social-engineering mega-project that strips out all short-wave social signals and re-routes feedback through the grandiose circuitry of European solidarity, ensuring that all economically-relevant information is red-shifted through the

heat-death sump of the European Central Bank. Most specifically, it has conspired with 'Europe' to obliterate all information that might be contained in Greek interest rates, thus effectively disabling all financial feedback on domestic policy choices.

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

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

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

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

Frankly, these dudes were freaks. Maniacal fanatics. Any mainstream English thinker of the 17th, 18th or 19th century, informed that this tradition (or its modern descendant) is now the planet's dominant Christian denomination, would regard this as a sign of imminent apocalypse. If you're sure they're wrong, you're more sure than me.

Fortunately, Cromwell himself was comparatively moderate. The extreme ultra-Puritan sects never got a solid lock on power under the Protectorate. Even more fortunately, Cromwell got old and died, and Cromwellism

> *died with him. Lawful government was restored to Great Britain, as was the Church of England, and Dissenters became a marginal fringe again. And frankly, a damned good riddance it was.*
>
> *However, you can't keep a good parasite down. A community of Puritans fled to America and founded the theocratic colonies of New England. After its military victories in the American Rebellion and the War of Secession, American Puritanism was well on the way to world domination. Its victories in World War I, World War II, and the Cold War confirmed its global hegemony. All legitimate mainstream thought on Earth today is descended from the American Puritans, and through them the English Dissenters.*

Given the rise of this "really ugly bug" to world dominion, it might seem strange to pick on tangential figure such as Dawkins, but Moldbug selects his target for exquisitely-judged strategic reasons. Moldbug identifies with Dawkins' Darwinism, with his intellectual repudiation of Abrahamic theism, and with his broad commitment to scientific rationality. Yet he recognizes, crucially, that Dawkins' critical faculties shut off – abruptly and often comically – at the point where they might endanger a still broader commitment to hegemonic progressivism. In this way, Dawkins is powerfully indicative. Militant secularism is itself a modernized variant of the

Abrahamic meta-meme, on its Anglo-Protestant, radical democratic taxonomic branch, *whose specific tradition is anti-traditionalism*. The clamorous atheism of *The God Delusion* represents a protective feint, and a consistent upgrade of religious reformation, guided by a spirit of progressive enthusiasm that trumps empiricism and reason, whilst exemplifying an irritable dogmatism that rivals anything to be found in earlier God-themed strains.

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

been born and educated in our time, [he] would have been the first to cringe with us at [his] Victorian sentiments and unctuous tone. I quote them only to illustrate how the *Zeitgeist* moves on."

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

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

To sustain this transcendent moral posture in relation to *racism* is no more rational than subscription to the doctrine of *original sin*, of which it is, in any case, the unmistakable modern substitute. The difference, of course, is that 'original sin' is a traditional doctrine,

subscribed to by an embattled social cohort, significantly under-represented among public intellectuals and media figures, deeply unfashionable in the dominant world culture, and widely criticized – if not derided – without any immediate assumption that the critic is advocating murder, theft, or adultery. To question the status of racism as the supreme and defining social sin, on the other hand, is to court universal condemnation from social elites, and to arouse suspicions of *thought crimes* that range from pro-slavery apologetics to genocide fantasies. Racism is *pure or absolute evil*, whose proper sphere is the infinite and the eternal, or the incendiary sinful depths of the hyper-protestant soul, rather than the mundane confines of civil interaction, social scientific realism, or efficient and proportional legality. The dissymmetry of affect, sanction, and raw social power attending old heresies and their replacements, once noticed, is a nagging indicator. A new sect reigns, and it is not even especially well hidden.

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

March 9, 2012

The Dark Enlightenment (Part 3)

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

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

> *In fact, Professor Dawkins'* Zeitgeist *is … indistinguishable*

> *from … the old Anglo-Calvinist or Puritan concept of* Providence*. Perhaps this is a false match. But it's quite a close one.*
>
> *Another word for* Zeitgeist *is* Progress*. It's unsurprising that Universalists tend to believe in* Progress *– in fact, in a political context, they often call themselves* progressives*. Universalism has indeed made quite a bit of progress since* [the time of Huxley's embarrassing remark in] *1913. But this hardly refutes the proposition that Universalism is a parasitic tradition. Progress for the tick is not progress for the dog.*

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

Moldbug).

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

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

That is the magic of the dialectic, or of logical perversity. When only *tolerance is tolerable*, and everyone (who matters) accepts this

manifestly nonsensical formula as not only rationally intelligible, but as the universally-affirmed principle of modern democratic faith, nothing except politics remains. Perfect tolerance and absolute intolerance have become logically indistinguishable, with either equally interpretable as the other, A = not-A, or the inverse, and in the nakedly Orwellian world that results, power alone holds the keys of articulation. Tolerance has progressed to such a degree that it has become a social police function, providing the existential pretext for new inquisitional institutions. ("We must remember that those who tolerate intolerance abuse tolerance itself, and an enemy of tolerance is an enemy of democracy," Moldbug ironizes.)

The spontaneous tolerance that characterized classical liberalism, rooted in a modest set of strictly negative rights that restricted the domain of politics, or government intolerance, surrenders during the democratic surge-tide to a positive *right to be tolerated*, defined ever more expansively as substantial entitlement, encompassing public affirmations of dignity, state-enforced guarantees of equal treatment by all agents (public and private), government protections against non-physical slights and humiliations, economic subsidies, and – ultimately – statistically proportional representation within all fields of employment, achievement, and recognition. That the eschatological culmination of this trend is simply impossible matters not at all to the dialectic. On the contrary, it energizes the political process, combusting any

threat of policy satiation in the fuel of infinite grievance. “I will not cease from Mental Fight, Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand: Till we have built Jerusalem, In England’s green and pleasant land.” Somewhere before Jerusalem is reached, the inarticulate pluralism of a free society has been transformed into the assertive multiculturalism of a soft-totalitarian democracy.

The Jews of 17th century Amsterdam, or the Huguenots of 18th century London, enjoyed the right to be left alone, and enriched their host societies in return. The democratically-empowered grievance groups of later modern times are incited by political leaders to demand a (fundamentally illiberal) *right to be heard*, with social consequences that are predominantly malignant. For politicians, however, who identify and promote themselves as the voice of the unheard and the ignored, the self-interest at stake could hardly be more obvious.

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

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

Behaviorally considered, the Misesian and Darwinian systems are clusters of 'selfish' incentives, oriented respectively to property accumulation and gene propagation. Whilst the Darwinians conceive the 'Misesian' sphere as a special case of genetically self-interested motivation, the Austrian tradition, rooted in highly rationalized neo-kantian anti-naturalism, is pre-disposed to resist such reductionism. Whilst the ultimate implications of this contest are considerable, under current conditions it is a squabble of minor urgency, since both

formations are united in ‘hate’, which is to say, in their reactionary tolerance for incentive structures that punish the maladapted.

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

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

manifest religious destiny of the world.

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

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

This does not compel even the most hard-hearted neo-reactionary to suggest, in a caricature of the high Victorian cultural style, that social disadvantage, as manifested in political violence, criminality, homelessness, insolvency, and welfare dependency, is a

simple index of moral culpability. In large part – perhaps overwhelmingly large part – it reflects sheer misfortune. Dim, impulsive, unhealthy, and unattractive people, reared chaotically in abusive families, and stranded in broken, crime-wracked communities, have every reason to curse the gods before themselves. Besides, disaster can strike anyone.

In regards to effective incentive structures, however, none of this is of the slightest importance. Behavioral reality knows only one iron law: Whatever is subsidized is promoted. With a necessity no weaker than that of entropy itself, insofar as social democracy seeks to soften bad consequences – for major corporations no less than for struggling individuals or hapless cultures — things get worse. There is no way around, or beyond this formula, only wishful thinking, and complicity with degeneration. Of course, this defining reactionary insight is doomed to inconsequence, since it amounts to the supremely unpalatable conclusion that every attempt at 'progressive' improvement is fated to reverse itself, 'perversely', into horrible failure. No democracy could accept this, which means that every democracy will fail.

The excited spiral of Misesian-Darwinian degenerative runaway is neatly captured in the words of the world's fluffiest Beltway libertarian, Megan McArdle, writing in core Cathedral-mouthpiece *The Atlantic*:

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

Despite McArdle's ridiculous suggestion that the United States of America has in some way exempted itself from Europe's mortuary path, the broad outline of the diagnosis is clear, and increasingly accepted as commonsensical (although best ignored). According to the rising creed, welfare attained through progeny and savings is non-universal, and thus morally-benighted. It should be supplanted,

as widely and rapidly as possible, by universal benefits or 'positive rights' distributed universally to the democratic citizen and thus, inevitably, routed through the altruistic State. If as a result, due to the irredeemable political incorrectness of reality, economies and populations should collapse in concert, at least it will not damage our souls. Oh democracy! You saccharine-sweet dying idiot, what do you think the zombie hordes will care for your soul?

Moldbug comments:

> *Universalism, in my opinion, is best described as a mystery cult of power.*
>
> *It's a cult of power because one critical stage in its replicative lifecycle is a little critter called the State. When we look at the big U's surface proteins, we notice that most of them can be explained by its need to capture, retain, and maintain the State, and direct its powers toward the creation of conditions that favor the continued replication of Universalism. It's as hard to imagine Universalism without the State as malaria without the mosquito.*
>
> *It's a mystery cult because it displaces theistic traditions by replacing metaphysical superstitions with philosophical mysteries, such as humanity, progress, equality, democracy, justice, environment, community, peace, etc.*
>
> *None of these concepts, as defined in orthodox*

> *Universalist doctrine, is even slightly coherent. All can absorb arbitrary mental energy without producing any rational thought. In this they are best compared to Plotinian, Talmudic, or Scholastic nonsense.*

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

Regime (1) Communist Tyranny
Typical Growth: ~0%
Voice / Exit: Low / Low
Cultural climate: Pyschotic utopianism
Life is … hard but 'fair'
Transition mechanism: Re-discovers markets at economic degree-zero

Regime (2) Authoritarian Capitalism
Typical Growth: 5-10%
Voice / Exit: Low / High
Cultural climate: Flinty realism
Life is … hard but productive
Transition mechanism: Pressurized by the Cathedral to democratize

Regime (3) Social Democracy
Typical Growth: 0-3%
Voice / Exit: High / High
Cultural climate: Sanctimonious dishonesty

Life is … soft and unsustainable
Transition mechanism: Can-kicking runs out of road

Regime (4) Zombie Apocalypse
Typical Growth: N/A
Voice / Exit: High (mostly useless screaming) / High (with fuel, ammo, dried food, precious metal coins)
Cultural climate: Survivalism
Life is … hard-to-impossible
Transition mechanism: Unknown

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

March 19, 2012

The Dark Enlightenment (Part 4)

Re-running the race to ruin

> *Liberals are baffled and infuriated that poor whites vote Republican, yet voting on tribal grounds is a feature of all multi-ethnic democracies, whether* [in] *Northern Ireland, Lebanon or Iraq. The more a majority becomes a minority the more tribal its voting becomes, so that increasingly the*

> *Republicans have become the "white party"; making this point indelicately got Pat Buchanan the sack, but many others make it too.*
>
> *Will it happen here* [in the UK]*? The patterns are not dissimilar. In the 2010 election the Conservatives won only 16 per cent of the ethnic minority vote, while Labour won the support of 72 per cent of Bangladeshis, 78 per cent of African-Caribbeans and 87 per cent of Africans. The Tories are slightly stronger among British Hindus and Sikhs – mirroring Republican support among Asian-Americans – who are more likely to be home-owning professionals and feel less alienated.*
>
> *The Economist recently asked if the Tories had a "race problem", but it may just be that democracy has a race problem.*
>
> — Ed West (here)

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

Irony is Moldbug's method, as well as his milieu. This can be seen,

most tellingly, in his chosen name for the usurped enlightenment, the dominant faith of the modern world: Universalism. This is a word that he appropriates (and capitalizes) within a reactionary diagnosis whose entire force lies in its exposure of an exorbitant particularity.

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

Ironically, then, the world's regnant *Universalist* democratic-egalitarian faith is a particular or peculiar cult that has *broken out*, along identifiable historical and geographical pathways, with an epidemic virulence that is disguised as progressive global enlightenment. The route that it has taken, through England and New England, Reformation and Revolution, is recorded by an accumulation of traits that provide abundant material for irony, and for lower varieties of comedy. The unmasking of the modern 'liberal' intellectual or 'open-minded' media 'truth-teller' as a pale, fervent, narrowly doctrinaire puritan, recognizably descended from the species of witch-burning zealots, is reliably – and irresistibly –

entertaining.

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

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

That the founding statement of the democratic-republican creed should be formulated as a statement of pure (and doctrinally recognizable) faith is information of sorts, but it is not yet irony. The

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

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

At the limit of self-parody, neo-puritan parricide takes the form of

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

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

Just as the ratchet progress of neo-puritan social democracy is radically facilitated by the orchestrated pillorying of its embryonic religious forms, so is its trend to consistently neo-fascist political

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

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

Before following the Tanstaafl-types into the crushing abyss where light dies, there are some preliminary remarks to make about

the white nationalist perspective, and its implications. Even more than the Christian traditionalists (who, even in their cultural mid-winter, can bask in the warmth of supernatural endorsement), white identity politics considers itself *besieged*. Moderate or measured concern offers no equilibrium for those who cross the line, and begin to self-identify in these terms. Instead, the path of involvement demands rapid acceleration to a state of extreme alarm, or racial panic, conforming to an analysis focused upon malicious population replacement at the hands of a government which, in the oft-cited words of Bertolt Brecht, "has decided to dissolve the people, and to appoint another one." 'Whiteness' (whether conceived biologically, mystically, or both) is associated with vulnerability, fragility, and persecution. This theme is so basic, and so multifarious, that it is difficult to adequately address succinctly. It encompasses everything from criminal predation (especially racially-charged murders, rapes, and beatings), economic exactions and inverse discrimination, cultural aggression by hostile academic and media systems, and ultimately 'genocide' – or definitive racial destruction.

Typically, the prospective annihilation of the white race is attributed to its own systematic vulnerability, whether due to characteristic cultural traits (excessive altruism, susceptibility to moral manipulation, excessive hospitality, trust, universal reciprocity, guilt, or individualistic disdain for group identity), or more immediate biological factors (recessive genes supporting

fragile Aryan phenotypes). Whilst it is unlikely that this sense of unique endangerment is reducible to the chromatic formula 'White + Color = Color', the fundamental structure is of this kind. In its abstract depiction of non-reciprocal vulnerability, it reflects the 'one drop rule' (and Mendelian recessive / dominant gene combination). It depicts mixture as essentially anti-white.

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

"If Blacks can have it, and Hispanics can have it, and Jews can have it, why can't we have it?" – That's the final building block of white

nationalist grievance, the werewolf curse that means it can only ever be a monster. There's exactly one way out for persecuted palefaces, and it leads straight into a black hole. We promised to get back to Tanstaafl, and here we are, in late Summer 2007, shortly after he got 'the Jew thing'. There isn't anything very original about his epiphany, which is exactly the point. He quotes himself:

> *Isn't it absurd that anyone would even think to blame Christianity or WASPs for the rise of PC and its catastrophic consequences? Isn't this in fact a reversal of the truth? Hasn't the rise and spread of PC eroded the power of Christianity, WASPs, and whites in general? Blaming them is in effect blaming the victim.*
>
> *Yes, there are Christians, WASPs, and whites who have fallen for the PC brainwashing. Yes, there are some who have taken it so deeply to heart that they work to expand and protect it. That's the nature of PC. That is its purpose. To control the minds of the people it seeks to destroy. The left, at its root, is all about destruction.*
>
> *You don't have to be an anti-Semite to notice where these ideas originate from and who benefits. But you do have to violate PC to say: Jews.*

That's the labyrinth, the trap, with its pitifully constricted,

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

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

Google is overkill. A little link-trawling will get you there. It’s a ‘six degrees of separation’ problem (and more like two, or less). Start digging into the actually existing ‘reactosphere’, and things get quite astoundingly ugly very quickly. Yes, there really is ‘hate’, panic, and disgust, as well as a morbidly addictive abundance of very grim,

vitriolic wit, and a disconcertingly impressive weight of credible fact (these guys just *love* statistics to death). Most of all, just beyond the horizon, there's the black hole. If reaction ever became a popular movement, its few slender threads of bourgeois (or perhaps dreamily 'aristocratic') civility wouldn't hold back the beast for long.

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

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

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

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

There's far more to Moldbug's essay, as there always is. Eventually it explains why he rejects white nationalism, on grounds that owe

nothing to conventional reflexes. But the dark heart of the essay, lifting it beyond brilliance to the brink of genius, is found early on, at the edge of a black hole:

> *Why does white nationalism strike us as evil? Because Hitler was a white nationalist, and Hitler was evil. Neither of these statements is remotely controvertible. There is exactly one degree of separation between white nationalism and evil. And that degree is Hitler. Let me repeat: Hitler.*
>
> *The argument seems watertight. (Hitlertight?) But it holds no water at all.*
>
> *Why does socialism strike us as evil? Because Stalin was a socialist, and Stalin was evil. Anyone who wants to seriously argue that Stalin was less evil than Hitler has an awful long row to hoe. Not only did Stalin order more murders, his murder machine had its heyday in peacetime, whereas Hitler's can at least be seen as a war crime against enemy civilians. Whether this makes a difference can be debated, but if it does it puts Stalin on top.*
>
> *And yet I have never had or seen anything like the "red flags" response to socialism* ["the sense of the presence of evil"]*. If I saw a crowd of young, fashionable people lining up at the box office for a hagiographic biopic on Reinhard Heydrich, chills would run up and down my neck. For Ernesto*

> *Guevara, I have no emotional response. Perhaps I think it's stupid and sad. I do think it's stupid and sad. But it doesn't freak me out.*

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

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

In this regard, rather than Satan, it might be more helpful to compare Hitler to the Antichrist, which is to say: to a mirror Messiah, of reversed moral polarity. There was even an empty tomb. *Hitlerism*, neutrally conceived, therefore, is less a pro-Nazi ideology than a universal faith, speciated within the Abrahamic super-family, and united in acknowledging the coming of pure evil on earth. Whilst not exactly worshipped (outside the extraordinarily disreputable circles already ventured into), Hitler is sacramentally abhorred, in a way that touches upon theological 'first things'. If to embrace Hitler as God is a sign of highly lamentable politico-spiritual confusion (at

best), to recognize his historical singularity and sacred meaning is near-mandatory, since he is affirmed by all men of sound faith as the exact complement of the incarnate God (the revealed anti-Messiah, or Adversary), and this identification has the force of 'self-evident truth'. (Did anybody ever need to ask why the *reductio ad Hitlerum* works?)

Conveniently, like the secularized neo-puritanism that it swallows, (aversive) Hitlerism can be safely taught in American schools, at a remarkably high level of religious intensity. Insofar as progressive or programmatic history continues, this suggests that the Church of Sacred Hitlerite Abomination will eventually supplant its Abrahamic predecessors, to become the world's triumphant ecumenical faith. How could it not? After all, unlike vanilla deism, this is a faith that fully reconciles religious enthusiasm with enlightened opinion, equally adapted, with consummate amphibious capability, to the convulsive ecstasies of popular ritual and the letter pages of the *New York Times*. "Absolute evil once walked amongst us, and lives still …" How is this not, already, the principal religious message of our time? All that remains unfinished is the mythological consolidation, and that has long been underway.

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

April 1, 2012

The Dark Enlightenment (Part 4a)

A multi-part sub-digression into racial terror

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

> *We believe in the equal dignity and presumption of equal decency toward every person — no matter what race, no matter what science tells us about comparative intelligence, and no matter what is to be gleaned from crime statistics. It is important that research be done, that conclusions not be*

> *rigged, and that we are at liberty to speak frankly about what it tells us. But that is not an argument for* a priori *conclusions about how individual persons ought to be treated in various situations — or for calculating fear or friendship based on race alone. To hold or teach otherwise is to prescribe the disintegration of a pluralistic society, to undermine the aspiration of* E Pluribus Unum*.*
> — Andrew McCarthy, defending the expulsion of JD from the National Review

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

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

There is no part of Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei, Shanghai, or very

many other East Asian cities where it is impossible to wander, safely, late at night. Women, whether young or old, on their own or with small children, can be comfortably oblivious to the details of space and time, at least insofar as the threat of assault is concerned. Whilst this might not be quite sufficient to define a civilized society, it comes extremely close. It is certainly *necessary* to any such definition. The contrary case is barbarism.

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

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

Within the most influential countries of the English-speaking world, the disintegration of urban civilization has profoundly shaped the structure and development of cities. In many cases, the 'natural' (one might now say 'Asian') pattern, in which intensive urbanization and corresponding real estate values are greatest in the downtown core, has been shattered, or at least deeply deformed. Social

disintegration of the urban center has driven an exodus of the (even moderately) prosperous to suburban and exurban refuges, producing a grotesque and historically unprecedented pattern of 'donut'-style development, with cities tolerating – or merely accommodating themselves to – ruined and rotting interiors, where sane people fear to tread. 'Inner city' has come to mean almost exactly the opposite of what an undistorted course of urban development would produce. This is the geographical expression of a Western – and especially American – social problem that is at once basically unmentionable and visible from outer space.

Surprisingly, the core-crashed donut syndrome has a notably insensitive yet commonly accepted name, which captures it in broad outlines – at least according to its secondary characteristics – and to a reasonable degree of statistical approximation: *White Flight*. This is an arresting term, for a variety of reasons. It is stamped, first of all, by the racial bi-polarity that – as a *vital archaism* – resonates with America's chronic social crisis at a number of levels. Whilst superficially outdated in an age of many-hued multicultural and immigration issues, it reverts to the undead code inherited from slavery and segregation, perpetually identified with Faulkner's words: "The past is not dead. It isn't even past." Yet even in this untypical moment of racial candor, blackness is elided, and implicitly disconnected from agency. It is denoted only by allusion, as a residue, concentrated passively and derivatively by the sifting function of a

highly-adrenalized white panic. What *cannot be said* is indicated even as it is unmentioned. A distinctive silence accompanies the broken, half-expression of a mute tide of racial separatism, driven by civilizationally disabling terrors and animosities, whose depths, and structures of reciprocity, remain unavowable.

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

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

So what is this 'problem'? How is it developing? Why should

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

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

Question: What is America's race problem?

Answer-1: Black people.

Answer-2: White people.

The combined popularity of these options is significantly expanded, most probably to encompass a large majority of all Americans, when is taken to include those who assume that one of these two answers dominates the thinking of *the other side*. Between them, the propositions "The problem would be over if we could just rid ourselves of black hoodlums / white racists" and / or "They think we're all hoodlums / racists and want to get rid of us" consume an impressive proportion of the political spectrum, establishing a solid foundation of reciprocal terror and aversion. When defensive projections are added ("We're not hoodlums, you're racists" or "We're not racists, you're hoodlums"), the potential for super-heated, non-synthesizing dialectics approaches the infinite.

Not that these 'sides' are racial (except in black or white tribal-

nationalist fantasy). For crude stereotypes, it is far more useful to turn to the *principal political dimension*, and its categories of 'liberal' and 'conservative' in the contemporary, American sense. To identify America's race problem with white racism is the stereotypical *liberal* position, whilst identifying it with black social dysfunction is the exact *conservative* complement. Although these stances are formally symmetrical, it is their actual political *asymmentry* that charges the American race problem with its extraordinary historical dynamism and universal significance.

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

law of ideological effectiveness in the ~~shadow~~ fragrant shade of the Cathedral. In certain respects, this dynamic political imbalance is even the primary phenomenon under consideration (and much more needs to be said about it, down the road).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> *residential housing too, it's the same thing. So I think there is a cold, dark despair lurking in America's collective heart about the whole thing.*

This is a version of reality that few want to hear. As Derbyshire recognizes, Americans are a predominantly Christian, optimistic, 'can-do' people, whose 'collective heart' is unusually maladapted to an *abandonment of hope*. This is a country culturally hard-wired to interpret despair not merely as error or weakness, but as *sin*. Nobody who understands this could be remotely surprised to find bleak hereditarian fatalism being rejected — typically with vehement hostility — not only by progressives, but also by the overwhelming majority of conservatives. At NRO, Andrew C. McCarthy no doubt spoke for many in remarking:

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

Others went much further. At the Examiner, James Gibson seized upon "John Derbyshire's vile racist screed" as the opportunity to teach a wider lesson – "the danger of conservatism divorced from Christianity":

> *… since Derbyshire does not believe "that Jesus of Nazareth was divine . . . and that the Resurrection was a real event,"; he cannot comprehend the great mystery of the Incarnation, whereby the Divine truly did take on human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and suffered death at the hands of a fallen humanity in order to redeem that humanity out of its state of fallenness.*
>
> *Herein lies the danger of a conservative socio-political philosophy divorced from a robust Christian faith. It becomes a dead ideology spawning a view of humanity that is toxic, fatalistic, and (as Derbyshire proves abundantly) uncharitable.*

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

At Gawker, Louis Peitzman jumped the shark (in the approved direction) by describing Derbyshire's "horrifying diatribe" as the "most racist article possible," a judgment that betrays extreme

historical ignorance, a sheltered life, unusual innocence, and a lack of imagination, as well as making the piece sound far more interesting than it actually is. Peitzman's commentators are impeccably liberal, and of course uniformly, utterly, shatteringly appalled (to the point of orgasm). Beyond the emoting, Peitzman doesn't offer much content, excepting only a little extra emoting – this time mild satisfaction mixed with residual rage – at the news that Derbyshire's punishment has at least begun ("a step in the right direction") with his "canning" from the *National Review*.

Joanna Schroeder (writing at something called the Good Feed Blog) sought to extend the purge beyond Derbyshire, to include anybody who had not yet erupted into sufficiently melodramatic paroxysms of indignation, starting with David Weigel at Slate (who she doesn't know "in real life, but in reading this piece, it seems you just might be a racist, pal"). "There are so many … racist, dehumanizing references to black people in Derbyshire's article that I have to just stop myself here before I recount the entire thing point by point with fuming rage," she shares. Unlike Peitzman, however, at least Schroeder has a point – the racial terror dialectic — "… propagating the idea that we should be afraid of black men, of black people in general, makes this world dangerous for innocent Americans." *Your fear makes you scary* (although apparently not with legitimate reciprocity).

As for Weigel, he gets the terror good and hard. Within hours he's

back at the keyboard, apologizing for his previous insouciance, and for the fact he "never ended up saying the obvious: People, the essay was disgusting."

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

Coming next: The Liberal Ecstasy

April 19, 2012

The Dark Enlightenment (Part 4b)

Obnoxious observations

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

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

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

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

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

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

> *complex than polite company is usually allowed to express.*
> — Heather Mac Donald (City Journal)

> *"Let's talk about the elephant in the room. I'm black, OK" the woman said, declining to be identified because she anticipated backlash due to her race. She leaned in to look a reporter directly in the eyes. "There were black boys robbing houses in this neighborhood," she said. "That's why George was suspicious of Trayvon Martin."*
> — Chris Francescani (Reuters)

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

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

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

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

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

When no agreement is necessary, or coercively demanded,

negative (or 'libertarian') liberty is still possible, and this non-argumentative 'other' of dialectics is easily formulated (even if, in a free society, it doesn't need to be): *Do your own thing*. Quite clearly, this irresponsible and negligent imperative is *politically* intolerable. It coincides exactly with leftist depression, retrogression, or depoliticization. Nothing cries out more urgently to be *argued against*.

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

Sometimes, in its impatient passion for progress, this message can trip over itself, because even though the agents of the Cathedral are *infinitely* reasonable, they are ever less sensible, often strikingly incompetent, and prone to making mistakes. This is to be expected on theological grounds. As the state becomes God, it degenerates into imbecility, on the model of the holy fool. The media-politics of the Trayvon Martin spectacle provides a pertinent example.

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

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

good to be true.

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

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

In the heart of the Cathedral it was well into head-scratching time. Here was the great Amerikkkan defendant being prepped for his show trial, the President had pitched in emotionally on behalf of the

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

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

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

warrior right:

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

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

> *You know how you can tell that black people are still oppressed? Because* black people are still oppressed*. If you claim that you are not a racist person (or, at least, that you're committed to working your ass off not to be one — which is really the best that any of us can promise), then you must*

> *believe that people are fundamentally born equal. So if that's true, then in a vacuum, factors like skin color should have no effect on anyone's success. Right? And therefore, if you really believe that all people are created equal, then when you see that drastic racial inequalities exist in the real world, the only thing that you could* possibly *conclude is that some external force is holding certain people back. Like…racism. Right? So congratulations! You believe in racism! Unless you don't actually think that people are born equal. And if you don't believe that people are born equal,* then you're a f*****g racist.

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

At the very least, Jezebel should be congratulated for expressing the progressive faith in its purest form, entirely uncontaminated by sensitivity to evidence or uncertainty of any kind, casually contemptuous of any relevant research – whether existent or merely conceivable – and supremely confident about its own moral invincibility. If the facts are *morally wrong*, so much worse for the

facts – that's the only position that could *possibly* be adopted, even if it's based upon a mixture of wishful thinking, deliberate ignorance, and insultingly childish lies.

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

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

The political commandment of this religion is transparent: Accept progressive social policy as the *only possible* solution to the ~~sin~~ problem of inequality. This commandment is a 'categorical imperative' – no possible fact could ever undermine, complicate, or revise it. If progressive social policy actually results in an exacerbation of the problem, 'fallen' reality is to blame, since the social malady is *obviously* worse than had been originally envisaged, and only redoubled efforts in the same direction can hope to remedy it. There can be nothing to learn in matters of faith. Eventually,

systematic social collapse teaches the lesson that chronic failure and incremental deterioration could not communicate. (That's macro-scale social Darwinism for dummies, and it's the way that civilizations end.)

Due to it's exceptional correlation with substantial variation in social outcomes in modern societies, by far the most troublesome dimension of human bio-diversity is intelligence or general problem solving ability, quantified as IQ (measuring Spearman's 'g'). When 'statistical common sense' or profiling is applied to the proponents of Human Bio-Diversity, however, another significant trait is rapidly exposed: a remarkably consistent deficit of *agreeableness*. Indeed, it is widely accepted within the accursed 'community' itself that most of those stubborn and awkward enough to educate themselves on the topic of human biological variation are significantly 'socially retarded', with low verbal inhibition, low empathy, and low social integration, resulting in chronic maladaptation to group expectations. The typical EQs of this group can be extracted as the approximate square-root of their IQs. Mild autism is typical, sufficient to approach their fellow beings in a spirit of detached, natural-scientific curiosity, but not so advanced as to compel total cosmic disengagement. These traits, which they themselves consider – on the basis of copious technical information — to be substantially heritable, have manifest social consequences, reducing employment opportunities, incomes, and even reproductive potential. Despite all

the free therapeutic advice available in the progressive environment, this obnoxiousness shows no sign of diminishing, and might even be intensifying. As Jezebel shows so clearly, this can only *possibly* be a sign of structural oppression. Why can't obnoxious people get a break?

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

Consider John Derbyshire's essay in infamy *The Talk: Nonblack Version*, focusing initially on its relentless obnoxiousness, and attentive to the negative correlation between sociability and

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

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

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

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

Derbyshire's article is noteworthy because it succeeds in being

definitively obnoxious, and has been recognized as such, despite the spluttering incoherence of most rejoinders. Among the things that 'the talk' and 'the counter-talk' share is a theatrical structure of *pseudo-private conversation designed to be overheard*. In both cases, a message that parents are compelled to deliver to their children is staged as the vehicle for a wider social lesson, aimed at those who, through action or inaction, have created a world that is intolerably hazardous to them.

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

Yet even to a reasonably sympathetic, or scrupulously obnoxious, reading, Derbyshire's article provides grounds for criticism. For

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

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

As a liberal of problematic standing, Saletan has no choice but

to recoil melodramatically from Derbyshire's "stomach-turning conclusions," but his reasons for doing so are not consumed by his gastro-emotional crisis. "But what exactly is a statistical truth?" he asks. "It's a probability estimate you might fall back on if you know nothing about [a particular individual]. It's an ignorant person's weak substitute for knowledge." Derbyshire, with his Aspergery attention to the absence of black Fields Medal winners, is "…a math nerd who substitutes statistical intelligence for social intelligence. He recommends group calculations instead of taking the trouble to learn about the person standing in front of you."

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

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

Millman's conclusion is also instructive:

> *So why am I arguing with Derb at all? Well, because he's a*

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

[Brief intermission …]

May 3, 2012

The Dark Enlightenment (Part 4c)

The Cracker Factory

> *In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men — yes, black men as well as white men — would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*
> *It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked "insufficient funds."*
> — Martin Luther King Jr.

> *Conservatism … is a white people's movement, a scattering of outliers notwithstanding.*
> *Always has been, always will be. I have attended at least a hundred conservative gatherings, conferences, cruises, and jamborees: let me tell you, there ain't too many raisins in that*

bun. I was in and out of the National Review offices for twelve years, and the only black person I saw there, other than when Herman Cain came calling, was Alex, the guy who runs the mail room. (Hey, Alex!)

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

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

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

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

Which is what, very rationally and sensibly, they do.
— John Derbyshire

Neo-secessionists are all around us… and free speech gives them a cozy blanket of protection. Rick Perry insinuating Texas could secede rather than adhere to the federal healthcare law, Todd Palin belonging to a political association advocating Alaskan secession, and Sharron Angle talking about 'second amendment remedies' to handle disputes with federal authorities are all examples of dangerous secessionist rhetoric permeating through modern discourse. The media focuses our attention at Civil War reenactors and pick-up trucks with Confederate flags flying on them. But public figures are influenced as well, by academics who struggle to perpetuate a most dangerous brand of revisionism.
— Practically Historical

African-Americans are the conscience of our country.
— commenter 'surfed' at Walter Russell Mead's blog (edited for spelling)

America's racial 'original sin' was foundational, dating back before the birth of the United States to the clearing of aboriginal peoples by European settlers, and – still more saliently – to the institution of chattel slavery. This is the Old Testament history of American black-

white relations, set down in a providential narrative of escape from bondage, in which factual documentation and moral exhortation are indissolubly fused. The combination of prolonged and intense social abuse in a pattern set by the Torah, recapitulating the primordial moral-political myth of the Western tradition, has installed the story of slavery and emancipation as the unsurpassable frame of the American historical experience: *let my people go*.

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

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

The New Testament of race in America was written in the 1960s, revising and specifying the template. The combination of the Civil Rights Movement, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, and the Republican Southern Strategy (appealing to disaffected whites in the states of the old Confederacy) forged a partisan identification between Blacks and the Democratic Party that amounted to a liberal-progressive rebirth, setting the terms for partisan racial

polarization that have endured – and even strengthened – over subsequent decades. For a progressive movement compromised by a history of systematic eugenicist racism, and a Democratic Party traditionally aligned with white southern obduracy and the Ku Klux Klan, the civil rights era presented an opportunity for atonement, ritual purification, and redemption.

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

The left thrives on dialectics, the right perishes through them. Insofar as there is a pure logic of politics, it is that. One immediate consequence (repeatedly emphasized by Mencius Moldbug) is that

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

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

Regardless of mainstream conservative fantasies, liberal-progressive mastery of American providence has become uncontestable, dominated by a racial dialectic that absorbs unlimited contradiction, whilst positioning the Afro-American underclass as the incarnate critique of the existing social order, the criterion of emancipation, and the sole path to collective salvation. No alternative structure of historical intelligibility is politically tolerable,

or even – strictly speaking – imaginable, since resistance to the narrative is un-American, anti-social, and (of course) racist, serving only to confirm the existence of systematic racial oppression through the symbolic violence manifested in its negation. To argue against it is already to prove it correct, by concretely demonstrating the same benighted forces of social retardation that are being verbally denied. By resisting the demand for orchestrated social re-education, knuckle-dragging 'bitter clingers' only show how much there still is to do.

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

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

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

harmonize itself with "a dream deeply rooted in the American dream."

> *I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."*
>
> *I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.*
>
> *I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.*
>
> *I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.*

Captivated by King's appeal to constitutional and biblical traditionalism, by his rejection of political violence, and by his uninhibited paeans to freedom, American conservatism gradually came to identify with his dream of racial reconciliation and race blindness, and to accept it as the true, providential meaning of its own most sacred documents. At least, this became the mainstream, public, conservative orthodoxy, even though it was consolidated far

too late to neutralize suspicions of insincerity, failed almost entirely to convince the black demographic itself, and would remain open to escalating derision from the left for its empty formalism.

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

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

King declares, “the Negro still is not free.”

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

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

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

> *… this isn't just about who has written what — it's about the intensely racist policies that are par for the conservative course. Some people would like to believe that racism is just the explicit, said-out-loud discrimination and hatred that is easily identifiable. It's not — it's also pushing xenophobic policies and supporting systemic inequality. After all, what's more impactful — a singular racist like Derbyshire or Arizona's immigration law? A column or voter suppression? Getting rid of one racist from one publication doesn't change the fact that the conservative agenda is one that disproportionately punishes and discriminates against people of color. So, I'm sorry, folks — you don't get to support structural inequality and then give yourself a pat on the back for not being overtly racist.*

The 'conservative agenda' cannot ever be dreamy (hopeful and inconsistent) enough to escape accusations of racism – that's intrinsic to the way the racial dialectic works. Policies broadly compatible with capitalistic development, oriented to the rewarding of low time-preference, and thus punishing impulsivity, will reliably have a disparate impact upon the least economically functional social

groups. Of course, the dialectic demands that the racial aspect of this disparate impact can and must be strongly emphasized (for the purpose of condemning incentives to human capital formation as racist), and at the same time forcefully denied (in order to denounce *exactly the same observation* as racist stereotyping). Anyone who expects conservatives to navigate this double-bind with political agility and grace must somehow have missed the late 20th century. For instance, the ~~doomed loser idiots~~ conservatives at the *Washington Examiner*, noticing with alarm that:

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

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

was given one. Call it the Cracker Factory.

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

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

Like Hell, or Auschwitz, the Cracker Factory has a simple slogan

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

You absolutely, definitely, *mustn't go <u>there</u>* … so, of course, we will … [next]

May 17, 2012

The Dark Enlightenment (Part 4d)

Odd Marriages

The origins of the word 'cracker' as a term of ethnic derision are distant and obscure. It seems to have already circulated, as a slur targeting poor southern whites of predominantly Celtic ancestry, in the mid-18th century, derived perhaps from 'corn-cracker' or the Scots-Irish 'crack' (banter). The rich semantic complexion of the term, inextricable from the identification of elaborate racial, cultural,

and class characteristics, is comparable to that of its unmentionable dusky cousin – "the 'N-'word" – and draws from the same well of generally recognized but forbidden truths. In particular, and emphatically, it testifies to the *illicit truism* that people are more excited and animated by their differences than by their commonalities, 'clinging bitterly' – or at least tenaciously – to their non-uniformity, and obstinately resisting the universal categories of enlightened population management. Crackers are grit in the clockwork of progress.

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

Contradictions demand resolution, but *cracks* can continue to widen, deepen, and spread. According to the cracker ethos, when things can fall apart – it's OK. There's no need to reach agreement, when it's possible to split. This *cussedness*, pursued to its limit, tends to a hill-billy stereotype set in a shack or rusting trailer at the end

of an Appalachian mountain path, where all economic transactions are conducted in cash (or moonshine), interactions with government agents are conducted across the barrel of a loaded shotgun, and timeless anti-political wisdom is summed in the don't-tread-on-me reflex: "Get off my porch." Naturally, this disdain for integrative debate (dialectics) is coded within the mainstream of Anglocentric global history – which is to say, Yankee evangelical Puritanism – as a deficiency not only of cultural sophistication, but also of basic intelligence, and even the most scrupulous adherent of social constructivist righteousness immediately reverts to hard-hereditarian psychometrics when confronted by cracker obstreperousness. To those for whom a broad trend of socio-political progress seems like a simple, incontestable fact, the refusal to recognize anything of the kind is perceived as clear evidence of retardation.

Since stereotypes generally have high statistical truth-value, it's more than possible that crackers are clustered heavily on the left of the white IQ bell-curve, concentrated there by generations of dysgenic pressure. If, as Charles Murray argues, the efficiency of meritocratic selection within American society has steadily risen and conspired with assortative mating to transform class differences into genetic castes, it would be passing strange if the cracker stratum were to be characterized by conspicuous cognitive elevation. Yet some awkwardly intriguing questions intervene at this point, as long

as one diligently pursues the stereotype. Assortative mating? How can that work, when crackers marry their cousins? Oh yes, there's *that*. Drawing on population groups beyond the north-western Hajnal Line, traditional cracker kinship patterns are notably atypical of the exogamous Anglo (WASP) norm.

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

Inbreeding, in contrast, creates a selective environment favoring

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

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

This paradox is most fully expressed in the radical forms of European ethnocentric revivalism exemplified by paleo- and neo-Nazism, confounding its proponents and antagonists alike. When exceptionally advanced 'race-treachery' is your quintessential racial feature, the opportunity for viable ethno-supremacist politics

disappears into a logical abyss – even if occasions for large-scale trouble-making no doubt remain. Admittedly, a Nazi, by definition, is willing (and eager) to sacrifice modernity upon the altar of racial purity, but this is either not to understand, or to tragically affirm, the inevitable consequence – which is to be out-modernized (and thus defeated). Identity politics is for losers, inherently and unalterably, due to an essentially parasitical character that only works from the left. Because inbreeding systematically contra-indicates for modern power, racial *Übermenschen* make no real sense.

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

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

* The Mises Institute was founded in Auburn, Alabama.

* Ron Paul newsletters from the 1980s contain remarks of a decidedly Derbyshirean hue.

* Derbyshire hearts Ron Paul.

* Murray Rothbard has written in defense of HBD.

* lewrockwell.com contributors include Thomas J. DiLorenzo and Thomas Woods

* Tom Palmer doesn't heart Lew Rockwell or Hans-Hermann Hoppe because "Together They Have Opened the Gates of Hell and Welcomed the Most Extreme Right-Wing Racists, Nationalists, and Assorted Cranks"

* Libertarians / constitutionalists account for 20% of the SPLC 'Radical Right' watch list (Chuck Baldwin, Michael Boldin, Tom DeWeese, Alex Jones, Cliff Kincaid, and Elmer Stewart Rhodes)

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

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

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

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

June 15, 2012

The Dark Enlightenment (Part 4e)

Cross-coded history

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

way to fix it is to break it up. — Frank Karsten

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

Thus, rather than by means of a top-down reform, under the current conditions, one's strategy must be one of a bottom-up revolution. At first, the realization of this insight would seem to make the task of a liberal-libertarian social revolution impossible, for does this not imply that one would have to persuade a majority of the public to vote for the abolition of democracy and an end to all taxes and legislation? And is this not sheer fantasy, given that the masses are always dull and indolent, and even more so given that democracy, as explained above, promotes moral and intellectual degeneration? How in the world can anyone expect that a majority of an increasingly degenerate people

> *accustomed to the "right" to vote should ever voluntarily renounce the opportunity of looting other people's property? Put this way, one must admit that the prospect of a social revolution must indeed be regarded as virtually nil. Rather, it is only on second thought, upon regarding secession as an integral part of any bottom-up strategy, that the task of a liberal-libertarian revolution appears less than impossible, even if it still remains a daunting one.* – Hans-Hermann Hoppe

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

self-limiting runaway. As a drama of liberation, it is a broken promise.

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

Given modernity's inherent trend to degeneration or self-cancellation, three broad prospects open. These are not strictly exclusive, and are therefore not true alternatives, but for schematic

purposes it is helpful to present them as such.

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

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

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

Because competition is good, a pinch of Western Renaissance would spice things up, even if – as is overwhelmingly probable — Modernity 2.0 is the world's principal highway to the future. That depends upon the West stopping and reversing pretty much everything it has been doing for over a century, excepting only scientific, technological, and business innovation. It is advisable to

maintain rhetorical discipline within a strictly hypothetical mode, because the possibility of any of these things is deeply colored by incredibility:

(1) Replacement of representational democracy by constitutional republicanism (or still more extreme anti-political governmental mechanisms).

(2) Massive downsizing of government and its rigorous confinement to core functions (at most).

(3) Restoration of hard money (precious metal coins and bullion deposit notes) and abolition of central banking.

(4) Dismantling of state monetary and fiscal discretion, thus abolishing practical macroeconomics and liberating the autonomous (or 'catallactic') economy. (This point is redundant, since it follows rigorously from 2 & 3 above, but it's the real prize, so worth emphasizing.)

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

Democracy might begin as a defensible procedural mechanism for limiting government power, but it quickly and inexorably develops into something quite different: a culture of systematic thievery. As

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

Within the final phase of Modernity 1.0, American history becomes the master narrative of the world. It is there that the great Abrahamic cultural conveyor culminates in the secularized neo-puritanism of the Cathedral, as it establishes the New Jerusalem in Washington DC. The apparatus of Messianic-revolutionary purpose is consolidated in the evangelical state, which is authorized by any means necessary to install a new world order of universal fraternity, in the name of equality, human rights, social justice, and – above

all – *democracy*. The absolute moral confidence of the Cathedral underwrites the enthusiastic pursuit of unrestrained centralized power, optimally unlimited in its intensive penetration and its extensive scope.

With an irony altogether hidden from the witch-burners' spawn themselves, the ascent of this squinting cohort of grim moral fanatics to previously unscaled heights of global power coincides with the descent of mass-democracy to previously unimagined depths of gluttonous corruption. Every five years America steals itself from itself again, and fences itself back in exchange for political support. *This democracy thing is easy – you just vote for the guy who promises you the most stuff. An idiot could do it.* Actually, it likes idiots, treats them with apparent kindness, and does everything it can to manufacture more of them.

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

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

Even on the left, it would be extraordinary to find many who genuinely believe, after sustained reflection, that the primary driver of government expansion and centralization has been the burning

desire *to do good* (not that intentions matter). Yet, as the twin tracks cross, such is the electric jolt of moral drama, leaping the gap from racial Golgotha to intrusive Leviathan, that skepticism is suspended, and the great progressive myth installed. *The alternative to more government, doing ever more, was to stand there, negligently, whilst they lynched another Negro*. This proposition contains the entire essential content of American progressive education.

The twin historical tracks of state capability and purpose can be conceived as a translation protocol, enabling any recommended restraint upon government power to be 'decoded' as malign obstruction of racial justice. This system of substitutions functions so smoothly that it provides an entire vocabulary of (bipartisan) 'code-words' or 'dog-whistles' – 'welfare', 'freedom of association', 'states rights' – ensuring that any intelligible utterance on the Principal (left-right) Political Dimension occupies a double registry, semi-saturated by racial evocations. Reactionary regression smells of strange fruit.

… and that is before backing out of the calamitous 20th century. It was not the Civil Rights Era, but the 'American Civil War' (in the terms of the victors) or 'War between the States' (in those of the vanquished) that first indissolubly cross-coded the practical question of Leviathan with (black/white) racial dialectics, laying down the central junction yard of subsequent political antagonism and rhetoric. The indispensable primary step in comprehending this fatality snakes along an awkward diagonal between mainstream

statist and revisionist accounts, because the conflagration that consumed the American nation in the early 1860s was wholly but non-exclusively about emancipation from slavery *and* about states rights, with neither 'cause' reducible to the other, or sufficient to suppress the war's enduring ambiguities. Whilst there are any number of 'liberals' happy to celebrate the consolidation of centralized government power in the triumphant Union, and, symmetrically, a (far smaller) number of neo-confederate apologists for the institution of chattel slavery in the southern states, neither of these unconflicted stances capture the dynamic cultural legacy of a *war across the codes*.

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

and the culture wars.

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

July 3, 2012

The Dark Enlightenment (Part 4f(inal))

Approaching the Bionic Horizon

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

The central dogma of the Cathedral has been formalized as the Standard Social Scientific Model (SSSM) or 'blank slate theory'. It is

the belief, completed in its essentials by the anthropology of Franz Boas, that every legitimate question about mankind is restricted to the sphere of culture. Nature permits *that* 'man' is, but never determines *what* man is. Questions directed towards natural characteristics and variations between humans are themselves properly understood as cultural peculiarities, or even pathologies. Failures of 'nurture' are the only thing we are allowed to see.

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

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

Acquiring knowledge and using tools is a single dynamic circuit, producing techno-science as an integral system, without real

divisibility into theoretical and practical aspects. Science develops in loops, through experimental *technique* and the production of ever more sophisticated instrumentation, whilst embedded within a broader industrial process. Its advance is the improvement of a machine. This intrinsically technological character of (modern) science demonstrates the *efficiency* of culture as a complex natural force. It neither expresses a pre-existing natural circumstance, nor does it merely construct social representations. Instead, nature and culture compose a dynamic circuit, at the edge of nature, where fate is decided.

According to the self-reinforcing presupposition of modernization, to be understood is to be modifiable. It is to be expected, therefore, that biology and medicine co-evolve. The same historical dynamic that comprehensively subverts the SSSM through inundating waves of scientific discovery simultaneously volatilizes human biological identity through biotechnology. There is no essential difference between learning what we *really are* and re-defining ourselves as technological contingencies, or *technoplastic* beings, susceptible to precise, scientifically-informed transformations. 'Humanity' becomes intelligible as it is subsumed into the technosphere, where information processing of the genome – for instance — brings reading and editing into perfect coincidence.

To describe this circuit, as it consumes the human species, is to define our *bionic horizon*: the threshold of conclusive nature-culture

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

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

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

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

Three implications are important.

1. Most evolutionary change is associated with the origin of new species.

2. Several modes of evolution may operate simultaneously. In this case the most effective dominates the process.

3. Tiny minorities of individuals do most of the evolving instead of the species as a whole.

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

The third seminal realization is that evolution extends past the change in organisms as products of evolution to

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

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

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

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

> *species are as likely to go extinct as were those in the past. Species cannot become fitter and fitter because reproductive success is not a cumulative parameter.*

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

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

> *Reasoning that the majority of humankind will not voluntarily accept qualitative population-management policies, Campbell points out that any attempt to raise the IQ of the whole human race would be tediously slow. He further points out that the general thrust of early eugenics was not so much species improvement as the prevention of decline. Campbell's eugenics, therefore, advocates the abandonment of Homo sapiens as a 'relic' or 'living fossil' and the application of genetic technologies to intrude upon the genome, probably writing novel genes from scratch using a*

> *DNA synthesizer. Such eugenics would be practiced by elite groups, whose achievements would so quickly and radically outdistance the usual tempo of evolution that within ten generation the new groups will have advanced beyond our current form to the same degree that we transcend apes.*

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

July 20, 2012

Malthusian Horror

The post is pitched like this because it's Friday night, but it works. A more dutiful post might have been entitled simply 'Malthus' and involved a lot of work. That's going to be needed at some point. (Here's the 6th edition of *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, for anyone who wants to get started now.) A more thoroughly technical approach would have been flagged 'Neo-Malthusianism'. While sympathizing with groans about another 'neo-' prefix, in this case it would have been solidly justified. It's only through expansion of the Malthusian insight in accordance with a more general conservation law that its full current relevance can be appreciated. Classic

Malthus still does far more work than it is credited with, but it contains a *principle* of far more penetrating application.

'Neo-' at its most frivolous is merely a mark of fashion. When employed more seriously, it notes an element of innovation. Its most significant sense includes not only novelty, but also abstraction. Something is carried forwards in such a way that its conceptual core is distilled through extraction from a specific context, achieving a higher generality, and more exact formality. Malthus partially anticipates this in a phrase that points beyond any excessively constrictive concreteness:



The qualification "in some shape or other" might have been drawn from abstract horror, and "premature death" only loosely binds it. Even so, this formulation remains too narrow, since it tends to exclude the dysgenic outcome, which we have since learnt is a dimension of Malthusian expression scarcely less imposing than resource crisis. A Neo-Malthusian account of the "X" which *in some shape or other* makes a grim perversity of all humanity's efforts to

improve its condition grasps it as a mathematically conserved, plastic, or abstract destiny, working as remorselessly through reductions of mortality (Malthusian 'relaxations') as through increases (Malthusian 'pressures'). Both would count equally as "checks on population" — each convertible, through a complex calculus, into the terms of the other. A population dysgenically deteriorated through 'enlightened' Malthusian relaxation learns, once again, how to starve.

The Dark Enlightenment (essay) was clearly catalyzed by the work of Mencius Moldbug, but it was to have had two Anglo-Thomistic or Doubting Thomas intellectual-historical pillars (and neither were Thomas Carlyle). The first was Thomas Hobbes, who was at least touched upon. The second was to have been Thomas Malthus, but the series was diverted into the foaming current of the Derbyshire affair and the outrages of Leftist race politics. The integrity of conception was lost. Had it not been, it might have been less tempting to read the 333-current as an Anti-Enlightenment, rather than a Counter-Enlightenment, in the sense of an eclipsed, alternative to the Rousseauistic calamity that prevailed. It would certainly attach the Scottish Enlightenment, but only under the definite condition that it is lashed securely to the harsh realist scaffolding of the Dark Enlightenment (Hobbes and Malthus), disillusioned of all idealism. Pretty stories are for little children (being raised by liberals).

Malthus subtracts all utopianism from enlightenment. He shows that history is put together — necessarily — in a butcher's yard. Through Malthus, Ricardo discovered the Iron Law of Wages, disconnecting the ideas of economic advance and humanitarian redemption. Darwin effected a comparable (and more consequential) revision in biology, also on Malthusian grounds, dispelling all sentimentality from notions of evolutionary 'progression'. It is from Malthus that we know, when anything seems to move forward, it is through being ground up against a cutting edge. It is when Marx attempts to put Malthus into history, rather than history into Malthus, that utopian dementia was resuscitated within economics. The anti-Malthusianism of Libertarians stigmatizes them as dreamy fools.

With NRx, the matter is perhaps more unsettled, but the Dark Enlightenment is unambiguously Mathusian. If you find your eye becoming dewy, pluck it out.

November 14, 2014

BLOCK 2 - SOCIAL DARWINISM

Reality Rules

Why Social Darwinism isn't going anywhere

> *The name* social Darwinism *is a modern name given to the various theories of society that emerged in England and the United States in the 1870s, which, it is alleged, sought to apply biological concepts to sociology and politics. The term* social Darwinism *gained widespread currency when used in 1944 to oppose these earlier concepts. Today, because of the negative connotations of the theory of social Darwinism,*

> *especially after the atrocities of the Second World War (including the Holocaust), few people would describe themselves as Social Darwinists and the term is generally seen as pejorative.* — Wikipedia

> *… no one calls himself a social Darwinist. Not now, not ever. Not Herbert Spencer. The term is always used to label one's opponents. In that sense it's clearly a more abusive term than "socialist," a term that millions of people have proudly claimed.* — David Boaz

Urban Future somehow missed the excited side-track discussion that bolted to the conclusion: America voted in November 2012 to spare itself from Social Darwinism. Yet, sadly belated as it may be, our rejoinder is unchanged: nothing ever gets spared from Darwinism. That's what Darwinism is.

The fact that the term Social Darwinism survives only as a slur is abundantly telling, and suffices on its own to explain the ideological 'evolution' of recent times. In a nutshell, the dominant usage of 'social Darwinism' says "markets are a kind of Nazi thing." Checkmate in one move.

Markets implement a Darwinian process by eliminating failure. Schumpeter called it 'creative destruction'. The principle *unit of selection* is the business enterprise, which is able to innovate, adapt,

propagate, and evolve precisely insofar as it is also exposed to the risk of perishing. None of this is especially complicated, or even controversial. In a sane world it is what 'social Darwinism' would mean. It is certainly what Herbert Spencer was really talking about (although he never adopted the label).

The fundamental tenet of Social Darwinism would then be compressible into a couple of words: *reality rules*. There's more, of course, but nothing especially challenging. The further additions are really subtractions, or reservations – intellectual economies, negative principles, and non-commitments. That's because Darwinism – whether 'social' or otherwise – is built from subtractions. Deducting all supernatural causality and transcendent agencies leaves Darwinism as the way complex structures get designed. (Not constructed, but *designed*, in conformity with a naturalistic theory of plans, blueprints, recipes, or assembly codes, of the kind that have naturally invited supernatural explanation. Darwinism only applies to practical information.)

Subtractions put it together. For instance, remove the extravagant hypothesis that something big and benevolent is looking after us, whether God, the State, or some alternative Super-Dad, and the realistic residue indicates that our mistakes kill us. It follows that anything still hanging around has a history of avoiding serious mistakes, which it may or may not be persisting with – and persistence will tell. If we're forgetting important lessons, we'll pay

(in the currency of survival).

If this is mere tautology, as has not infrequently been alleged, then there's not even any need for controversy. But of course, controversy there is, plentifully, and so deeply entrenched that the most banal expositions capture it best. Consider this, from the self-assuredly pedestrian United States History site:

> *Social Darwinism was the application of Charles Darwin's scientific theories of evolution and natural selection to contemporary social development. In nature, only the fittest survived — so too in the marketplace. This form of justification was enthusiastically adopted by many American businessmen as scientific proof of their superiority.*

What is this supremely typical paragraph really saying? That some American businesses survived, were thus seen as "the fittest" (= they had survived), 'justified' (= they had survived), and 'proven to be superior' (= they had survived), in other words, a string of perfectly empty identity statements that is in some way supposed to embody a radically disreputable form of ruthless social extremism. This same systematic logical error, seen with tedious insistence in all instance of commentary on 'social Darwinism', was baptized by Schopenhauer 'hypostasis of the concept'. It seizes upon something, repeats it exactly but in different terms, and then pretends to have added

information. Once this error is corrected for, substantial discussion of the topic is exposed in its full, dazzling vacuity.

A writhing David Boaz cites the Encyclopedia Britannica entry on Social Darwinism, which describes it as:

> *… the theory that persons, groups, and races are subject to the same laws of natural selection as Charles Darwin had perceived in plants and animals in nature. According to the theory, which was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the weak were diminished and their cultures delimited, while the strong grew in power and in cultural influence over the weak…. The poor were the "unfit" and should not be aided; in the struggle for existence, wealth was a sign of success. At the societal level, social Darwinism was used as a philosophical rationalization for imperialist, colonialist, and racist policies, sustaining belief in Anglo-Saxon or Aryan cultural and biological superiority.*

It is immediately clear that this passage, too, follows the already-familiar pattern, clocking 'hypostasis of the concept' to the edge of spontaneous combustion. Worse still, it tries to put its hypostasized 'information' to work through the positive proposition — tacitly insinuated rather than firmly stated – that "persons, groups, and races" are something other than "animals in nature." Nature, it seems,

ceased to apply at some threshold of human social development, when people stopped being animals, and became something else. Man is not only doubled (as a natural being and something else), but divided between incommensurable kingdoms, whose re-integration is morally akin to "rationalization for imperialist, colonialist, and racist policies" and – why not admit it? — fascist genocide.

Define nature in such a way that we're not part of it, or you're engaged in Nazi apologetics says *Encyclopedia Britannica*. There's obviously something about social Darwinism that gets people excited — several things, actually. Plugging the spontaneous theory of *laissez faire* capitalism into traumatic association with the Third Reich is thrilling enough, especially because that's the basic platform for the epoch of actually existing fascism (which we still inhabit), but there's more.

The most obvious clue, from which the *Encyclopedia Britannica* passage unravels like a piece of incompetent knitting, is the magical appearance of 'should' – "The poor were the 'unfit' and should not be aided." This is another preposterous hypostasis, naturally (and unnaturally), but equally typical. At the evolution site *talkorigins*, John S. Wilkins tells us: "'Social Darwinism' … holds that social policy should allow the weak and unfit to fail and die, and that this is not only good policy but morally right." The intellectual perversity here is truly fascinating.

Any naturalistic social theory subtracts, or at least suspends,

moral evaluation. It says: this is the way things are (however we might want them to be). Yet here, through hypostatic doubling, or redundancy, such neutral realism is converted into a bizarre, morally-charged stance: *nature should happen*. Social Darwinism is not attempting to explain, but rather *siding with reality* (those Nazis!).

This is, quite simply and literally, madness. Left dissatisfied by mere denial of the modest proposition that reality rules, the denunciation of social Darwinism proceeds smoothly to the accusation that realists are aiding and abetting the enemy. The unforgivable crime is to accept that there are consequences, or results, other than those we have agreed to allow.

The reality is that practical decisions have real consequences. If those consequences are annulled by, or absorbed into, a more comprehensive social entity, then that entity inherits them. What it incentivizes it grows into. The failures it selects for become its own. When maladaptive decisions are displaced, or aggregated, they are not dispelled, but reinforced, generalized, and exacerbated. Whatever the scale of the social being under consideration, it either finds a way to work, and to reward what works, or it perishes, whether as a whole, or in pieces. That is the 'social Darwinism' that will return, eventually, because reality rules, and rather than joining the clamor of denunciation, Boaz would have been prescient to reclaim it.

November 20, 2012

Discrimination

Bryan Caplan has had two epiphanies, which sum to the conclusion that — bad as tribalism is — misanthropy is the real problem. His ineradicable universalism betrays him once again.

It matters little whether people are *uniformly* judged good or bad. Far more important is whether such judgment is *discriminating*.

The central argument of Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals* is clarifying in this regard, not least because it explains how radical mystification came to dominate the topic. How could there ever come to be a moral quandary about the value of discrimination? Considered superficially, it is extremely puzzling.

Differentiation between what is 'good' and 'bad' requires discrimination. This is a capability no younger than life itself, which it serves as an indispensable function. As soon as there is behavior, there is discrimination between alternatives. One way leads to survival, the other way leads to death. There is nourishment, or not; reproduction, or not; safety or predatory menace. Good and bad, or the discrimination between them (which is the same thing), are etched primordially into any world that life inhabits. Discrimination is needed to survive.

The very existence of archaic hominids attests to billions of years of effective discrimination, between safety and danger, wholesome and putrid or poisonous food, good mates and less good (or worthless) ones. When these elevated apes differentiated between good and bad, appetizing and rotten, attractive and repulsive, they found such discriminations sufficiently similar in essence to be functionally substitutable. When judging that some food item is 'not good for us', a person is 'rotten', or the odor of a potential mate is 'delicious', we recall such substitutions, and the primordial sense of discrimination that they affirm. There can be no long-term deviation from the original principle: *discrimination is intelligence aligned with survival*.

Two contrary developments now present themselves. Firstly, there is a sublimation or sophistication of discrimination, which might be called *cultivation*. Abstract concepts, modes of expression, artworks, delicate culinary flavors, refined behaviors, and exotic elaborations of sexual-selection stimuli, among innumerable other things, can all be subtly discriminated on the ancient scale, supporting an ever more intricate and extended hierarchy of judgments. The reflexive doubling of this potential upon itself, as captured by the 'higher' judgment that *to discriminate well is good*, produces a 'natural aristocracy'. For the first time, there is a self-conscious 'Right'. This, at least, is its logico-mythical ur-form. *To divide the good from the bad is good*. Order, hierarchy, and

distinction emerge from an affirmation of discrimination.

Because the Left cannot create, it comes second. It presupposes an existing hierarchy, or order of discriminations, which is subverted through a 'slave revolt in morality'. The formula is simple enough: *to discriminate is bad*. Following from this leftist moral perversion, as its second-order consequence, those who do not discriminate (well), but are in fact discriminated against, must be the good. In the new moral order, therefore, to be bad at discrimination is good — or 'universalist' — whilst the old (and now 'evil') quality of good judgment, based on competent perception of patterns and differences, is the very quintessence of sin.

Lawrence Auster's thinking, which would not usually be described as 'Nietzschean', conforms to the conclusions of the Antichrist perfectly in this:

We thus arrive at our present system of mass nonwhite immigration, multiculturalism, racial preferences for minorities, the symbolic celebration of minorities, the covering up of black-on-white violence, and antiracism crusades directed exclusively at whites. ***Under this system, whites practice assiduous non-discrimination toward the unassimilated, alien, or criminal behavior of racial minorities, while practicing the most assiduous discrimination against their fellow whites for the slightest failure to be non-discriminatory.*** *This is the system that conservatives variously describe as "political correctness" or the "double standard."*

However, from the point of view of the functioning of the liberal order itself, what conservatives call the double standard is not a double standard at all, but a fundamental and necessary articulation of the society into the "non-discriminators" and the "non-discriminated against"—an articulation upon which the very legitimacy and existence of the liberal society depends. [Auster's emphasis]

The racial pretext for this righteous diatribe is not incidental, given the prevailing sense of 'discrimination' in Left-edited languages. Caution is required, however, precisely because vulgar racism is *insufficiently discriminating*. All generalization lurches towards the universal. The abstract principle of Leftism is, in any case, far more general. The trend towards the Left-absolute is entirely clear, and pre-programmed: *no state of human existence can possibly be any better or worse than any other*, and only through recognition of this can we be saved. Do you sinfully imagine that it is *better* to be a damned soul like Nietzsche than an obese, leprous, slothful, communist, cretin? Or worse still, in Bryan Caplan's world, that one might design an immigration policy on this basis? Then your path to the abyss is already marked out before you.

It does not take an exceptional mastery of logic to see the inextinguishable contradiction in Leftist thought. If discrimination is bad, and non-discrimination is good, how can discrimination be discriminated from non-discrimination, without grave moral error?

This is an opportunity for Rightist entertainment, but not for solace. The Left has power and absurdist mysticism on its side. Logic is for sinners.

Two hanging questions:

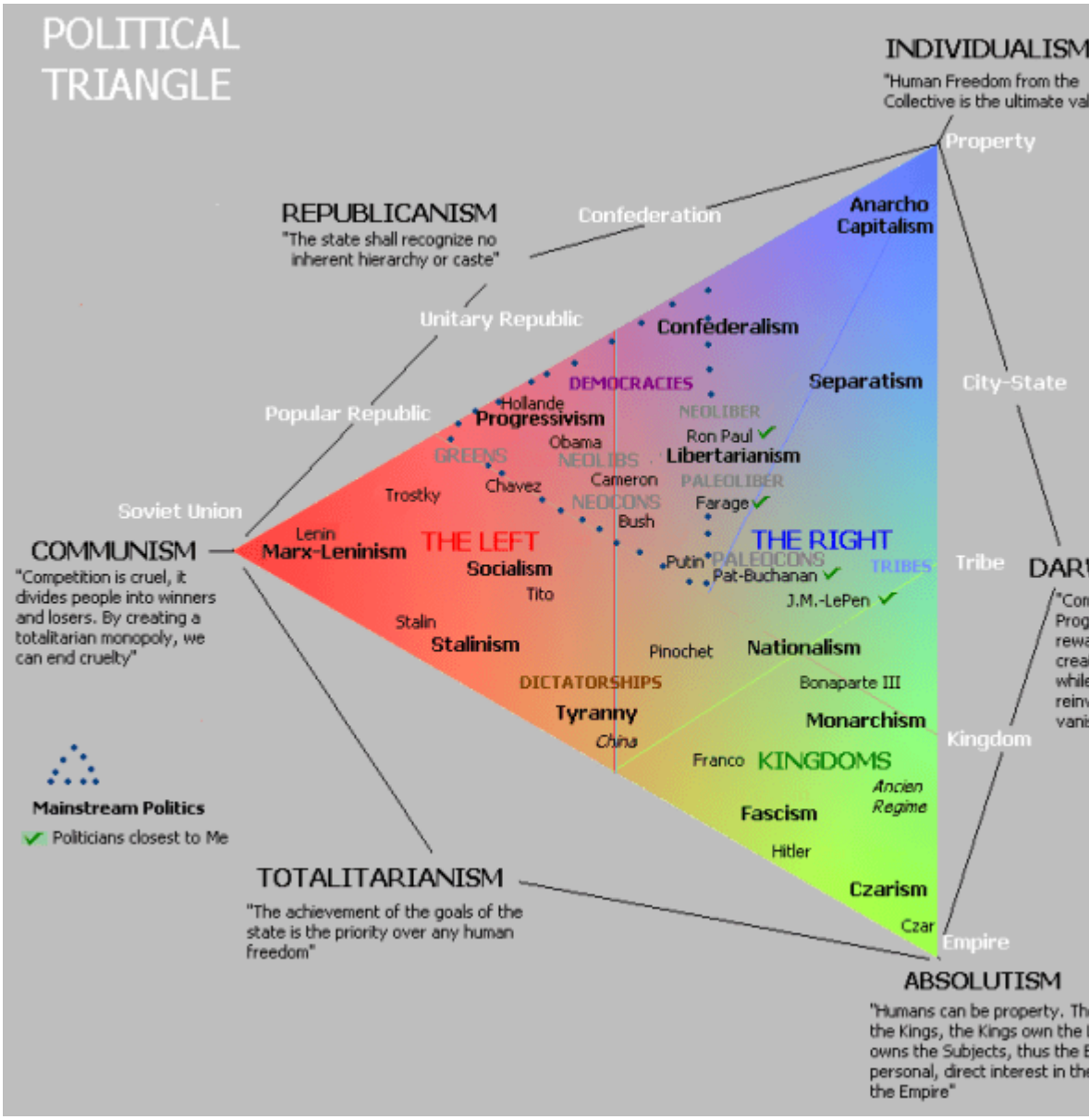
Can Left and Right be rigorously distinguished in any other way?

Isn't Christianity, as Nietzsche insisted, inextricable from this mess?

August 9, 2013

Coldness

'Coincidentally' a number of seemingly unrelated social media stimuli have conspired to recall this today:



Note: “Politics closest to me” comes from the original creator of this diagram (I’m still not sure who that is). The politics closest to

me are located in the top right corner of the gray box, where it disappears into the blackness of the Outside.

For the record, these tweets were the principal pincers:

> @Outsideness I'm 70% sure I read something by you (or maybe it was linked by you) about how Darwinism is always to our right
>
> — Кирилл Каминец (@Fatalist_Rus) February 12, 2015

> Outside in – Involvements with reality » Blog Archive » Fission http://t.co/GTCSoEd89s
>
> — Kalish Jantzen (@KalishJantzen) February 13, 2015

(It took me a while to make the connection.)

There's a further link — also to Twitter — concerning the accusation that Anarcho-Capitalism and Neocameralism are 'Utopian'. I won't reproduce that here, because it was longer, and more involved. The relevant point is that both these 'positions' can be construed either as ideals, and therefore indeed vulnerable to criticism for their Utopianism, or as *cold* analytical frameworks that capture *what is* in a way that enhances its theoretical tractability. Darwinism is no different, in this respect.

Anybody who is a Cosmic Darwinist is certainly going to be a Social Darwinist, unless they have a cognitive consistency problem.

When a Darwinist observes a maladaption it is not seen as a theoretical hole, but rather as the basis for a prediction. Whatever cannot effectively reproduce itself can be reliably expected not to successfully reproduce itself. If adventures in policy recommendation then follow, they are strictly secondly. What is primary is simple. Reality rules.

Outside in is, of course, utterly Social Darwinist in this sense (and probably also in whatever others are available). Variation-selection dynamics are unsurpassable. Whatever seeks to depart from them will fail. Suppression of either variation or selection is intrinsically maladaptive *to the cosmos*. Maximization of the interlocked functions of experimentation and eradication of error is the only value to which the ultimate nature of things subscribes. Anything that works picks up on that, and goes with its grain. Anything that doesn't is objectively insane. It's not especially difficult, except for the fact that it offers us nothing but the (cold) truth.

Does Darwinism define the ultimate (transcendental) Right (in this sense, and this)? Capitalism as Darwinian socio-economics, HBD as Darwinian anthropology, the Gods of the Copybook Headings as Darwinian cultural history …? I cannot even imagine how that might not be so.

February 13, 2015

Scales

From a widely cited defense of the Black Lives Matter synthetic meme at *Reddit*:

*… societally, we **don't** pay as much attention to certain people's deaths as we do to others. So, currently, we don't treat all lives as though they matter equally.*

Two points:

(1) Some lives (and deaths) *do* matter far more than others, **obviously**. Everyone knows this, when they're not high, even if they usually feel compelled to lie about it. (Some lives, indeed, characterized by criminality and parasitism, are worth less than nothing — and even considerably less.) Only bizarre religious ideas could lead anybody to think the opposite.

(2) Western societies are very rapidly losing the ability to make sane calls on the point, as *exceptional productivity* loses its capacity to inspire attention, and the merely *piteous* usurps its central cultural position.

In the absence of adaptive sensibilities, life insurance premiums — or some equivalent expression of undemonstrative, practical value-processing — will have to serve as a default.

September 3, 2015

How Communism Works

Really:

Naked mole rats are among the ugliest creatures in the animal kingdom, and they engage in acts that seem repulsive — such as eating one another's, and their own, faeces. … Now researchers have found one biological motivation for this behaviour. When a queen mole rat's subordinates feed on her hormone-filled faeces, the resulting oestrogen boost causes the beta rats to take care of the queen's pups … […] Like bees, naked mole rats live in eusocial colonies, with only one queen rat and a few males that can reproduce. The rest of the colony consists of dozens of infertile subordinates that help with tasks such as foraging and defending the nest. The subordinate rats also take care of the queen's pups as though the babies were their own: they build the nests, lick the pups and keep them warm with their body heat.

We're almost there. Hail the New Collectivist Man:



"Sue Carter, a behavioural neurobiologist at Indiana University in Bloomington, says that the animals' method of transferring parental responsibility through faeces is interesting."

(Don't say you weren't warned.)

October 22, 2015

Twin Discoveries

Twin studies are the foundation of realism in all subjects pertaining to human beings (although their implications are wider). They reveal two crucial pieces of information:
(1) Heredity overwhelms environment in the (rigorous, statistical) explanation of human psychology, and
(2) Humans are massively predisposed to under-emphasize hereditary factors in the folk explanation of human psychology (including their own).

Both points emerge lucidly from Brian Boutwell's article on twin research in *Quillette*:

Based on the results of classical twin studies, it just doesn't appear that parenting — whether mom and dad are permissive or not, read to their kid or not, or whatever else — impacts development as much as we might like to think. Regarding the cross-validation that I mentioned, studies examining identical twins separated at birth and reared apart have repeatedly revealed (in shocking ways) the same thing: these individuals are remarkably similar when in fact they should be utterly different (they have completely different environments, but the same genes). Alternatively, non-biologically related adopted children (who have no genetic commonalities) raised together are utterly dissimilar to each other — despite in many cases having decades of exposure to the same parents and home

environments.

Without wanting to play down the importance of the parenting angle, it's worth bearing in mind that this is a rare zone where it remains politically acceptable to bring hereditarian findings to the table. Upsetting parents is still OK, and even vaguely commendable, so it provides a doorway through which to introduce matters of far broader significance. The truly critical point, from the perspective of this blog, is that *we should expect a systematic cognitive bias against the influence of heredity* and thus — intellectual integrity demands — we should lean against it.

There's an important lesson here:

Children who are spanked (not abused, but spanked) often experience a host of other problems in life, including psychological maladjustment and behavioral problems. In a study led by my colleague J.C. Barnes, we probed this issue in more detail and found some evidence suggesting that spanking increased the occurrence of overt bad behavior in children. We could have stopped there. Yet, we went one step further and attempted to inspect the genetic influences that were rampant across the measures included in our study. What we found was that much of the association between the two variables (spanking and behavior) was attributable to genetic effects that they had in common. The correlation between spanking and behavior appeared to reflect the presence of shared genetic influences cutting across both traits.

Parents are twin sources of influence. They "pass along two things to their kids: genes *and* an environment" — which facilitates the misattribution of genetic to environmental factors. If you find yourself regularly spanking your kids, it's very likely that you've genetically-endowed them with the same spank-worthy characteristics you have yourself (because you were spanked as a kid, too, right?). The environmentalist delusion practically leaps out of this situation, pre-packaged for credulous belief.

See original (of both quotes) for references.

(Don't just read the whole of Boutwell's article, read the whole of *Quillette*.)

December 2, 2015

Quote note (#266)

It is surely a crucial (and inadequately acknowledged) feature of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* that its point of departure is *artificial selection*, which might also be described as primordial technology, or the foundation of material civilization. Natural selection acquires definition through comparison with the (predominantly *unconscious*) process of domestication, or *cultivation*. This is the transitional paragraph (from Chapter IV):

As man can produce, and certainly has produced, a great result

by his methodical and unconscious means of selection, what may not natural selection effect? Man can act only on external and visible characters: Nature, if I many be allowed to personify the natural preservation or survival of the fittest, cares nothing for appearances, except in so far as they are useful to any being. She can act on every internal organ, on every shade of constitutional difference, on the whole machinery of life. Man selects only for his own good: Nature only for that of the being which she tends. Every selected character is fully exercised by her, as is implied by the fact of their selection. Man keeps the natives of many climates in the same country; he seldom exercises each selected character in some peculiar and fitting manner; he feeds a long- and short-beaked pigeon on the same food; he does not exercise a long-backed or long-legged quadruped in any peculiar manner; he exposes sheep with long and short wool to the same climate. He does not allow the most vigorous males to struggle for the females. He does not rigidly destroy all inferior animals, but protects during each varying season, as far as lies in his power, all his productions. He often begins his selection from some half-monstrous form; or at least by some modification prominent enough to catch the eye or to be plainly useful to him. Under Nature, the slightest difference of structure or constitution may well turn the nicely balanced scale in the struggle for life, and so be preserved. How fleeting are the wishes and efforts of man! how short his time! and consequently how poor will be his results, compared with those

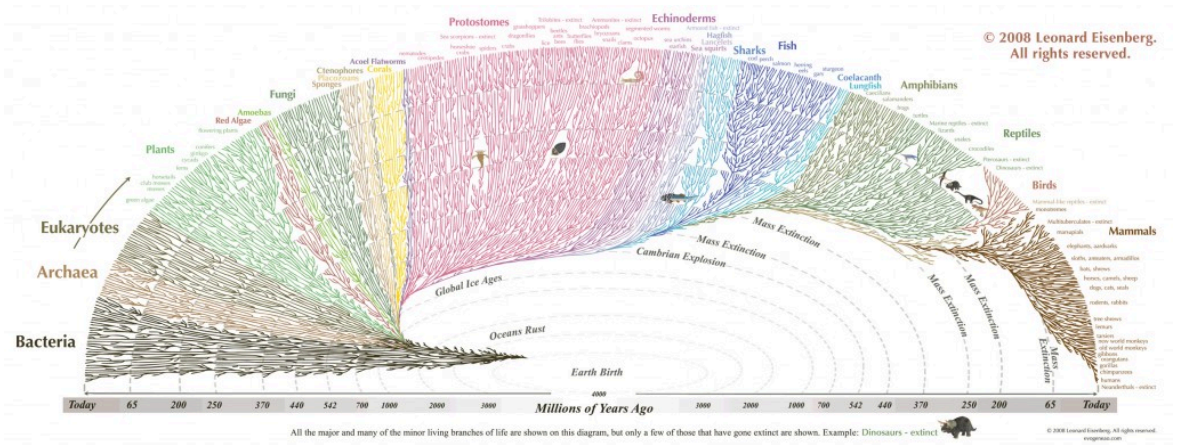
accumulated by Nature during whole geological periods! Can we wonder, then, that Natures productions should be far "truer" in character than man's productions; that they should be infinitely better adapted to the most complex conditions of life, and should plainly bear the stamp of far higher workmanship?

July 10, 2016

CHAPTER ONE - SELECTION

Edited Life

Leonard Eisenberg has created a striking new visualization of the tree of life.



It's open about the skew: "All the major and many of the minor living branches of life are shown on this diagram, but only a few of those that have gone extinct are shown."

Extinction is overwhelmingly the deep reality, compared to which the survival of species — the selected *phenomenon* — is scarcely more than a rounding error. Through a reflexive, lucid, secondary selection the culled, blasted, and gnawed tree of terrestrial life is

edited into the attractive flowering shrub we see in the diagram. It shows us what our illusion looks like in detail.

Survivor or selection bias is a hugely important frame. It absorbs the whole of anthropic reasoning in principle. To produce a display of life on earth that realistically incorporated it would require overcoming a range of psychological and epistemological obstacles so profound they reach the very root of the biological enterprise and even human intelligence as such, but only then would we truly see where we come from.

December 16, 2014

Hell-Baked

There's a potential prologue to this post that I'm reluctant to be distracted by. It's introvertedly about NRx, as a cultural mutation, and the way this is defined by a strategic — or merely ornery — indifference to deeply-settled modes of ethico-political condemnation. Terms designed as pathblockers — 'fascist' or 'racist' most obviously — are stepped over, perhaps laughed at, but in any case, and most importantly, *exposed* as bearers of a *religious terror*. They are signs of a control regime, marking the unthinkable wastes *where be dragons*, effective precisely insofar as they cannot be entertained. 'Satanic' was once such a word (before it became a joke).

These words cannot be understood except as invocations of the sacred, in its negative, or limitative role.

Is NRx in fact fascist? Not remotely. It is probably, in reality rather than self-estimation, the *least* fascistic current of political philosophy presently in existence, although this requires a minimal comprehension of what fascism actually is, which the word itself in its contemporary usage is designed to obstruct. Is NRx racist? Probably. The term is so entirely plastic in the service of those who utilize it that it is difficult, with any real clarity, to say.

What NRx most definitely is, at least in the firm opinion of this blog, is *Social Darwinist*. When this term is hurled at NRx as a negative epithet, it is nor a cause for stoic resignation, stiffened by humor, but rather for grim delight. Of course, this term is culturally processed — *thought through* — no more competently than those previously noted. It is our task to do this.

If 'Social Darwinism' is in any way an unfortunate term, it is only because it is merely Darwinism, and more exactly *consistent Darwinism*. It is equivalent to the proposition that Darwinian processes have no limits relevant to us. Darwinism is something we are inside. No part of what it is to be human can ever judge its Darwinian inheritance from a position of transcendent leverage, as if accessing principles of moral estimation with some alternative genesis, or criterion.

This is easy to say. As far as this blog is concerned, it is also —

beyond all reasonable question — true. While very far from a dominant global opinion, it is not uncommonly held — if only nominally — by a considerable fraction of those among the educated segment of the world's high-IQ populations. It is also, however, scarcely bearable to think.

The logical consequence of Social Darwinism is that **everything of value has been built in Hell**.

It is only due to a predominance of influences that are not only entirely morally indifferent, but indeed — from a human perspective — indescribably cruel, that nature has been capable of constructive action. Specifically, it is solely by way of the relentless, brutal culling of populations that any complex or adaptive traits have been sieved — with torturous inefficiency — from the chaos of natural existence. All health, beauty, intelligence, and social grace has been teased from a vast butcher's yard of unbounded carnage, requiring incalculable eons of massacre to draw forth even the subtlest of advantages. This is not only a matter of the bloody grinding mills of selection, either, but also of the innumerable mutational abominations thrown up by the madness of chance, as it pursues its directionless path to some negligible preservable trait, and then — still further — of the unavowable horrors that 'fitness' (or sheer survival) itself predominantly entails. We are a minuscule sample of agonized matter, comprising genetic survival monsters, fished from a cosmic ocean of vile mutants, by a pitiless killing machine of infinite appetite.

(This is still, perhaps, to put an irresponsibly positive spin on the story, but it should suffice for our purposes here.)

Crucially, any attempt to escape this fatality — or, more realistically, any mere accidental and temporary reprieve from it — leads inexorably to the undoing of its work. *Malthusian relaxation* is the whole of mercy, and it is the greatest engine of destruction our universe is able to bring about. To the precise extent that we are spared, even for a moment, we degenerate — and this Iron Law applies to every dimension and scale of existence: phylogenetic and ontogenetic, individual, social, and institutional, genomic, cellular, organic, and cultural. There is no machinery extant, or even rigorously imaginable, that can sustain a single iota of attained value outside the forges of Hell.

What is it that Neoreaction — perhaps I should say *The Dark Enlightenment* — has to offer the world, if all goes optimally (which, of course, it won't)? Really, the honest answer to this question is: *Eternal Hell*. It's not an easy marketing brief. We could perhaps try: *But it could be worse (and almost certainly will be)*.

July 17, 2015

Malthus was Right

The global wealth distribution is predictably spiky. That's mostly

because scarcely anyone owns anything:

… it does not take that much to get into the top 1% of wealth holders. Once debts have been subtracted, a person needs only $3,650 to be among the wealthiest half of the world's citizens. However, about $77,000 is required to be a member of the top 10% of global wealth holders and $798,000 to belong to the top 1%. So if you own a home in any major city in the rich North on your own and without a mortgage, you are part of the top 1%.

This looks like what you'd expect if population — at the global level — expanded approximately to the resource limit. (There are no doubt cuddlier interpretations out there.)

November 28, 2016

CHAPTER TWO - DYSGENICS

Ruin

What does Dark Enlightenment see when it scrutinizes our world?

This. (**Exactly** this.)

December 12, 2013

Charlton is Right …

… on this question, at least. The sole real puzzle is the precise quantity of dysgenic deterioration that has taken place in Western societies over the last 150 years, or more. Charlton estimates a one SD decline over this period in the UK, which seems entirely credible. Due to the small sample size, his argument from mathematical excellence has an inevitable anecdotal quality, but it would be hard to contest its general direction.

A fascinating paper by Michael A. Woodley (via @intelligenceres) is able to be more comprehensively persuasive. Its second table describes the innovation rate per capita across a sample of

European countries falling by almost three-quarters over the period 1845-2005, and roughly halving from 1945-2005. (*Great Stagnation* anyone?)

It shouldn't need adding that it's impossible to read this often enough (it's always there in my 'Resources' roll).

Two more, somewhat more distantly related links.

(We're so screwed.)

ADDED: More on this topic at Charlton's place.

ADDED: Gregory Cochran's 'outliers' argument against this thesis has as its core: "In another application – if the average genetic IQ potential had decreased by a standard deviation since Victorian times, the number of individuals with the ability to develop new, difficult, and interesting results in higher mathematics would have crashed, bring such developments to a screeching halt. Of course that has not happened."

I would have found it profoundly confidence-crushing if Cochran had simply said: *the collapse of a complex trait on this scale, in this time-span, is inconsistent with everything we know about population genetics*. The argument he relies upon instead, while far more elegant, is also much less persuasive (see the excellent comment thread at his site). As Dave Chamberlin notes, the parallel increase in assortative mating over the period in question means that assuming a stable standard distribution (variance) might not be safe. An increasingly heterogeneous population would to some degree shield

its outliers from averaging effects.

Compared to the evidence mustered in support of the IQ collapse thesis, it is hard to be impressed by the rather impressionistic claim "Of course that has not happened." Up to the mid-20th century — the era of Gödel, Von Neumann, and Turing — this might indeed have been irresistible, but today? Charlton's counter-argument seems by no means risible. How sure are we that mathematics has not "collapsed" — at least down to the level of 'normal' (rather than 'revolutionary') science? What was the last mathematical breakthrough that mattered dazzlingly to the world?

ADDED: Mangan adds a significant complication.

March 7, 2014

The Worst Question

At news aggregator Real Clear World, Frank Ching's recent article comparing the economic performance of the earth's two demographic giants was given the tantalizing headline *Why India Keeps Falling Behind China*. There's no sign of the "Why?" at the original, published in Taiwan's *China Post*. No surprise there.

As Ching notes:

While India and China are both being hailed as rapidly developing emerging markets, the gap between the two countries is widening

with India being left behind as China continues to power ahead. China's growth in 2013 was 7.7 percent while that of India hit a low for the decade of 4.5 percent in the 2012-13 fiscal year.

Despite being positioned for catch-up (i.e. being far poorer), India simply doesn't grow as fast as China. "The average estimated productivity growth rate of China (5.9%) is more than double that of India (2.4%)." India hasn't matched Chinese growth rates in any single year since the end of the Mao-era in the late 1970s, even after launching its own much-heralded market-oriented economic reform program in the early 1990s. Despite pulling itself from the dismal 3% "Hindu" growth rate, which was roughly doubled to a 5-6% range, China's average 9.8% growth rate, sustained over three decades, has remained far out of reach.

The two most populous nations on earth — by a huge margin — accounting between them for over a third of the 'developing world' by headcount (and for a far larger proportion of the part that has been in any serious way developing), would seem, superficially, like obvious candidates for unrelenting comparison. How could this titanic development race not be the most important socio-economic story on the planet?

Adding drama to this competition is the ideological polarity it represents. Pitting the most substantial and obstreperous antagonist to liberal-democratic global manifest destiny against a regime that was forged in Fabian social-democracy, and which

continues to exult in its status as "the world's largest democracy®" — the narrative potential is … oh wait.

For the forces of darkness, it only gets better. If India's relative development failure is not to be considered a conspicuous illustration of democratic incapability, other explanatory factors have to be invoked. Something like 5% GDP growth is going missing, chronically, every year (and if alternative development indicators are preferred, the grim story they tell is much the same). Either India's Cathedral-approved political orientation is responsible for this social morass, or something else has to be.

While wondering about this awkward conundrum, you're quite likely to stop being surprised about the paucity of China-India comparative news coverage. Clearly, the "Why?" isn't wanted, because it only goes to bad places. In fact, it's probably the worst question in the world.

March 27, 2014

Dysgenic Reactions

Michael A. Woodley, Jan te Nijenhuis, and Raegan Murphy respond (in detail) to critics of their 2013 paper on the dysgenic implications of Galton's reaction time data. Their adjusted evidence indicates an increase in reaction times among US/UK males over the period

1889-2004 from 187.1 ms to 237.1 ms (44.6 ms over 115 years), equivalent to a decline in *g* of 13.9 points, or 1.21 points per decade. They propose that 68% of this decline is due to dysgenic selection, with the remaining 32% attributed to increasing mutation load.

If these figures are even remotely accurate, they portray a phenomenon — and indeed a catastrophe — that would have to be considered a fundamental determinant of recent world history. Given the scale and rapidity of dysgenic collapse suggested here, skepticism is natural, and indeed all-but inevitable. (The proposed rate of decline seems incredible to this, radically inexpert, blog.) It should nevertheless be reasonable to expect counter-arguments to exhibit the same intellectual seriousness and respect for evidence that this paper so impressively demonstrates.

June 12, 2014

Counter-Dysgenics

Heartiste (finally) discovers Weiss.

Of Heartiste's six proposed policy responses, #2 (introduce counter-dysgenic incentives) is the only one this blog endorse without reservation. High-IQ immigration, assortative mating, and open markets all make a positive contribution to general social competitiveness, although due theoretical deference to IQ-Shredder

problems is required. His point #6 is valuable if it is inverted, to make socio-political fragmentation a primary objective, rather than a consequence, or subordinate instrumental goal. Point #5 ("Eliminate all female-friendly public policies") is unobjectionable because all 'X-friendly' public policies are objectionable, and its specific emphasis is material for consideration within a disintegrated *oecumenon*, where polities could experiment with all kinds of things. Talented people will tend to flee a heavy-handed authoritarian state, even if it's social policies have impressive traditional validation. Consequently, as a response to local dysgenics, the outcome of any attempt to socially engineer a restored patriarchy from the top-down is likely to be counter-productive.

Social Darwinism, seriously understood, is the theoretical default that every attempt to neutralize spontaneous selection processes (entropy dissipation) will be subverted by predictable perverse effects. It's no more possible to suppress Social Darwinism than it is to annul the Second Law of Thermodynamics, and social philosophies which teach that this can be achieved are the strict equivalent of plans for perpetual motion machines. That's what Weiss is explaining, as *Outside in* understands it. Subsumption into an effective competitive environment is the only possible response that could work to reverse dysgenic trends, and this will eventually occur, whether human politics cooperates or not. Patchwork is the gentlest way this could be realized, since it enables a multitude of societies to

decide on their own levels of entropy-accumulation tolerance. (That is not, of course, to suggest that a Patchworked-world is gentle in any sense we have grown accustomed to.)

August 2, 2014

Quote note (#168)

The level of apocalypticism to be found in scientific abstracts rarely reaches the Dark Enlightenment threshold, but there are always exceptions. Here's Olav Albert Christophersen, on 'Thematic Cluster: Focus on Autism Spectrum Disorder', originally published in *Microbial Ecology in Health & Disease* (2012). Indicatively, the paper is subtitled 'Should autism be considered a canary bird telling that *Homo sapiens* may be on its way to extinction?' The full abstract:

There has been a dramatic enhancement of the reported incidence of autism in different parts of the world over the last 30 years. This can apparently not be explained only as a result of improved diagnosis and reporting, but may also reflect a real change. The causes of this change are unknown, but if we shall follow T.C. Chamberlin's principle of multiple working hypotheses, we need to take into consideration the possibility that it partly may reflect an enhancement of the average frequency of responsible alleles in large populations. If this hypothesis is correct, it means that the average

germline mutation rate must now be much higher in the populations concerned, compared with the natural mutation rate in hominid ancestors before the agricultural and industrial revolutions. This is compatible with the high prevalence of impaired human semen quality in several countries and also with what is known about high levels of total exposure to several different unnatural chemical mutagens, plus some natural ones at unnaturally high levels. Moreover, dietary deficiency conditions that may lead to enhancement of mutation rates are also very widespread, affecting billions of people. However, ***the natural mutation rate in hominids has been found to be so high that there is apparently no tolerance for further enhancement of the germline mutation rate before the Eigen error threshold will be exceeded and our species will go extinct because of mutational meltdown****. This threat, if real, should be considered far more serious than any disease causing the death only of individual patients.* ***It should therefore be considered the first and highest priority of the best biomedical scientists in the world, of research-funding agencies and of all medical doctors to try to stop the express train carrying all humankind as passengers on board before it arrives at the end station of our civilization.*** [XS emphasis]

(Mutational load is, of course, genomic entropy — and the kind of 'Social Darwinian' or eugenicist mechanisms that might dissipate it are all, today, strictly unthinkable.)

(Via.)

June 13, 2015

Crime Think

It doesn't get much clearer than this. Any policy decisions resulting in a reduction of mean IQ within a society are implicit choices to raise the level of criminality. If there's wriggle room on the point, this blog isn't seeing it.

The clearest takeaway from this research is that low intelligence is a strong and consistent correlate of criminal offending. For example, the risk of acquiring a felony conviction by age 21 is nearly four times (3.6) higher among those in the three lowest categories (1–3) of total intelligence as compared to those scoring in the top three categories (7–9). We observed differences of similar magnitude across each indicator of criminal offending and regardless of the measure of intelligence.

(Via.)

June 25, 2015

No-Brainer

"Getting rid of your brain sounds like a bad idea."

It says a lot about the cosmos that evolution seems to disagree.

The oldest known fossil with a complex brain is about 520 million years old. This was a time when life became much more abundant and diverse, often referred to as the Cambrian explosion. […] Discovered in China, the animal looked like a woodlouse with claws. It seems to have had an elaborate brain-like structure consisting of a fore-, mid- and hind-brain, all of which had specialised neural circuits. […] This suggests that complex brains were in place as early as 520 million years ago. But they may not have stayed.

(Via.)

October 29, 2015

Who needs an argument?

The kind of things 19th century English geniuses believed will set your teeth chattering:

Galton feared that the English race was degenerating, declining in both mental and physical ability. (It remains a common fear; the French thought they were degenerating, too.) Like others of his day, Galton used the term 'race' loosely. He referred alternately to the English race, the white race, the human race. But overall, English eugenics was less about race than class. To Galton's mind, the filthy working poor were breeding like rabbits while the gentry were

chastely dwindling. He became convinced that unless something were done, the flower of English manhood – not excluding specimens such as his cousin and, ahem, himself – would soon vanish, swamped by a massive tide of Oliver Twists and Tiny Tims.

Thank goodness that preposterous conviction has been rigorously debunked.

November 18, 2015

Going Down

Yes, the United States is undergoing a triple-pronged dysgenic process.

The only serious questions are about speed.

May 9, 2017

CHAPTER THREE - EUGENICS AND SPECIATION

Quote notes (#71)

F. Roger Devlin reviews Gregory Clark's latest book *The Son Also Rises: Surnames and the History of Social Mobility* at *American Renaissance*:

China, which saw enormous social upheaval in the 20th century, provides yet another perspective. Under Mao, much of the country's elite was killed or exiled. The rest were subject to discrimination and excluded from the Communist Party. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao tried to turn the social scale upside down by shipping prominent people to the countryside to work in rice paddies. If political intervention can create higher social mobility, it would have done so in China.

Yet once discrimination against "class enemies" was abolished shortly after Mao's death, those with surnames characteristic of the pre-communist elite quickly began to rise again. Today, they are greatly over-represented even in the Communist Party. Those

descended from the "workers and peasants" favored under Mao have quickly seen their status erode. Recent social mobility in China has been no greater than it was under the Emperors.

Anyone who doesn't find their presuppositions shaken by Clark's work is probably not paying attention. If those out here in the NRx think it conforms neatly to their expectations that heredity is strongly determining of social outcomes — are they comfortable proceeding to evidence-based acknowledgement that socio-economic regime-type seems entirely irrelevant to the (uniformly low) level of social mobility? Clark himself draws the curve-ball conclusion: *so why not be a social democrat? It's not as if rational incentives make any difference anyway*.

(I'll be looking for the opportunity to dig into this stuff at least a little, as soon as I catch a moment.)

April 7, 2014

Chinese Eugenics

A *Shanghaiist* interview with Leta Hong Fincher wanders into ~~inspiring~~ delicate territory:

… in 2007, China's State Council came out with a very important population decision. They announced that China had a severe problem with the so-called "low quality" of the population, that it's

*going to cause problems for China in the future, in the global marketplace, that it's going to affect China's ability to compete with other nations, because the quality of the population is too low. So they made it an urgent priority to "upgrade population quality" (**tigao renkou suzhi**). And then they designated certain agencies to be the primary implementers of the goal of upgrading population quality. One of the agencies they named was the Women's Federation. And they also named the Public Security Bureau. Shortly after that population decision, the state media suddenly came out with all these Leftover Women media reports, news reports cartoons, commentaries, columns, and it was just ubiquitous.*

*And then, the Women's Federation defined the term and the Ministry of Education adopted the term **shengnü** [or 'leftover woman'] as part of its official lexicon. And it's just amazing when you look at these reports and cartoons just how little they vary. Fundamentally it's the same message, kind of reworded. It's the same theme over and over again, year after year.*

The basic message is targeting urban, educated, successful, professional women. And it shows these women as being too picky. They're too focused on their careers. They're overly ambitious. If they simply lowered their sights, and made more compromises, then they would easily find a man to marry. So it's the woman's fault that they are not getting married, that their standards are too high. And then there are a wide variety of insults hurled at these women: that

they don't like sex, that they're afraid of commitment.

And I noticed that they are evolving. The propaganda machine is evolving now to include single, divorced mothers. Just a few months ago, I noticed Xinhua News came out with something talking about how single, divorced mothers also have an obligation to go out and get married again and that they shouldn't use their children as an excuse not to get married. They also have a new category of so-called leftover women which is single female homeowners. They say that single women lull themselves into a false sense of security by buying a home of their own. In fact this is going to make it even more difficult for them to find a husband.

All of this is really tightening its hold on this group of urban, educated, professional women. And why are they focusing on these women? It's because these women have, in the view of the government, higher quality. The government has a tradition of eugenics. These educated urban women are seen as having higher quality, but these are the very women who are choosing to delay marriage because they want to pursue their educations, because they want to pursue their careers. It's a very natural thing to do and that's what women around China are doing. In South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, and even Hong Kong, women are delaying their age of first marriage and some of them are even rejecting marriage altogether.

And so the Chinese government feels this urgency, I believe, that

they need to stop this trend. They have to get these educated women to get married and have a child because they see this as the basic function of a woman. Her duty to the nation is to have a child. But they are focusing on educated women. They're not encouraging the illiterate rural woman to have children, because those women are considered to be of "low quality".

This elementary common sense is supposed to be appalling beyond comprehension, of course.

ADDED: Bernard Harcourt on Michel Foucault on Gary Becker — *Now, Foucault refers to this … specific danger around page 228 of the English translation of his lectures when he talks about eugenics, the problem of eugenics. And he says, "as soon as a society poses itself the problem of the improvement of its human capital in general," that is, once we have a theory of human capital, and once we view the important issue as being improvement of human capital, that "it is inevitable that the problem of control, screening, and improvement of the human capital of individuals … [is] called for."*

May 6, 2014

Reality Boxes

Acknowledgement of a conservation law is typically a reliable indication of realistic analysis. There's a notable example here

(embedded in an important article):

*In the past, individuals could suffer death or disability due to small genetic defects, for example in their immune systems, for which modern medicine now routinely substitutes and which welfare cushions. But even modern medicine and welfare have their limits. W.D. Hamilton stated that when the misery resulting from mutations grows too great to bear — for medical, economic or humanitarian reasons — **the load will be reduced**, either naturally or artificially — painfully through elevated rates of mortality, or painlessly through eugenics.*

[My emphasis]

The slogan *It's going to happen one way or the other* is engraved upon the gateway to the Temple of Gnon.

May 13, 2015

Ideological Speciation

It's happening.

> If this sort of assortative mating continues, Civil War II is all but guaranteed. http://t.co/BsmwZgOSwb
>
> — heartiste (@heartiste) July 22, 2014

(Bring it on.)

July 22, 2014

Hyper-Racism

While this blog generally seeks to spread dismay whenever the opportunity arises, it cannot pretend to a huge obsession with what might be described as *ordinary racism*. When perusing the thought-crimes of the mainstream racist community, it is continually afflicted by a sense of overwhelming unreality. This is not (of course), because races do not exist, or do not differ significantly, or … whatever. The most politically incorrect cognitive position on almost every point of this kind is reliably closer to reality than its more socially-convenient and comforting alternatives.

The problem with ordinary racism is its utter incomprehension of the near future. Not only will capabilities for genomic manipulation dissolve biological identity into techno-commercial processes of yet-incomprehensible radicality, but also … other things.

First, a sketch of the existing racism-antiracism contention in its commonplace or dominant form. The antiracist, or universal humanist position — when extracted from its most idiotic social-constructivist and hypocritical alt-racist expressions — amounts to a program for global genetic pooling. Cultural barriers to the Utopian

vision of a unitary 'human' gene pool, stirred with increasing ardor into homogeneous intermixture, are deplored as atavistic obstructions to the realization of a true, common humanity. Races *will not* exist once they are reduced, by practical politics and libidinal indiscriminacy, into relics of contingent historical partition. In contrast, racial identitarianism envisages a conservation of (comparative) genetic isolation, generally determined by boundaries corresponding to conspicuous phenotypic variation. It is *race realist*, in that it admits to seeing what everyone does in fact see — which is to say consistent patterns of striking, correlated, multi-dimensional variety between human populations (or sub-species). Its unrealism lies in its projections.

Gregory Cochran suggests that space colonization will inevitably function as a highly-selective genetic filter, unless extreme political intervention is taken to prevent this:

One generally assumes that space colonists, assuming that there ever are any, will be picked individuals, somewhat like existing astronauts – the best out of hordes of applicants. They'll be smarter than average, healthier than average, saner than average – and not by just a little. […] Since all these traits are significantly heritable, some highly so, we have to expect that their descendants will be different – different above the neck. They'd likely be, on average, smarter than any existing ethnic group. If a Lunar colony really took off, early colonists might account for a disproportionate fraction of

the population (just as Puritans do in the US), and the Loonies might continue to have inordinate amounts of the right stuff indefinitely.

As a scientific sort, Cochran is exploring this scenario as a potential source of compelling hereditarian *evidence* (anticipated through *thought experiment*). What, however, of the prospect itself, as the illustration of a mechanism that lends itself to theoretical generalization? One might discuss it in terms of ordinary racism, as a zone of disparate impact (which it would almost certainly be). Yet this is only to scratch at it, hazily and superficially.

The most prominent model of such a filter is found in the theory of assortative mating. Strictly speaking, the racial-preservationist culture advocated by ordinary racism is an example of assortative mating, with a criterion of genetic proximity filtering potential matches. This is not why the idea has such currency. It is assortative mating on the basis of SES that has lifted it to prominence, both because it seems unquestionably to be happening, and because the implications of its happening are extreme. (Crucially, SES is a strong proxy for IQ.)

Assortative mating tends to genetic diversification. This is neither the preserved diversity of ordinary racism, still less the idealized genetic pooling of the anti-racists, but a class-structured mechanism for population diremption, on a vector towards neo-speciation. It implies the disintegration of the human species, along largely unprecedented lines, with intrinsic hierarchical consequence. The

genetically self-filtering elite is not merely different — and becoming ever more different — it is explicitly *superior* according to the established criteria that allocate social status. Analogical fusion with Cochran's space colonists is scarcely avoidable. If SES-based assortative mating is taking place, humanity (and not only society) is coming apart, on an axis whose inferior pole is *refuse*. This is not anything that ordinary racism is remotely able to process. That it is a consummate nightmare for anti-racism goes without question, but it is also trans-racial, infra-racial, and hyper-racial in ways that leave 'race politics' as a gibbering ruin in its wake.

Neo-eugenic genomic manipulation capabilities, which will also be unevenly distributed by SES, will certainly intensify the trend to speciation, rather than ameliorating it. On the sweetness-and-light side, racists and anti-racists can be expected to eventually bond in a defensive fraternity, when they recognize that traditionally-differentiated human populations are being torn asunder on an axis of variation that dwarfs all of their established concerns.

ADDED: Assortative Mating, Class, and Caste

September 29, 2014

CHAPTER FOUR - STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes

The Less-Evil Twin hasn't been on its best behavior recently. Discussing the prospects for Accelerationism (following this negative prognosis), it quite innocently suggested:

> @turingcop (A new pulse of darkside electronic music innovation would help.)
>
> — Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 27, 2014

… and it was already over the line.

> @UF_blog @turingcop why isn't there any coming out of neochina?
>
> — Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 27, 2014

> @urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Actually, my guiding theory there is hardcore racist, so I bet save it for the darkside space.
>
> — Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

['bet' should be 'best' (not 'better')]
That's where things paused for a while.

> @UF_blog @turingcop hoping for some devastating sonic counterattack to Al Qadiri's neoexoticist chinoiseries
> — Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

(You've heard of her, right? It's a superbly intelligent play off the *Shanzhai* idea.)

> @urbanomicdotcom @turingcop The sound of Cyber-apocalypse is going to come out of the Black Atlantic. That's just the way it is.
> — Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

> @UF_blog @turingcop footwork needs to turn up the dread, I guess
> — Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

> @urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Kind of like the Al Qadiri stuff, it's clever, but it doesn't claw its way into the brainstem and start ripping.
> — Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

> @UF_blog @turingcop refuse to believe nothing happening in

China (esp 'because race', o plz) Someone will be workin on sonic weirdness…

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Because the notion of overwhelming racial patterns in compulsive rhythmo-memetics is so obviously implausible ..

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop "natural rhythm"? Omg omg omg

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop … oh come on, you know it's true. Why the hell shouldn't there be a genetic basis for this stuff?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop … I'll stop talking about it if you're about to faint on me or something.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop i think mostly the biological sciences have abandoned the "why shouldn't there be" approach

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop lol its a good job we both know ur too smart to actually think this shit

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop I'm having trouble believing you sincerely don't see the obvious reality of it. Any reason particularly?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop i'm reading the stuff, its not convincing me

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop concept of race thoroughly discredited?

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Oh sure, there's no such thing as Chinese people. It's a bizarre idea cooked up by Hitler.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop wow, so reasoning! Much argument.

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop There are no people on earth I'd want to live among more than the Chinese, but the idea that they're going …

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop … to transport the world to the sonic dark side any moment now is some kind of bizarre ideological fantasy.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop not an ideological fantasy just assumption based on sheer weight of numbers and electronics

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Is "omg omg omg" supposed to be some kind of exhibition of natural rhythm?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop its a song from bongo bongo land

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop snark aside, dont u think, in view of massive prodtvty of hyperdub continuum,that adding chinese terminal can only +++ ?

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Comparative advantage. People should do what they're good at.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop does that mean we gots to keep on slavin' massah?

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop … still, among 1.3 billion people, there should be some freaky statistical outliers. Finding them though …

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop i am going to make it one of my missions now. Gotta go feeding porridge to my caucasian scion.

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop You're killing me here.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop are you going to faint? It's ok I'll stop

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop dammit why does this baby refuse to eat anything but fish and chips

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Actually, the reason to stop is to avoid the slightest risk of getting you into trouble.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop … I've got the PLA watching my back — you're stuck out there in insanityville all on your lonesome.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop so tuff

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop http://t.co/vv9pbAMCNv

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Exactly "minimalist, ghostly electronic music" — might as well be wearing his DNA on his T-shirt.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop hmm. unfortunately, it's not

particularly good. the search continues

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Science!

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop pwned by dna

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop http://t.co/97HNVVNpz8 lol

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop more "Electronica from Sichuan province, the band lists Pet Shop Boys among influences + has early 80s Euro sound." :(

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Keep on busting those stereotypes.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop You should stop, really, before the bad thoughts come.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop the condescension library is the least

appealing aspect of your new personality implant

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop I'm just trying to keep you out of the ducking stool.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop tell it to 师涛

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop I realise that from over there Cornwall must seem futuristic and exotic but rly it's not that dangerous these days

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop Is the investigation continuing, or has it drawn a blank for now?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop you're seriously treating this as an experimentum crucis for biological determinism now, right?

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop No, I'm far to deep into evidence saturation for that.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

['to' should be 'too', of course]

@UF_blog @turingcop a rabbit hole. int.style generic noisism is big: http://t.co/MeqEG1Pel0 Alice Hui worth a listen for freaky voice evac

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop A lot of that stuff is pretty interesting — but you wouldn't want to try and get people dancing to it.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop if anyone knows it must be @kodenine

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop @kodenine We already know what came out of his research expeditions.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @urbanomicdotcom @turingcop coming soon

— 9 (@kodenine) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @turingcop @kodenine def soundcloud shows 10x more imaginary shanghai sonic fictions than stuff actually

coming out of there

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@urbanomicdotcom @turingcop @kodenine [Digs into the condescension library] Why could that possibly be?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 28, 2014

@kodenine @UF_blog @turingcop search on 'chinese footwork' mainly tabletennis tutorials #QED

— Urbanomic (@urbanomicdotcom) May 28, 2014

@UF_blog @urbanomicdotcom > http://t.co/Yvw4ORQkCA > https://t.co/kHvBRgRxSA

— Promiis mesh (@MXEXSXH) May 28, 2014

(I've no idea what secret treasures await extraction from that final tweet yet.)

May 28, 2014

Stereotypes II

Meta-stereotypes are not to be trusted. This is two years old, but recently tweet-linked by Justine Tunney, and well-worth recalling. The meat and potatoes:

… stereotypes are not inaccurate. There are many different ways to test for the accuracy of stereotypes, because there are many different types or aspects of accuracy. However, one type is quite simple — the correspondence of stereotype beliefs with criteria. If I believe 60% of adult women are over 5′ 4″ tall, and 56% voted for the Democrat in the last Presidential election, and that 35% of all adult women have college degrees, how well do my beliefs correspond to the actual probabilities? One can do this sort of thing for many different types of groups.
And lots of scientists have. And you know what they found? That stereotype accuracy — the correspondence of stereotype beliefs with criteria — is one of the largest relationships in all of social psychology. The correlations of stereotypes with criteria range from .4 to over .9, and average almost .8 for cultural stereotypes (the correlation of beliefs that are widely shared with criteria) and.5 for personal stereotypes (the correlation of one individual's stereotypes with criteria, averaged over lots of individuals). The average effect in social psychology is about .20. Stereotypes are more valid than most social psychological hypotheses.

It's not as if this is new, or in general outline even two years old. It's roughly as old as human culture, in fact. Generalization is what pragmatic intelligence is for (which means it's what intelligence in general has been kept around for). Regardless of where we find ourselves culturally right now, this is a point of common sense that

simply can't be forgotten forever.

August 27, 2014

Stereotypes III

There's an exchange in Sam Raimi's movie *Oz the Great and Powerful*, where the fake wizard, speculating on the incentives for success, says to his monkey(ish) companion and servant Finley:

"We're going to find this wicked witch. Steal her wand. I'll get that big pile of gold. And you can have a nice pile of bananas, alright?"
"Bananas. Oh, I see, because I'm a monkey? I must love bananas, right? — That is a vicious stereotype."
"You don't like bananas?"
"Of course I love bananas. I'm a monkey. Don't be ridiculous. I just don't like you saying it …"

(I seem to remember Sailer citing a similar joke at some point — probably from a more reputable source.)

September 28, 2015

Stereotypes IV

Folk Wisdom is a thing:

> Google searches about cats are negatively correlated with birth rate, across U.S. states https://t.co/p06AJsv5v7 ! pic.twitter.com/HgUmaNTV53
>
> — Neuroskeptic (@Neuro_Skeptic) February 26, 2016

February 29, 2016

CHAPTER FIVE - RACES

Racism for Beginners

Taken *on average*:

Caucasians should be ashamed of their sanctimonious moral hysteria;
(Ashkenazi) Jews should be ashamed of their susceptibility to insane ideologies;
East Asians should be ashamed of their ~~thoughtless~~ timid conformism;
South Asians should be ashamed of their *Tamas;*
Hispanics should be ashamed of their mindless populism;
Arabs should be ashamed of their inbreeding and Islam;
and Africans should be ashamed of their incompetent barbarism.

As for casual racism, there's far too much shame about that already.

(I hope that's sanctimonious enough for everyone)

ADDED: "Whole books could be filled with the unequal behavior or performances of people, or the unequal geographic settings in which whole races, nations, and civilizations have developed. Yet the

preconceptions of the political Left march on undaunted, loudly proclaiming sinister reasons why outcomes are not equal within nations or between nations."

July 4, 2013

Five Stages of HBD

Stage-1 (Denial): "What is this naziish-sounding "HBD" of which you speak? Actually, I'd rather you didn't answer that."

Stage-2 (Anger): "RAAAAAAACISSSST!!!"

Stage-3 (Bargaining): "… but even if HBD is real, it doesn't mean anything, does it? You know, comparative advantage, or postmodernism … (or something)."

Stage-4 (Depression): "Who could possibly have imagined that reality was so evil?"

Stage-5 (Acceptance): "Blank slate liberalism really has been a mountain of dishonest garbage, hasn't it? Guess it's time for it to die …"

[Thanks to Thales for the prompt]

October 21, 2013

Quote notes (#46)

Commenter 'augurae' at the TC Colloseum:

I believe these people are stupidest and most dangerous people on the planet. But it would be lying if I said I didn't share some of their ideas: for exemple, I think that if prior to, or after the second world war, we killed all the reactionaries and other fascists-friendly people, we would've prevented the situation we are in today and be way further in term of technology, medicine, economy, social and global peace…

People who prone social darwinism are the people who don't invent or change shit, except for the worse, and I mean the worse periods in humanity's History like the Middle Age or WWII. Moreover they are dangerous, racist, retrograde people who should be killed.

Liberal humanists — you have to love them.

There's a comment from me pending at TC, and I've lost patience, so here it is (one word edited):

There's absolutely no reason to think that the "HBD OMG! Auschwitz!" crowd here is receptive to logical argument, but what the hell — It goes like this:

Under the present Progressive dispensation, wherever group differences are detected in social outcomes, the dominant presupposition is that a grave social injustice has been identified.

Not many women, blacks, or hispanics to be found as programmers in Silicon Valley companies? — obvious evil at work. The solution: new bureaucratic arrangements, indoctrination sessions, intensified ideological reconstruction of the education system, anti-rightist campaigns (the beatings will continue until 'fairness' arrives). Protest any of this, and full-spectrum social destruction will be orchestrated.

HBD and its associated ideas propose — on the basis of abundant empirical evidence and theoretical understanding — that the existence of deeply ingrained group differences, both biological and cultural, actually predict disparate social outcomes. Men and women, on average, are attracted to different professions, in keeping with their natural competences. The same applies to ethnic and racial groups. It makes no more sense to see a vicious racist conspiracy in the domination of sprinting by people of African ancestry than to see the same in the preponderance of Jews, East Asians, and Caucasians among mathematics professors. If this seems implausible to you, feel free to argue about it — there are rigorous research programs dedicated to ~~researching~~ examining such realities (even under contemporary Lysenkoist conditions).

The first-order consequence of HBD, therefore, is not to start organizing the cattle trucks to death camps, but in fact to — relax. People are different. They thrive at different things. No government is capable of comprehending optimal outcomes in detail (or even broad outline). Society's spontaneous sorting mechanisms do a

pretty good job at dealing with the situation, when left alone to do so, and certainly no superior arrangement presents itself. Best of all, you don't even need to pull your jackboots on to let things work. So chill (except that's increasingly illegal).

ADDED: A link worth noting.

ADDED: Panic! (Some smart comments to the initial froth-post.)

November 25, 2013

Bell-Curve of the Apes



Another outrageous study completely overlooks the problem of stereotype threat.

Hopkins et al conclude (un-shockingly):

Finally, from an evolutionary standpoint, the results reported here suggest that genetic factors play a significant role in determining individual variation in cognitive abilities, particularly for spatial cognition and communication skills. Presumably, these

attributes would have conferred advantages to some individuals, perhaps in terms of enhanced foraging skills or increased social skills, leading to increased opportunities for access to food or mating … These individuals would have then potentially had increased survival and fitness, traits that would have become increasingly selected upon during primate evolution, as has been postulated by a number of theorists, going all the way back to Darwin …

(Thanks to Greg for the link.)

July 10, 2014

The Prussian

If you'd asked me what I think about The Prussian yesterday, I'd probably have assumed you were talking about Frederick the Great. Today I'm seeing his stuff mentioned all over the place (at least, by Bryce on Twitter, and Scott Alexander at his place). The two pieces being especially recommended share a tack (interesting) and a tone (impressive). The *Outside in* response to both is unsettled, but already uneven. At the very least, they initiate a conversation in a way that is unexpected and worthy of respect.

The highlight for me was this (to repeat the second link):

… when differences in African and Caucasian distributions of the ASPM gene that is involved in brain development, racialists jumped

to argue that this was the long looked for basis for white cognitive supremacy (Derbyshire's line). Unfortunately for them, it turned out that the variation does not affect IQ, but does affect the ability to hear tones, and is associated with a lack of tonal languages.

To be honest, this is a lot more interesting than any IQ mumbo-jumbo; that Indo-European languages ('Aryan' languages to use the term correctly, and not in the disgraceful way it was used) are non-tonal is one of the big puzzles, and may be a reason why civilization got started in these regions. This is a variant of Joseph Needham's hypothesis of why China 'got stuck' at a certain level of technology. Needham argued that the Chinese failed to make the break to the conceptual level of science that the ancient Greeks did, and part of this is to do with the concrete-level of Chinese vocabulary. By contrast, the reduced sound range and hence, reduced word range available to Indo-European languages may have played a crucial role in making that initial great breakthrough.

Has the case just been made for a clearly identifiable genetic predisposition to digitization? It sounds that way to me.

ADDED: *Theden* gets serious on the genetics of tonal language.

ADDED: A critique of the Anti-Racialist Q&A at *The Right Stuff*.

April 19, 2014

Escalation

Steve Sailer doesn't ask whether there are any two human races further apart than wolves and coyotes, because he's a nice guy.

August 16, 2014

Demography is Destiny

For a blast of sudden, icy clarity, this is worth recalling:

After decades of American Ed theorists and politicians grumbling about our low ranking on international tests, we now know that, as Steve Sailer summarized in 2010, reviewing the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) results from the previous year:

** Asian Americans outscored every Asian country, and lost out only to the city of Shanghai, China's financial capital.*

** White Americans students outperformed the national average in every one of the 37 historically white countries tested, except Finland (which is, perhaps not coincidentally, an immigration restrictionist nation where whites make up about 99 percent of the population).*

** Hispanic Americans beat all eight Latin American countries.*

** African Americans would likely have outscored any sub-Saharan country, if any had bothered to compete. The closest thing to a black*

country out of PISA's 65 participants is the fairly prosperous oil-refining Caribbean country of Trinidad and Tobago, which is roughly evenly divided between blacks and South Asians. African Americans outscored Trinidadians by 25 points.

Racially disaggregate a conundrum that has tortured progressive education reformers for over a century, and it entirely disappears. Non-discrimination is mental and cultural chaos.

April 16, 2015

Quote note (#348)

Retrieved from four years ago (by XS's favorite HBD-blogger), and still perfect in its outrageous realism:

Daniel Freedman was a professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago. For his doctoral thesis, he did adoption studies with dogs. He had noticed that different dog breeds had different personalities, and thought it would be interesting to see if personality was inborn, or if it was somehow caused by the way in which the mother raised her puppies. Totally inborn. Little beagles were irrepressibly friendly. Shetland sheepdogs were most sensitive to a loud voice or the slightest punishment. Wire-haired terriers were so tough and aggressive that Dan had to wear gloves when playing with puppies that were only three weeks old. Basenjis were

aloof and independent.
He decided to try the same thing with human infants of different breeds. Excuse me, different races. …

You'll never guess what happens next (although, actually, the readers here are almost certain to).

The dog-breed analogy is used quite often, but probably still not enough. It's pitched at the correct cladistic level, obviously. In addition, since 'labrador supremacism' sounds immediately ridiculous it should contribute to chipping a little stupidity from the race discussion.

April 4, 2017

White to Red

Guilt is basically a North-West European thing, argues Peter Frost. That would certainly explain the conspicuous abnormality of white ethnomasochism, which has a claim to be the social fact of greatest significance in the world today. There's a certain type of fanatically universalist moral argument that — even when encountered anonymously on the Internet — indicates (absolutely reliably) that one is dealing with a self-hating pale-face. When someone tells you that some incontestable principle requires self-sacrifice without reservation to the wretched global Other, the obvious melanin

deficiency almost sucks holes in the screen. None of this is seriously controversial (although more hard data would, of course, be nice).

Take one additional step, and hypothesize that the Cathedral latches onto white guilt as its sole natural territory. Much then follows. Clearly, whatever 'globalization' the Cathedral will ever achieve cannot be analogous to its domestic dominion. It is a plug that only fits the white guilt socket, so that every attempt to propagate it more widely encounters complexities. To a degree, this is initially masked by the fact that a racial revenge narrative sells well, even when its original moral axioms are entirely non-communicative. 'Post-colonialism' would therefore be expected to mark the limit of Cathedralist global contagion — a limit that has already been in large measure reached (or even exceeded). Nobody other than whites wants white guilt *for themselves*. Non-whites will, however, often be delighted that whites have white guilt, especially when this has metastasized to its self-abolitional phase, and this second reaction — under the specific conditions of 'post-colonial / anti-racist discourse' — is easily confused with the first.

If the progressivism-guilt plug-socket arrangement doesn't travel racially, than Cathedralist globalization has to fall back upon far cruder mechanisms of power — of the "Red Foreign Policy" type. The experience of the last decade suggests that, in doing so, it is no longer remotely playing to its own strengths. Democratic evangelism, at home and abroad, are two very different things. Bloody international

disorder is strongly predicted as the complement of its domestic New Jerusalem.

Just one more effort citizens, and the white race will have consummated its destiny as the cancer of human history.

December 8, 2013

White Fright

Racial fear is a complicated thing. It's worth trying to break it down, without blinking too much.

As one regresses through history, and into pre-history, the pattern of encounters between large-scale human groups of markedly distinct ancestry is modeled — with ever-greater fidelity — upon a genocidal ideal. The 'other' needs to be killed, or at the very least broken in its otherness. To butcher all males, beginning with those of military age, and then assimilate the females as breeding stock might suffice as a solution (Yahweh specifically warns the ancient Hebrews against such half-hearted measures). Anything less is sheer procrastination. When economic imperatives and high levels of civilizational confidence start to overwhelm more primordial considerations, it is possible for the suppression of other peoples to take the humanized form of social obliteration combined with mass enslavement, but such softness is a comparatively recent

phenomenon. For almost the entire period in which recognizably 'human' animals have existed on this planet, racial difference has been thought sufficient motive for extermination, with limited contact and inadequacy of socio-technical means serving as the only significant brakes upon inter-racial violence. The sole deep-historical alternative to racial oppression has been racial eradication, except where geographical separation has postponed resolution. This is the simple side of the 'race problem', but it too begins to get complicated … (we'll pick it up again after a detour).

For the moment, we need only note the archaic, subterranean ocean of racial animosity that laps upon the sunless chasms of the brain, directed by genomes sculpted by aeons of genocidal war. Call it racial terror. It's not our principal concern here.

Racial horror is something else, although it is no doubt intricately inter-connected. Horror of the very phenomenon of race — of *race as such* — is both a larger and a smaller topic. It is at once an expansive affect that finds no comfort in biological identity, and a distinctively ethno-specific syndrome. When positively elaborated, racial horror explodes into a 'Lovecraftian' cosmic revulsion directed at the situation of human intelligence by its natural inheritance. The negative expression, far more common today (among those of a very specific natural inheritance), takes the form of a blank denial that any such reality as race even exists. We are fully entitled to describe this latter development as *racial white-out*. Any *Critical Whiteness*

Studies of even minimal seriousness would concentrate upon it unrelentingly.

HBD, or human biological diversity, is evidently not reducible to racial variation. It is at least equally concerned with human sexual dimorphism, and is ultimately indistinguishable from an eventual *comparative human genomics*. When considered as a provocation, however, the translation of HBD into 'race science' or more pointedly 'scientific racism' drowns out every other dimension of meaning. What is found appalling about HBD is the insistence that race exists. It is a 'trigger' for racial horror. Social outrage, certainly, but beyond that cosmic distress, tilting into a panic without limit. HBD subtracts the promise of universal humanity, so it must — at any cost — be stopped.

Because this is no more than a preliminary blog post, I will restrict it to a single modest ambition: the refoundation of Critical Whiteness Studies on a remorselessly Neoreactionary basis. White people are odd. Some especially significant group of them, in particular, have radically broken from the archaic pattern of human racial identity, creating the modern world in consequence, and within it their ethnic identity has become a dynamic paradox. *Whiteness* is an uncontrolled historical reaction which nobody — least of all anybody from among the complementary anti-racists of Critical Whiteness Studies and White Nationalism — has begun to understand. To begin to do so, one would have to comprehend why

the essay in which Mencius Moldbug most explicitly repudiates White Nationalism is the same as the one in which he most unambiguously endorses human racial diversity. It requires an acknowledgement of difficulty, which — because it demolishes irresistibly attractive but hopelessly facile solutions on both sides — few are motivated to make.

The signature of indissoluble White difference is precisely racial horror. **HBD is uniquely horrible to White people**. Until you get that, you don't get anything.

Play with this for a while, or for more than a while (it does a huge amount of unwanted but indispensable work). To begin with:

(1) Critical Whiteness Studies, whatever its ethno-minoritarian pretensions, is all about 'acting white'. Insofar as it criticizes 'white privilege' *essentially*, it does so by reproducing an ethnically singular mode of universal reason which no other people make any sense of whatsoever, except opportunistically, and parasitically. 'Whiteness' tends to become a religious principle, exactly insofar as it lacks the recognizable characteristics of racial group dominance ("race does not exist") and sublimes into a mode of cultural reproduction which only one ethnicity, ever, has manifested. To quote Alison Bailey — tilting over into the raw psychosis of systematic 'whiteness' critique (repeated link):

In its quest for certainty, Western philosophy continues to generate what it imagines to be colorless and genderless accounts

of knowledge, reality, morality, and human nature. Perhaps this is because academic philosophy in the U.S. has been largely driven by analytic methods and the legacy of Classic Greek and European thinkers, or because philosophy departments are white social spaces where the overwhelming majority of professional philosophers are white men. In either case, it's likely that most members of the discipline have avoided racial topics because they believe that philosophical thought transcends basic cultural, racial, ethnic, and social differences, and that these differences are best addressed by historians, cultural studies scholars, literary theorists, and social scientists. The absence of color talk in philosophy is a marker of its whiteness.

Supremacist white racism goes so deep it is absolutely indistinguishable from a complete absence of racism — *quod erat demonstrandum*.

(2) White Nationalism finds itself stymied at every turn by universalism, pathological altruism, ethno-masochism — all that yucky white stuff. If only you could do White Nationalism without white people, it would sweep the planet. (Try not to understand this, I know you don't want to.) Heartiste is picking up on the pattern:

Where is this thought leading? The native stock of the West is clearly suffering from a mental sickness caused by too much outbreeding. Universalism is the religion of liberal whites, and they cleave so strongly to this secular religion that they are happy, nay

overjoyed!, to throw the borders open and bequeath their hard-won territory and culture to battalions of Third Worlders and other temperamentally distant aliens, who of course given large enough numbers will promptly, whether wittingly or consequentially, execute its destruction.

(3) All White people need is an identitarian religion. Is that not approximately the same as saying: a counter-factual history?

(4) Those wacky libertarians, with their universal schema for human emancipation that's so easily confused with a washing-powder advertisement — it's so dazzlingly white. Deny the whiteness and self-destruct in bleeding-heart abasement and open-borders insanity, or affirm it and head into post-libertarian racial perplexity.

Destiny is difficult — not least racial destiny. I don't think many people want to think about this, but I'm determined to be as awkward about it as I can … (it's probably a white thing).

ADDED: Notable race sanity from Neovictorian here and here.

March 29, 2014

Mitochondrial Eve

Without wanting to set off the usual suspects, this research into Ashkenazi ancestry is fascinating. Based on MtDNA analysis, it is evident that: "Overall, at least 80 percent of Ashkenazi maternal

ancestry comes from women indigenous to Europe, and 8 percent from the Near East, with the rest uncertain, the researchers estimate."

Jewish matrilineal cultural descent starts to look extraordinarily odd. Also, a final goodbye to Koestler's Khazar hypothesis.

(via)

October 9, 2013

On the JQ

Colin Liddell, amid an impressively cool-headed discussion of John Engelman and racial neuralgia:

Jared Taylor is trying very, very hard to avoid the Jewish question. Naturally I disagree with this, but I can understand why Taylor wishes to do so, as the Jewish Question has become a kind of lightning rod for a lot of angst and rage in our society that does not have the time, sophistication, or emotional equilibrium to attain to a more complex understanding of the challenges of modernity.

Whatever one's opinion on the JQ, it is important as the marker for a still intellectually under-developed schism, dividing the meritocratic and tribalistic strains of HBD. This blog is surreptitiously sympathetic to WN claims that it is being systematically evaded on the Right out of evasive cowardice. The

main reason for this evasion is that anti-semitic WNs tend to be over-excitable, inarticulate proles, whose commentary — to quote Liddell — is characterized by "humourless, droning, brittle outrage" if not outright splenetic abuse. (In fairness, I have to note that on the rare occasions when extreme anti-semites have visited this blog, they have been models of calm lucidity, however lop-sided in their attention.)

The *Outside in* line on the JQ is well-represented by Moldbug and Amy Chua. (They're both smarts-over-loyalty selections of exactly the kind to raise WN hackles, of course. This isn't a *bhumiputra* blog.) The slight familiarity I have with the work of Yuri Slezkine has also left a very positive impression.

It's worth taking the opportunity to link this recent post.

(Feel free to be evil, but be civil — or else.)

ADDED: Yuri Slezkine interviewed (video).

July 3, 2014

Guilt Projection

"This machine breeds fascists."

Given Jesse Benn's repulsive indulgence in self-criticism on other people's behalf, the riposte almost writes itself. It's hard to see anything in the push-back that seems uncalled for.

Just to be clear: Speaking as a self-appointed representative for people you feel free to disassociate from at will is *as annoying as hell*. It's hard for me to believe Benn is too stupid to see that, which leaves the malignant devious evil option.

If the West sees another mass outbreak of antisemitism, a plaintive "Why?" is going to look laughable. Benn's ilk are why.

(You might want the other half of the proxy-masochism cognitive dissonance machinery. This (entirely non-obnoxious piece) is also well-worth a read.)

September 2, 2015

Tough Asia

Scott Sumner has a good post on the topic, using low government spending and unemployment (a proxy for "get a job" social attitudes) as indicators. East Asian countries — China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan — do indeed cluster at the 'hard' end. Europeans, predictably, are softies. The Anglosphere (or "immigrant") societies are intermediate.

My favorite part of the post, though, was this:

… the great Simon Leys once suggested that 5000 years of Chinese history could be divided up into two types of periods.
A. Times when the status of the Chinese masses was little better than

slaves.
B. Periods of turmoil, when the Chinese masses yearned for period A.

March 26, 2015

Chinese Trumpkins

SoBL has passed on this fascinating piece on Trump-fervor in Chinese elite opinion. It's all good. Quasi-random snippet:

The past 30 years of China's economic growth and social development began after a period of chaos [i.e., the Cultural Revolution], and there was no Enlightenment-like intellectual movement. Government officials, in order to mobilize reform, exaggerated the evils of the old benefit system as "everyone eating from one big pot," which, with the assistance of some scholars, led to an almost complete social consensus that a market economy means completely free competition. With no restraint from ethics or rules, the "law of the jungle" that the weak are prey to the strong became nearly universal in society. Amid all the worship of the strong and disdain for the weak, an atmosphere of care and equal treatment of disadvantaged groups has not formed. Therefore "political correctness," which is for the protection of vulnerable groups, basically does not exist in Chinese society, and the language of discrimination, objectification of women, and mockery of disabled

people is everywhere. […] This way of thinking is further reinforced among some Chinese elites: they succeed because they are better able to adapt to and dominate this kind of environment. In this process, they are hurt by others, they hurt others, and gradually they develop a heart of stone and a feeling of superiority — that their success is due to their own efforts and natural abilities, and the losers in competition must be those who don't work hard because they are lazy or have some other problems. Therefore, they believe in free competition and personal striving even more than ordinary people, and also feel more strongly that poor people deserve their low position, are more wary of the abuse of welfare by lazy people, and are more supportive of Trump's attacks on political correctness.

The result is a shockingly civilized civil society (in which women, conspicuously, excel), but you wouldn't get that from reading the article. Highly recommended, nevertheless.

November 22, 2016

SECTION A - CLADISTICS

CHAPTER ONE - RELIGIOUS CLADES

Cladistic Meditations

Neoreactionaries have a thing about Puritanism. Whether or not this trait is conceptually essential is a question for another time. The important point, right now, is that it serves as a *cladistic marker*. Whatever it might be that neoreaction speciates into, it bears this trait as an indication of cultural ancestry, bookmarking the root-code archive of Mencius Moldbug.

When reconstructed as an argument, the Moldbuggian clade proposes a species of ethnographic categorization on a loosely Darwinian (and strongly evolutionary) model, according to which cultural phenomena are logically nested, in tree-like fashion, revealing a pattern of descent. When considering an English Darwinian Evolutionist, who is also an example of contemporary political progressivism, Moldbug makes this mode of analysis explicit:

*My belief is that Professor Dawkins is not just a Christian atheist. He is a **Protestant atheist**. And he is not just a Protestant atheist. He is a **Calvinist atheist**. And he is not just a Calvinist atheist. He is an*

***Anglo-Calvinist atheist**. In other words, he can be also be described as a **Puritan atheist**, a **Dissenter atheist**, a **Nonconformist atheist**, an **Evangelical atheist**, etc, etc.*

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

If there were a Thirty-Nine Articles of neoreaction, some suitably compressed version of this cladogram would constitute the primary tenet of the creed. Among the logically most attenuated twigs of this scheme, sub-speciated to the limit of cladistic definition, is found the globally-dominant sovereign instance of advanced modernity — the Cathedral (the enemy).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the 'Puritan question' remains the core preoccupation of the neoreactionary Dark Enlightenment. This has been illustrated with consummate clarity by an article posted by J. M. Smith at *The Orthosphere*, contesting the Christian genealogy of the Cathedral, and the subsequent rejoinder by descendants of the neoreactionary clade — of varying religious persuasions — **Jim** (here), **Foseti** (here), and **Nick B. Steves** (here, here, and here). Foseti reacts with some bemusement to the polemical framing of the Smith text, because what he encounters is

an argument without disagreement:

At The Orthosphere, there's a post purporting to argue that the Cathedral was not constructed by Christians. Presumably the title was changed by someone other than the author of the text of the post, because the post ably demonstrates that Christians did in fact build the Cathedral. Indeed, the post is recommended.

Cladistic method contributes significantly to an understanding of these relationships. In particular, it is essential to grasp the logic of taxonomic naming, which perfectly corresponds to pure genealogy, and the ideal reconstruction of evolutionary relatedness. The crucial point: *A cladistic name refers to everything that is encompassed by a splitting-off, speciation, or schism*.

At the risk of superfluous explanation, it might be worth rehearsing this logic with a colloquialized biological example (using familiar rather than technical taxonomic descriptors). Paleontologists are supremely confident that amphibians evolved from bony fishes, and reptiles evolved from amphibians. This can be reformulated, without loss of information, as a cladistic series (of branchings), with bony fishes including amphibians,which in turn include reptiles. In other words, as a cladistic name, a 'bony fish' describes an initial speciating split from an ancestral clade, which — projected forwards — encompasses every subsequent speciation, in this case amphibians, and reptiles. Both amphibians and reptiles are bony fish. So are mammals, apes, and human beings. Bony fish, as

a clade, comprehends every descendant species that has bony fish ancestry, whether extinct, still existent, or still to come. Nothing that has bony fish ancestry, however distant, can ever cease to be a bony fish (whatever else it becomes, in addition). Cladistically, it is *obvious* that humans are bony fish, as well as far simpler and more primordial things.

Smith writes:

… a Great Schism rent American Protestantism in the early nineteenth century, with the sundering fissure tearing through denominations, and even congregations. Protestants on one side of the fissure called themselves "liberals," those on the other side called themselves "orthodox." … Liberal Protestantism is a new, post-Christian religion that in its early stages opportunistically spoke in a Christian idiom, but nevertheless preached a new gospel.

We have seen, however, that from a cladistic point of view, nothing arising as a schism from X ever becomes 'post-X'. There is no such thing as a post-bony-fish, a post-reptile, or a post-ape. Nor, by strict logical analogy, can there ever be such things as post-Abrahamic Monotheists, post-Christians, post-Catholics, post-Protestants, post-Puritans, or post-Progressives. It is a logical impossibility for ancestral clades to ever be evolutionarily superseded. To have Christianity as a cultural ancestor is to remain Christian forever. That is no more than terminological precision, from the cladistic-neoreactionary perspective.

Steves elucidates the same point in a closely-related vocabulary: "… there *are* atheist Catholics. Why? Because being Catholic is cultural. It is not *only* that, but it is also *at least* that." Cultures are genealogically or cladistically organized — that is the neoreacionary presupposition. (Lateral complications are not entirely inconceivable — link to a truly ghastly Wikipedia entry on an important thought: the non-treelike network. That's not for now.)

What, though, of neoreaction itself? What did it split from? Like everything else under investigation here, unless it is comprehended as a schism, it is not comprehended at all.

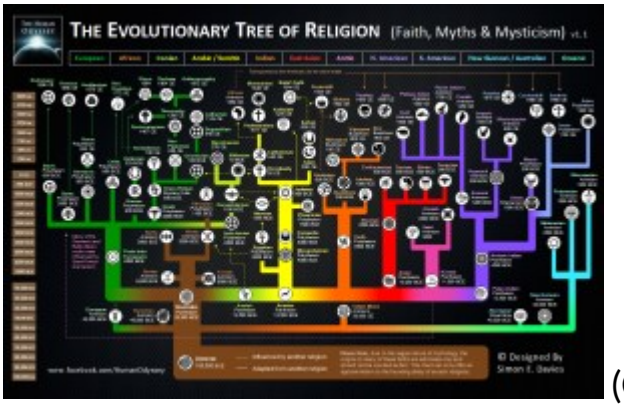
When cladistically approached, the primordial split is the ineluctable question of identity, or persistent ancestry. We can, perhaps, postpone it momentarily, but it will eventually lead us in directions that are more than a little Lovecraftian.

What was the last thing that neoreaction was submerged within, before arising, through schism? (That investigation has to await another post.)

September 4, 2013

Religious Clades

Peter A. Taylor relayed this magnificent cladogram of world religions:



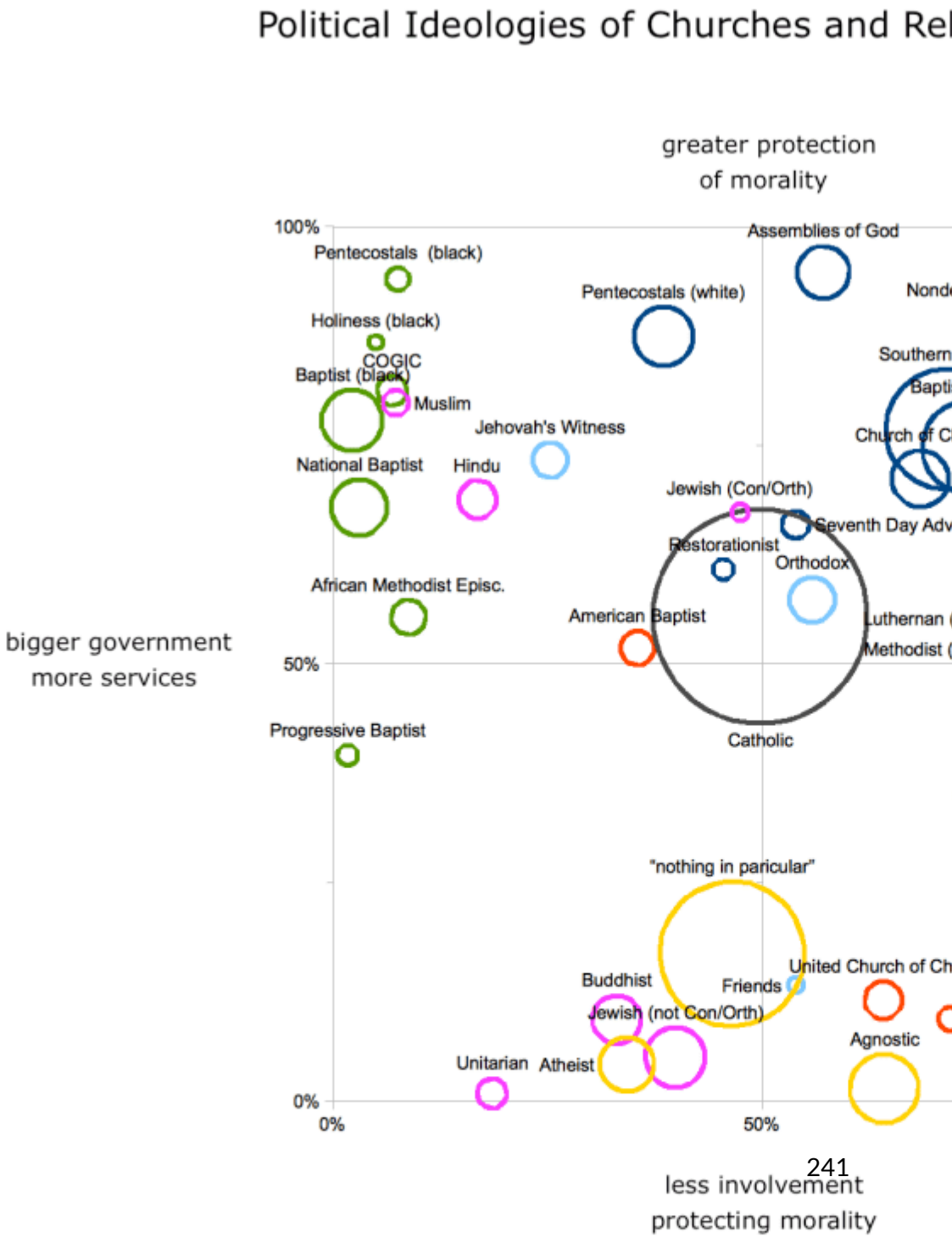
(Click on image to enlarge.)

If there's such a thing as a comprehensive cultural map of the world, it's woven on to something very like this. No opportunity to comment on it right now — but I'm confident it will spark some responses.

April 29, 2014

Religions and Ideologies

Tobin Grant (of the Religious News Service) charts political ideology by religious affiliation:


Political Ideologies of Churches and Rel
greater protection
of morality
bigger government
more services
less involvement
protecting morality
100%
50%
0%
0%
50%
Pentecostals (black)
Holiness (black)
COGIC
Baptist (black)
Muslim
Jehovah's Witness
National Baptist
Hindu
African Methodist Episc.
Progressive Baptist
Assemblies of God
Pentecostals (white)
Southern
Bapti
Church of C
Jewish (Con/Orth)
Seventh Day Adv
Restorationist
Orthodox
American Baptist
Luthernan
Methodist
Catholic
"nothing in paricular"
Buddhist
Friends
United Church of Ch
Jewish (not Con/Orth)
Agnostic
Unitarian
Atheist

The chart is reproduced in this article, which also includes a complementary graphic (of religions and income distribution). I'm assuming visitors here are too reality-jaded to need a *ThinkProgress* trigger warning (after all, even communists can provide useful links).



(Click on image to expand)

At this stage, there's no commentary from this blog on the abundance of graphically-embedded information here (except to say that the first diagram makes the Congregationalists look highly attractive, which seems strange). It's being posted as a contextual resource for future discussion.

August 30, 2014

Goddamned

That's roughly Gregory Hood's title, for an article making the case for a return to paganism. As his point of departure, Hood examines, unflinchingly, the indications of an Occidental *desire* for enslavement or destruction by Islam. "It's a kind of ethical exhaustion

— liberal Whites are weary of the moral responsibility of existence and survival." (The diagnosis seems hideously plausible to me.)

Islam is Nature's solution. Like the Architect from ***The Matrix Reloaded****, it is Nature's way of saying that "There are levels of survival we are prepared to accept." It is stultifying, depressing, and tyrannical. It is an enemy of real culture, with the most militant variations smashing the tombs and shrines not only of other religious traditions, but of their own. Modern Wahhabism is funded by Western decadence, enabled by Western weakness, in many ways a product of Western postmodernism and self-hatred. […] And lest what I say be misunderstood, it is obviously, laughably, and comically false. It is sustained by the protective cordon it has created around criticism. Yet believing that a pedophiliac illiterate transcribed the literal word of God still makes more sense than believing all men are created equal. Islam's refusal to allow critical analysis of itself is a sign of strength, not weakness.*

Islam is the first term in Hood's tetralemma. It's the executioners blade for a civilization that has lost all cosmic purchase upon existence. A disgusting way to die, begged for by the broken, in the end (which is already) — because at least it's a way to die.

The remaining three terms entertained by Hood are the "god of our grandfathers, the White Christ upon whose image the West was built" which "is dying", faithless liberalism (including modern Christianity), and paganism. Among these options, he declares, "The

Old Gods are my own choice."

Much of this analysis — down to its grimmest conclusions — is highly compelling, even when abstracted from the flow of Hood's vigorous prose. The proposed remedy, however, is by far its weakest component.

To make a *choice* among Gods, is that not the final expression of liberalism, and therefore of degenerated Christianity? If we have learnt anything from the manifold failures of multiculturalism, it is that religious freedom is downstream of religion. 'Freedom of conscience' lies at the furthest remove from a genuinely secular conception, if any such thing is even possible. If it now seems imaginable to shop for different gods, it is because of the way a distinctive religious tradition has worked out. If political considerations seem to occupy a position of meta-religious authority, the descent has been deeper still. Choice is *internal* to religion, even if the decayed *image* of religion serves to obscure this fundamental fact. Contemporary Occidental paganism remains dissident Christianity. There is no decision that could alter that.

As Hood himself states: *The very fact that I frame this identity as a "choice" is itself proof of decadence — a vibrant metaphysics simply is and has nothing to do with a rational actor listing pros and cons. Ironically, those who profess the Old Gods are weakened because what they profess is so obviously new and a product of innovation and modernity. Few would even call it a real faith that actually*

expresses literal belief in personalized divinities. […] The new pagan cults that preach fanaticism and virility owe too much to reason and deconstruction.

A God that is not the very principle of destiny is no God at all. Are we, then, *destined* to rediscover the Old North European Gods? The impossibility of answering such a question with confident affirmation says everything necessary about it. The Old Gods manifestly failed against the challenge of the new One. There is no reason at all to suspect that this outcome has been rescinded by the subsequent calamities befalling the new faith.

Religions are providential. They are units of fate. The claims they make far exceed rational controversy or personal decision, in the abyss of their decadence no less than at the apex of their flourishing. If Christian Modernity is a process of escalating nihilism, as Nietzsche conceived it to be, it is nevertheless a road without turn-offs, that can only be followed to the end.

ADDED: Second long (italicized) quote has been grafted in, thanks to Irving (in comments below), who pointed out its clearly indispensable relevance to the topic. Just in case it is not already obvious, the Hood essay is a superbly crafted masterpiece — its quality only enhanced by its supple self-ironization. It deserves to be a landmark reference whenever this question re-arises, as it will continually do.

November 19, 2014

CHAPTER TWO - ETHNO-CULTURAL CLADES

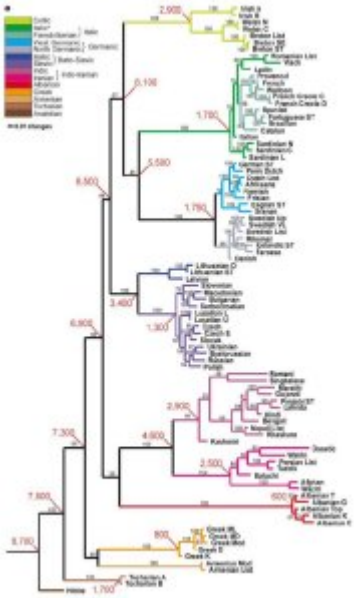
Ethno-Cladistics

The Ethno-cladistic thesis, sketchily reconstructed here from Mencius Moldbug's neoreactionary usage, proposes that **relations between cultural systems are captured by cladograms to a highly significant level of adequacy**. The limits to this thesis are set by lateral complications — interchanges and modifications that do not conform to a pattern of branching descent — and these are by no means negligible. Nevertheless, actual cultural formations are dominated by cladistic order. As a consequence, cultural theories that assume taxonomic regularity as a norm are capable of reaching potentially realistic approximations, and furthermore offer the only prospect for the rigorous organization of ethnographic phenomena.

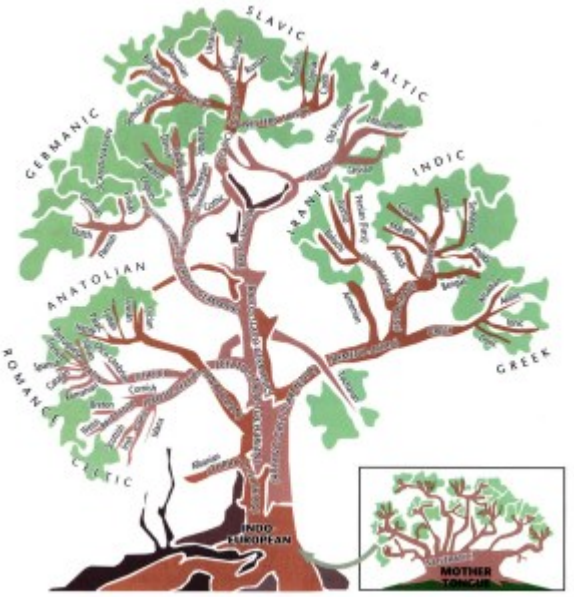
The most direct and central defense of the ethno-cladistic thesis bypasses the comparatively high-level religious systems that provide the material for Moldbug's arguments, and turn instead to the ethnographic root phenomenon: language. Languages simply *are*

cultures in their fundamentals, so that any approach applicable to them will have demonstrated its general suitability for cultural analysis.

I'd try to spin this out melodramatically, but I don't think there's really any point:



Click on images for full-size (legible) display.



It seems indisputable (to me) that lateral complications of these basic cladistic schemes are marginal. Languages are naturally grouped in branching, tree-like structures, which like those of (metazoan) biological variety are simultaneously explanatory of historical processes and morphological relatedness, because they represent evolutionary processes of successive speciation. The dominant organization is a taxonomic hierarchy, conforming to the formal language of set theory. The real events captured by these schemes are schisms, whose logical relation is that of genus to species. In the case of culture, as with biology, the manifest evolutionary development indicates the existence of some efficient hereditary mechanism (whose unit of replicated information is tagged by Moldbug, among innumerable others, as a ‘meme‘). On this

last point, it is worth noting that taxonomic biological classification, and even genetics, preceded the biochemical discovery of DNA — and was broadly confirmed, rather than disrupted, when this discovery took place. (The meme is an analogy, but not a metaphor.)

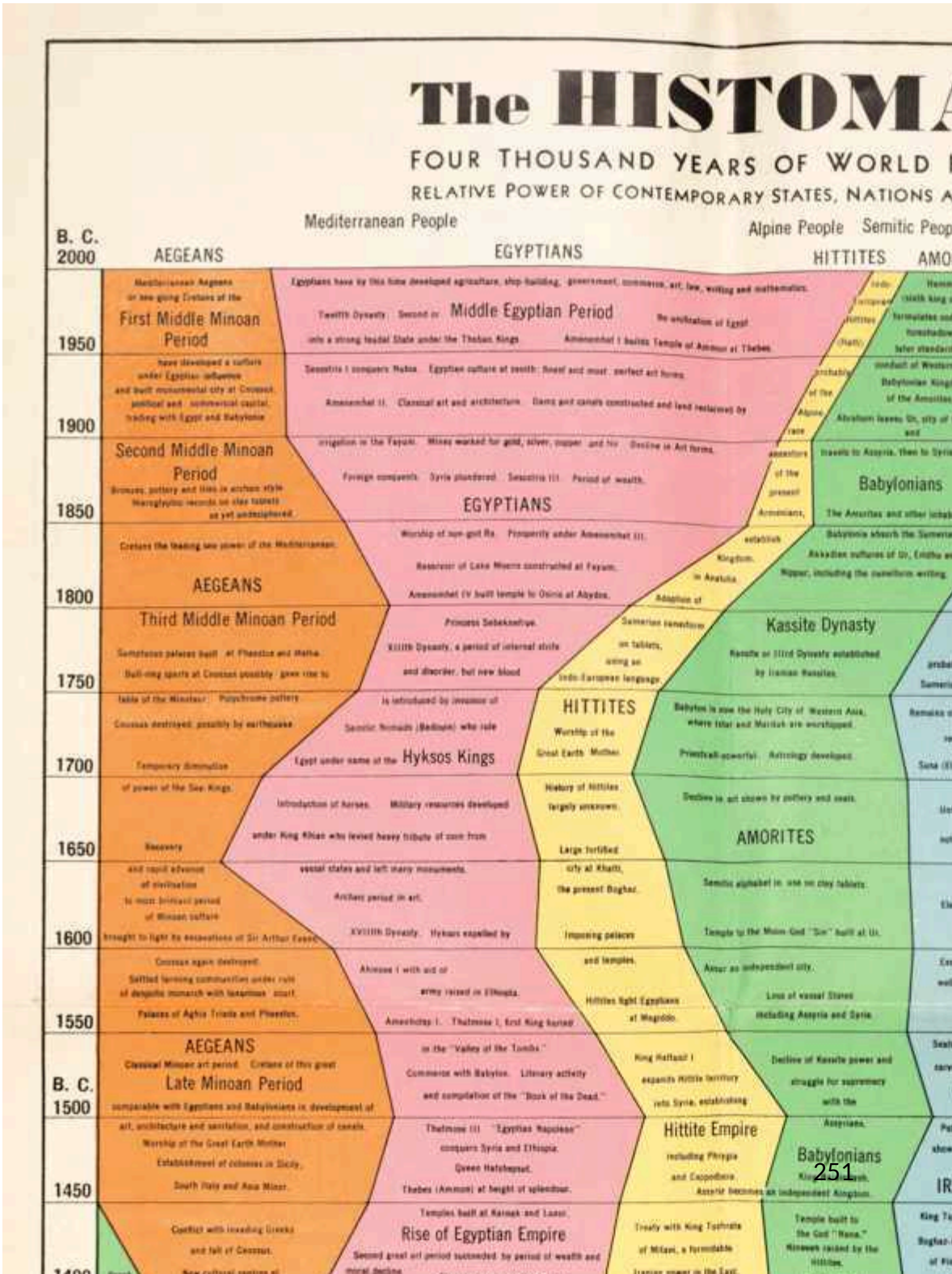
Ethno-cladistics is the schematics of cultural heritage. Despite the bulldozer assertiveness of this post, it is not designed to block methodical efforts directed at the subversion of this model. As indicated, such efforts will necessarily involve the elaboration of lateral (or 'rhizomatic') diagrams — a project of great intrinsic significance (and creative potential). Techno-commercial processes are strongly associated with lateralizations of this kind.

Culture, however, is *fundamentally heritage*, and ethno-cladistics is the theoretical response to this basic historical fact. This is already Moldbug's tacit claim, which should be uncontroversial among reactionaries of any kind. At the core of the neoreactionary endeavor is the cladogram.

September 6, 2013

Pictured Power

Couldn't resist sharing this:


The HISTOMA
FOUR THOUSAND YEARS OF WORLD
RELATIVE POWER OF CONTEMPORARY STATES, NATIONS A
Mediterranean People
Alpine People
Semitic Peop
B. C.
2000
1950
1900
1850
1800
1750
1700
1650
1600
1550
B. C.
1500
1450
AEGEANS
EGYPTIANS
HITTITES
AMO
First Middle Minoan Period
Middle Egyptian Period
Second Middle Minoan Period
EGYPTIANS
AEGEANS
Third Middle Minoan Period
HITTITES
Hyksos Kings
AMORITES
Late Minoan Period
Hittite Empire
Rise of Egyptian Empire
Babylonians
Kassite Dynasty
Babylonians

My main quibble is with the chromatics — a single color for the Anglosphere would have been helpful. More generally, a correspondence of color with language groups would have given a more intuitive picture of history's shape.

Also, China looks a little slender, no? (I wonder how 'power' is being calculated?)

July 23, 2014

European Vedism

Whilst dazzlingly ignorant about Julius Evola, I can at least partially understand the attraction his work generates for the ultra-traditionalist wing of the Outer Right. Thomas F. Bertonneau, whose essays are always worth digesting carefully, produces a typically masterful overview here.

Evola represents a significant thread of early 20th century reactionary thinking, rooted in the discoveries of historical linguistics, and the intellectual formation of an 'Indo-European' people corresponding to its deep cultural cladistics. The core phenomenon that supports the mystical-reactionary interpretation of history is the unambiguous process of crudification that afflicts the Indo-European languages, evident through the line of grammatical degeneration from Sanskrit, through Attic Greek, to

Latin, and then into the vulgar — even structurally collapsed — tongues of the modern European vernacular. Reactionary, hierarchical, and racially-inflected ideas comparable to Evola's are easily identified in the writings of Martin Heidegger, among many others. Historical linguistics appears to apprehend a large-scale ethnic totality undergoing prolonged cultural deterioration at the fundamental (grammatical) level. Once this is noted, progressivism appears as pure irony — and as a comic confirmation of decline.

Outside in, comparatively comfortable with chewed-up techno-commercial jargons and stripped-down communication protocols, is only minimally attentive to this particular 'problem of tradition' (which it registers from a position of detachment). Insofar as 'tradition' is invoked, however, it seems to be a highly significant reference — and its tendency to relapse the problem back to a Sanskritic (Vedic) origin is surely worthy of disciplined commentary. Kali Yuga makes a lot of sense.

November 2, 2013

Range Finders

A politically-incorrect short history of the Wild West. (Jim at his rough realist best.)

March 10, 2014

Thedes

The formulation of this concept was a building-block moment for NRx, but the trend in its usage has been dismally regressive. Apparently devised as a tool for the analysis of social identities, it is increasingly invoked as a rallying-cry for neo–tribalism. From the perspective of *Outside in*, it will soon become entirely toxic unless it is dramatically clarified.

Nydwracu initially employs the word 'thede' to designate the substance of group identity, "a superindividual grouping that its constituent individuals feel affiliation with and (therefore?) positive estimates of." Thedes are multiple, overlapping, sometimes concentric, and honed by antagonistic in-group/out-group determinations. They are seen as following from the understanding that "Man is a social animal." Ideological arguments disguise thede conflicts. At this level of abstraction, there is little to find objectionable.

In his essay on Natural Law, Jim writes:

Man is a rational animal, a social animal, a property owning animal, and a maker of things. He is social in the way that wolves and penguins are social, not social in the way that bees are social.

The kind of society that is right for bees, a totalitarian society, is not right for people. In the language of sociobiology, humans are social, but not eusocial. Natural law follows from the nature of men, from the kind of animal that we are. We have the right to life, liberty and property, the right to defend ourselves against those who would rob, enslave, or kill us, because of the kind of animal that we are.

Occupying a band of group integration between ants and tigers, humans have *intermediate sociality*. Even the tightest mode of human social organization is loose relative to an ant colony, and even the loosest is tight relative to a solitary feline. In human societies, neither collectivity nor individuality is ever absolute, and — even though these 'poles' are commonly exaggerated for polemical purposes — they realistically apply only to a *range of group integrations* (which is both narrow and significantly differentiated). To say that "man is a social animal" does *not* mean that collectivity is the fundamental human truth, any more than the opposite. It means that man is a creature of the middle (and the middle has a span).

Insofar as a thede corresponds to a unit of autonomous, reproducible social organization, it is a far narrower concept than the one Nydwracu outlines. A thede is an *ethnicity* if it describes a real — rather than merely conventional — unit of human population. This is, of course, to exclude a great variety of identity dimensions, including sex, sexual orientation, age, interests, star signs … as well as some of those Nydwracu mentions (musical subcultures and

philosophical schools). Generalization of 'thedes' to include all self-conscious human groupings risks diffusion into frivolous subjectivism (and subsequent re-appropriation for alternative purposes).

If the analysis of thedes begins with the recognition that man is a social animal, it is a grave error to immediately expand the scope of the concept to groups such as women, lesbians, dog-lovers, and black metal fans, since none of these correspond to biologically-relevant social groupings. If this is the way the notion is to be developed, this blog takes the first off-ramp into more biorealist territory. There are quite enough of such 'thedes' to be found already in university literature and grievance studies departments. 'Thedism' of this kind is simply intersectionality with a slight right-wing skew. It has no cladistic function, unless as degenerate metaphor.

As a reliable heuristic, only those groupings which are plausible subjects of secessionist autonomization should be considered thedes. Any group that could not imaginably be any kind of micro-nation has only intra-thedish identity. More darkly, a thede — 'properly' speaking — is necessarily a potential object of genocide. (To argue this way is to depart radically from the usage Nydwracu recommends. It is not an attempt to wrest control of the word, but only to explain why it seems so basically impaired. This post will be the last time it is mangled here.)

Rigorization of thede analysis in the direction of real ethnicities

would also require the abandonment of attempts to assimilate classes to thedes, although class identities can mask thedes, and operate as their proxies. Between New England and Appalachia there is a (real) thede difference between ethnic populations, encrusted with supplementary class characteristics. Used strictly in this way, the idea of a thede does theoretical work, and uncovers something. It exposes the subterranean ethnic war disguised by class stratification. When merely used to classify generic social identities, on the other hand, it thickens the fog, pandering to the social constructivist mentality. Tribes and classes cannot be absorbed into a single super-concept without fatal loss of meaning. It is impossible to belong to a class in anything like the same sense that one can belong to an (ethnic) thede, *unless class is a cover*. Class stratification is primarily intra-thedish and trans-thedish. It is the way a population is organized, not a population itself.

Religious difference, in contrast, are typically thedish. By far the most important example, for the internal dissensions of NRx, and for the Occident in general, is the split between Catholic and Reformed (Protestant) Christianity. There are real (autonomously reproducible) Catholic and Protestant populations, and thus true thedes. Either could be wholly exterminated without the disappearance of the other. Furthermore, the way in which 'thedishness' is comprehended varies systematically between them. On strictly technical grounds, it is tempting to counter-pose high-

integrity to low-integrity social arrangements, but that is to give away too much ammunition for free. (This is to depart into a different discussion, but one that is already overdue. (Alongside other obvious references, Nydwracu points to this))

Ethnicities correspond to real populations, and to cladistic structures. 'Thedes' as presently formulated do not. Ironically, this *denotational* haziness (super-generality) of the thede concept lends itself to usages guided by extremely concrete *connotations*, with a distinctive *Blut und Boden* flavor. Usage of the word 'identity' (at least, on the right) has exactly the same characteristics. This blog is done with the 'thede' concept unless its meaning is drastically tidied up.

Note: Where this post wanted to go, when it set off, was closer to the 'dogs vs cats' debate, or this:

Yeah there is a huge disconnect between the idea of seasteading as a platform for experimenting with various forms of governance and the reality that the vast majority of people interested in pursuing it are orthodox libertarians who see some kind of anarcho capitalist libertarianism as the inevitable winner in a 'fair fight' between political systems. I really think that a belief in libertarianism is linked to a distinctive and relatively rare neurological type, and therefore will never convince the vast majority of people who tend towards a more altruistic and collectivized morality.

It is at least conceivable that neuro-atypical hyper-individualists

could establish a micro-nation (or be exterminated). They could therefore lay claim to thedish identity, although in a strict sense — that no one wants to use.

ADDED: Since this is my last opportunity to borrow 'thede' to mean something with substantial real content (i.e. an autonomous, self-reproducing social unit), it's worth enumerating some possible thedes, to give a sense of its extension: tribes, ethnic groups (concentrically-ordered), cities, seasteads, space colonies … "What is your thede?" translates as "Who are your people?" — "Stamp collectors" shouldn't be considered a serious answer.

ADDED: Terminological tidying from Nydwracu —

> I should separate @Outsideness' redefinition of 'thede' (autonomous, self-reproducing social unit) into a new word. Ideas?
>
> — Wesley Morganston (@nydwracu) October 26, 2014

> I'm using 'phyle' for that second one. @Outsideness @chitonous
>
> — Wesley Morganston (@nydwracu) October 26, 2014

'Phyle' is good.

ADDED: Valuable consolidation (and criticism) at Nydwracu's place.

October 24, 2014

Genetic Interests

'n/a' provided a link to Frank Salter's On Genetic Interests. (Available in a variety of formats.)

That gift follows from the latest exchange on the topic, based on this Jayman post. Some (Salterian) contention from Pumpkin Person (here) and n/a (here). It's a fascinating discussion, that has divided Cochran and Harpending, which is an indication of its seriousness. Sadly — if understandably — it tends to generate massive rancor very quickly, as is evident in the tone of some of these posts. That's especially unfortunate because, heated race politics aside, there's a massive amount of philosophical substance underlying it. (Maximum coldness would certainly be appreciated here.)

A suggestive remark from Salter (p.28), on the disrupted equilibrium between 'ultimate' and 'proximate' interests (a crucial and thought-provoking distinction):

The equilibrium applying to humans has been upset in recent generations, so that we can no longer rely on subjectively designated proximate interests to serve our ultimate interest. We must rely more on science to perceive the causal links between the things we value and formulate synthetic goals based on that rational appraisal.

So (subject to correction as the argument progresses) Salter proposes an explicit, rational proxy for the 'ultimate interests' of genetic propagation, now inadequately represented by change-shocked phenotypes (and, most importantly, brains). This is a Principal-Agent problem, applied to human biology.

Here is Salter laying out his problem at greater length:

Certainly we can no longer rely on our instincts to guide us through the labyrinths of modern technological society. But there is one innate capacity we possess that, combined with one or more motivations, is capable of solving this problem. Humans are uniquely equipped with analytic intelligence, the ability to tackle novel challenges. This 'domain general' problem-solving capacity evolved because it allowed our ancestors to find solutions to novel threats that arose in the environments in which they lived. General intelligence is distinguished from 'domain specific capacities, such as face recognition and speech, specialized mental modules for solving recurring problems in the environments in which we evolved. We are flexible strategizers par excellence, able to construct our own micro environments across a great diversity of climates and ecosystems. Abstract intelligence is physiologically costly because it requires a large brain, difficult childbirth and extended childhood. Nevertheless it has been so adaptive that it distinguishes our species. It allows us to consciously assess dangers and opportunities and to devise novel solutions, or to choose a well-rehearsed routine from our extensive

repertoire to apply in a given situation. Now changed environments have effectively blinded us to large stores of our genetic interests, or to put it more accurately, for the first time situated us where we need to perceive those interests and be motivated to pursue them. This blindness is not cured by a people's economic and political power, as documented in Chapter 3, regarding the decline of Western populations. We must rely on our intelligence to adapt, not only using science to perceive our fundamental interests in the abstract but devising ways to realize these interests through proximate interests, the short-term goals of which we are aware and towards which we are motivated to act.

There's a far more general topic here than racial antagonism (without wanting to dismiss the importance of that). Putting it up here now is a test of whether it can be discussed without throwing people into a rage. If so, it could become an engaging conversation.

(Googling Moravec's concept of 'replicator usurpation' for a cite, it seems that I'm the only person who's being talking about it for over a decade. That's disappointing, because its relevance to these questions seems obvious. I'm going to need to look it up again in order to come back here with a helpful quote.)

ADDED: Gloss and critical commentary from David B. at *Gene Expression* (2005): "It is essential to understand that Salter is *not* presenting a biological theory of how people have evolved, how they will evolve in future, or why they behave in the way they do. [Note 2]

As Salter puts it himself: 'the present work is not primarily a theory of human behavior, but of interests. Rather than being a work of explanation, this is mainly an exercise in political theory dealing with what people are able to do if they want to behave adaptively (p.85)… my main goal in this chapter is not to describe how people actually behave. Rather, I explore how individuals would behave if they were attempting to preserve their genetic interests (p.257)'. Some of these remarks might suggest that Salter is merely setting out an option that people may wish to follow or not, according to their own values, but it can hardly be doubted that Salter himself positively *advocates* the pursuit of ethnic genetic interests, principally through the control of immigration. The use of such terms as 'adaptive', 'fitness', and 'ultimate interests' could in principle have a neutral biological sense, but in practice Salter uses them with an evaluative force: he regards the policies he discusses not just as possible but *desirable*. Otherwise why say that we 'need to perceive' our genetic interests and 'be motivated to pursue them'? From time to time he overtly uses the mode of recommendation rather than mere analysis, for example, 'Multiculturalism and other versions of ethnic pluralism… are types of ethnic regime that majorities should certainly avoid (p.188)… Since genetic interests are the most fundamental, liberals [sic] should support social policies that take these vital interests into account (p.250)'. And some of the language and comparisons Salter uses are strongly emotive … much of Salter's book is concerned with

immigration, and especially immigration from third-world countries to the West. In my view there are sound arguments against large-scale, uncontrolled immigration from the third-world, not least the danger of civil strife resulting from the presence of large unassimilated groups holding values and beliefs incompatible with those of the host society. But it would be unwise for people who object to uncontrolled immigration on these grounds to latch onto Salter's ideas. Whatever Salter's own motives, his theory is being taken up enthusiastically by racists (as a Google search will confirm), and anyone who follows their lead will be tainted by association. Since even by Salter's own account his theory is not a scientific thesis, but more of a political manifesto, there can be no compelling reason for non-racists to accept it."

David B.'s final point is especially relevant to some of the issues hinted at in the post here (targeted for future development): "… Salter's doctrine is profoundly *anti-eugenic*. For Salter, it is in the interest of an individual to preserve and promote the gene frequencies of his own ethnic group, whether the existing gene frequency is good, bad or indifferent, as judged by qualitative criteria. So, for example, it is in the interest of American blacks to promote their own gene frequencies against those of American whites, even if in some respects it would be better for blacks themselves to change those gene frequencies. The doctrine of genetic interests is inherently backward-looking and conservative.

In contrast, the eugenic position is that we are able to make value judgements about what characteristics are desirable (such as health, intelligence, and beauty) and undesirable (such as stupidity, mental illness, and physical disabilities) and then to take reproductive decisions based on those judgements. Of course eugenics is controversial, but many of those who might feel vaguely sympathetic to Salter's approach would also feel vaguely sympathetic to eugenics, and they should at least be aware of the conflict between them."

August 3, 2015

Fish People

Since the opportunities for XS to agree (in advance) with PZ Myers don't come along too regularly, it's worth seizing upon those that do. For anyone who thinks cladistics are important, this point is worth strongly defending:

There are multiple meanings of "fish". We can use it to refer to specific species or an extant category of animals: salmon are fish, halibut are fish, herring are fish. No one objects to that, and they all understand that if I said "humans are still salmon", that would be wrong. […] But another way the term is used is as a descriptor for a clade. A taxonomic clade is a "grouping that includes a common

ancestor and all the descendants (living and extinct) of that ancestor". […] So, for instance, humans belong to the mammalian clade, which includes mice and cats and cows. If we have transhuman, part-cyborg descendants, they will still be mammals, because, note, by definition a clade must include all the descendants of an ancestor. We're trapped! There's no way our progeny can exit the clade!

In fact, it's such a sound point, it's worth generalizing.

July 6, 2016

CHAPTER THREE - THE PURITAN QUESTION

Luciano Pellicani

Mark Warburton passed this masterpiece along (*Revolutionary Apocalypse*, by Luciano Pellicani). A couple of tiny morsels from its consistently brilliant — and eerily familiar — analysis:

With Puritanism, an absolutely new element was introduced into Western civilisation: ***(revolutionary) politics as fulfillment of God's will****, with the objective of consciously building "a new human community, that could substitute the lost Eden" and produce a prodigious "change in human nature." For centuries, politics had been conceived as a "cybernetic art" (Plato) or as a technique for the accumulation of power (Machiavelli). From the Puritan cultural revolution on, politics was conceived as a* ***soteriological practice****, dominated by an* ***eschatological tension toward the Kingdom of God on earth****, therefore as a calling, whose methodical objective was to overturn the world in order to purify it. The slogan originally used by the Taborites and the Anabaptists was revived: "Permanent warfare*

against the existing, in the name of the New World."

And:

An all-powerful state is essential for communism, since ***the total destruction of civil society*** *is the only way to destroy capitalism. By civil society we mean the "society of industry, of general competition, of freely pursued private interest, of anarchy, of natural and spiritual individuality alienated from self." But since capitalism — Lenin's definition is correct — is a phenomenon that is generated spontaneously, whenever the ideological power relaxes its watch, the effort to prevent mammon from raising its head must be permanent. It is a matter of* ***annihilation*** *that requires* ***mass terror****, since the main enemy of communism is "widespread petit bourgeois spontaneity." Thus, the "revolutionary project challenges the normal course of history." It is a huge effort to prevent humanity from moving spontaneously toward a bourgeois society. This is only achieved through permanent terror.*

If Pellicani is already being widely discussed in the reactosphere, I've missed it. My guess: he'll be considered an indispensable reference by this time next year.

January 3, 2014

Ultra-Calvinism

JayMan chips in (succinctly and lucidly) to a familiar topic (or, perhaps, two):

> A complex story, but today's SWPLs are indeed descendants of the Puritans http://t.co/EEI7hzVeFx
>
> — JayMan (@JayMan471) March 2, 2015

"New England was not swamped with immigrants because these people were particularly simpatico with the original Puritan settlers." *Post Civil War New England, no. But assortative migration has been powerful (see previous link) and continues on to this day.*

You know, your general trope of modern SWPLs not being the descendents of the Puritans doesn't actually hold water. A simple comparison of both genetic and self-reported ancestry (again aforementioned link, partially supplied by you) shows that Democratic voting Whites are only found in areas Puritans settled. British ancestry backs it up. See also The Myth of the Expanding Circle or You Can't Learn How to Be an English Vegetarian | Staffan's Personality Blog.

Now, in New England, some of that genetic British ancestry is Scottish, as opposed to English ancestry. I think we can be fairly certain the Scots aren't the ones pushing things Left.

Sure, today's SWPLs are heavily admixed with other groups in addition to their Puritan roots. And sure, small numbers of liberals are found everywhere. And sure, not all Puritan descendants vote Left (e.g., Mormons – but they have been specially selected). But today, the consistent Blue states are found only in areas which have Puritan (as well as Scandinavian, and possibly Quaker) descendants. It does limited (some, but limited) good to compare their attitudes 200-400 years ago with current ones – all groups have undergone considerable change during that time (the moral circle expanded to fill its genetic potential). You also can't blame it on the Jews because A) there's not that many of them B) their putative influence resonates with some and not others, putting us back to the original problem.

March 3, 2015

Ultra-Calvinism II

The XS Inner Council doesn't get as much time to study hardcore Ultra-Calvinist Theonomy as it would like, but Rushdoony's *Politics of Guilt and Pity* (full-text available free online) is looking truly awesome so far. A couple of early snippets:

The reality of man apart from Christ is guilt and masochism. And guilt and masochism involve an unshakeable inner slavery which

governs the total life of the non-Christian. The politics of the anti-christian will thus inescapably be ***the politics of guilt****. In the politics of guilt, man is perpetually drained in his social energy and cultural activity by his over-riding sense of guilt and his masochistic activity. He will progressively demand of the state a redemptive role. What he cannot do personally, i.e., to save himself, he demands that the state do for him, so that the state, as man enlarged, becomes the human savior of man. The politics of guilt, therefore, is not directed, as the Christian politics of liberty, to the creation of godly justice and order, but to the creation of a redeeming order, a saving state. Guilt must be projected, therefore, on all those who oppose this new order and new age. And, because the salvation is mythical, and the enslavement real, the hatred of life and of innocence grows, and with it grows the urge to mass destruction.*

[…]

In the modern state, in the name of democracy, there is the increasing pandering to guilt and to the hatred felt by the guilty for the innocent and for the successful. This then is the full triumph of the politics of guilt and its open enthronement. For the politics of guilt, the order of the day is mass destruction. […] Sentimental humanism asserts that man's basic need is ***love****, more specifically, a passive need* ***to be loved****. Thus, man is seen as a passive creature whose basic problem is not a will to evil but an absence of love, so that a positive agency must be created to supply man's needs. The*

result is the totalitarian caretaker state. Man, being passive, needs an active agency in his life, and this agency the welfare state provides.

[…]

In ***guilt*** *cultures, the individual deals directly and personally with the inner warfare. Man, burdened with a sense of guilt and unable to enjoy life, confesses his sin, as does the man in a* ***shame*** *culture, but he pleads guilty to the lesser crime. With a fine sensitivity, he dredges up minor offenses to prove the refinement of his conscience in order to escape his capital offense against God. He may trouble himself over a stolen pencil while ignoring his open or veiled warfare against God. In the United States, as the nation has departed progressively from God, it has indulged progressively in a "debunking" of its history, in a general confession of many past faults, some often imagined. The hypocrisy of such confessions is striking: by confessing the "sins" of past generations, the present scholar or generation thereby implies its own superior virtues and its innocence of those sins. By the fact of such "debunking" or confession, it confesses also, very modestly, that wisdom is now born to us and is among us, so that confession again becomes a vehicle of pride.*

[…]

What man cannot do, i.e., to cleanse himself of sin or to make atonement to God for sin, God does for man. Men, being wholly

God's creation, cannot be active towards God; his relationship is derivative and passive. Man's will is not autonomous, nor is man creative in relationship to God. Hence, since God is God, the relationship between man and God is wholly a part of the eternal decree and wholly determined by the triune God.

[…]

Today, millions of Negroes, joined by millions of slave whites, are demanding that the federal government become their slave-master and provide them with security and care. Slavery is a welfare economy; private ownership is a privately maintained welfare economy, and it is not economically a sound unit of operation. Under state ownership, slavery, a social security structure, is a welfare economy which lacks the necessity for successful operation which the private owner must maintain. The private owner must make a profit somewhere; Alexander H. Stephens made it in law and supported his slaves thereby. The slave-owning state survives instead by progressive confiscation until the nation is destroyed. […] … Slavery remains, however, a legitimate way of life, but a lower way of life. Slavery offers certain penalties as well as certain advantages. Objectively, the penalty is the surrender of liberty. Subjectively, the slave does not see the surrender of freedom as a penalty, since he desires escape from freedom. Even as a timid and fearful child dreads the dark, so does the slave mind fear liberty: it is full of the terrors of the unknown. As a result, the slave mind clings to statist or state

slavery, cradle-to-grave welfare care, as a fearful child clings to his mother. The advantage of slavery is precisely this, security in the master or in the state. Socialism is thus a slave state, created by the demands of slaves for a master.

[…]

Hell is a witness to the fact that a God of justice is on the throne of the universe. When people insist that they cannot believe in hell they are saying that they refuse to believe that justice has any right to exist. The denial of hell means that justice has been replaced by the total tolerance of evil, and this tolerance of evil is disguised as love. This doctrine of love involves a hatred of God and justice and an overt or covert love of evil.

November 12, 2015

Double Predestination

Cladistic inheritance necessitates that I begin talking about the Calvinist doctrine of Providence here (soon), despite my total cognitive depravity on the topic. I've been reading the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and around it, but inevitably as if from Mars (and as a Confucian). It has to be the case that many of the visitors here are vastly more intellectually fluent on the subject, so any anticipatory comments will be hungrily seized upon.

The fatality, as far as it is initially evident:

(1) Neoreaction, cladistically located, is a Cryptocalvinist splinter.

(2) The doctrines that placed Calvinism in H. L. Mencken's "cabinet of horrors" ("next to cannibalism"), have never been *philosophically* dissolved, whether by theological or secular argument.

(3) The moralistic dismissal of Modernity and, through association, of Protestantism, evidences an almost incomprehensibly crude conception of Providence — as if the way things have turned out was not a fatality, and in theological terms a *message* (or punishment), but rather an accident, or man-made contingency. The rigorous theology of Modernity cannot reduce to mere denunciation.

(4) Calvinism is an instrument with which to explore Catholicism, especially in respect to its implicit philosophy of history (and recourse to teleological reasoning). The 'Neo-' in Neoreaction appears to be a Calvinist mark. There are any number of influential secular explanations for the way history has tortured the Church — such that even the religious seem typically to default to them. Where does one find a radically providential account (excavating the theological meaning of Modernity)?

(5) Is not the very word 'Cathedral' in its Neoreactionary usage a complex providential sign? (Which suggests that it has far more to tell than anything either Neoreactionary writers or mere accident

put into it.)

(6) The cluster of disputes around 'predestination' (or the action of eternity upon history) is the Occidental key to the problem of time.

I'm sure there's much more …

[This helps to set the tone.]

November 30, 2013

Join the Dots

Walter Russell Mead muses on identitarian blood-letting.

First the sermon:

The eastern Congo and the African Great Lakes are remote places, and many people might wonder why Americans or the world at large should care much about what goes on there. The short answer is that the people who live there are made in God's image as much as anybody else and they are infinitely dear to him, and to remain indifferent to the suffering of people there is to fail in our clear duty to our Creator and to some degree to betray our own humanity.

Then the analysis:

While the world's intelligentsia today spends an endless amount of time "celebrating difference" and singing the praises of diversity (and we join in that chorus), diversity and difference constitute

potentially catastrophic political challenges. One thing that seems to happen with modernization is that groups of people start feeling more need to have the state and the laws reflect the values and the priorities of their own ethnic or religious communities. Identity demands to be reflected in politics.

Pre-modern and "primitive" cultures don't seem to feel this as strongly as more modern ones do, and democracies are sometimes even more chauvinistic than other forms of government as these pressures are felt. It is often populists who lead campaigns for ethnic cleansing or nationalist war. The history of Europe and the Middle East has been shaped by 150 years of sometimes genocidal wars of conquest, revenge, national liberation and religion. Tens of millions have been killed in these wars, multinational states have broken down into ethnic nation states, and millions of refugees have been forced into exile.

[…] One of the biggest questions of the 21st century is whether this destructive dynamic can be contained, or whether the demand for ethnic, cultural and/or religious homogeneity will continue to convulse world politics, drive new generations of conflict, and create millions more victims. […] … the foundations of our world are dynamite, and that the potential for new conflicts on the scale of the horrific wars of the 20th century is very much with us today.

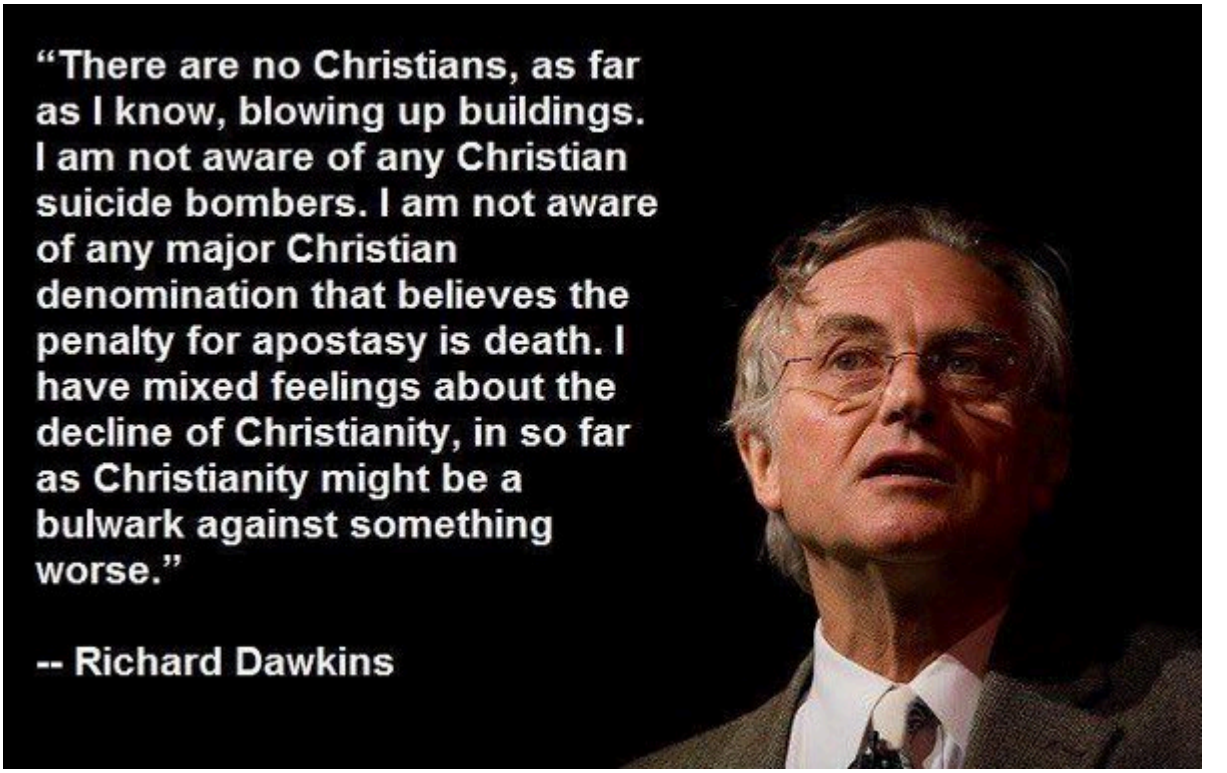
In other words: "If everyone shared my (religious) identity, we wouldn't be tilting into a century of blood and horror." Even if this

dubious argument was to be accepted at face value, ***they don't***, and ***we are***.

ADDED: "… Great State leaders take the erroneous intellectual short cut of assuming that foreigners are just human beings who think just like they do and who focus on the same priorities. … This tendency to a kind of passive, subconscious, egalitarian universalism is, of course, greatly amplified if you are actually an Egalitarian Universalist because that is effectively your official state religion …"

December 19, 2013

Progress (IV)



Facile progressivism is over.

January 12, 2016

CHAPTER FOUR - ALTERNATE PATHS

Salience Preference

> Time preference and provincialism are both special cases of salience preference.
>
> — Gate Of Heavens (@GateOfHeavens) October 31, 2014

On the assumption that most reactionary-types will want to refuse the idea of an integrated 'salience preference' — what is the counter-argument? (I'm also wondering whether ethico-political humanism — in its restrictive rather than expansive usage — can be bound into the same super-syndrome.)

November 1, 2014

Crypto-Brahmins

Poseidon Awoke has a great post up about the class characteristics of neoreaction. It's bound to generate a lot of discussion. Much of it is irresistibly persuasive. You'll want to read it.

I have a few quibbles — Vaisyas aren't 'activists' (because business isn't politics), and the Catholic slant of NRx is more complicated than this essay makes it out to be (because cladistics). These kind of qualifications aren't decisive in themselves.

The decisive reservation has to do with the social function of *code specialists*. Perhaps this tweet makes the point best:

> Prose is just code that doesn't compile. (Ignore if you're not a tech entrepreneur).
>
> — Naval Ravikant (@naval) May 30, 2014

'Silicon Valley' changes the meaning of 'Brahmin' — if we're still going to use that word. Most simply, the long-established *distinction* between literate and industrial elites loses its security in the epoch of programming, or digitization. NRx washes back from a social horizon at which the sign and its operationalization have become de-segmented, necessitating a seismic re-configuration of class identities.

The Brahmin priest caste, like the digital elite, specializes in signs, but they are signs of exhortation, rather than of intrinsic efficiency. Is not *the Cathedral* precisely a name for that apparatus of signs — (non-STEM) academia, media, bureaucracy, politics … — which cannot in principle *ever compile*? The Cathedral is a secular religion, which has to preach because it does not work.

When NRx insists upon a division within 'progress' between techno-economics (which works) and socio-politics (which decays), it opens a rift that splits the Brahmins, rather than further separating them from social inferiors. NRx, at its core, is a 'Brahmin' civil war.

June 6, 2014

Quantum Suicide

This stuff is excellent Frightday night material (a relatively old but appropriately sensationalist link). It's the *Outside in* candidate for a conceivable postmodern religion, channeling video game ontology into an off-the-cliff practice of the numinous. It has to be a better place to look than Odinist revival (which it might ultimately eat). QS fanatics would merit an argument, and better still, they'd be immunized against it.

NRx would find a lot to talk about with these folks — until they pulled the trigger. For instance: Exit. Imagine a near-future world in which political disputes were dominated by QS cults. It would be remarkably tolerant of electoral processes, whose defects would have been made a matter of indifference. Divide the social body on the issue of greatest political rancor, and submit the contest to a 'resolution' procedure with significant probabilistic input. Whoever loses terminates themselves, *in 'this' sector of the multiverse*. The

outcome, from the perspective of the QS religion, would be that branching universes acquired increasingly distinctive ideological flavors. Everyone ends up with the future they selected, in worlds pre-cleansed of dissent. Elections would be OK, but why not just roll the dice? The important thing would be the schism, and from the QS perspective, every true devotee ends up on the right side of it. *This is the future you chose* would actually always be true.

Replace elections with the flip of a coin, accompanied by mass suicidal auto-selection. On the day this becomes an articulate political program, the Quantum Suicide religion will have arrived.

February 20, 2015

Sore Losers

Following the recent publication of *Our Wound Is Not So Recent*, Alain Badiou's analysis of the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, Nick Land detects a residue of 'Frenchness' in Badiou's universalism, reconfigures the battlefield of the future, and plays devil's advocate for globalised capitalism

> [L]et's admit it: Globalization does not automatically benefit France. […] Globalization develops according to principles that correspond neither to French tradition nor to French

> culture. These principles include the ultraliberal market economy, mistrust of the state, individualism removed from the republican tradition, the inevitable reinforcement of the universal and 'indispensable' role of the United States, common law, the English language, Anglo-Saxon norms, and Protestant—more than Catholic—concepts.
>
> —Hubert Védrine, February 9, 2002[1]

To be French is to understand—with peculiar lucidity—what it is to have been defeated by modernity. The world's first modern nation, enthralled beyond all others by the call of the universal, has been cropped back to a nexus of untaken paths, over the course of two centuries. If Hubert Védrine says this more clearly than Alain Badiou, Badiou says it nevertheless. *Our Wound is Not So Recent*. The title already says almost everything. To anticipate: '…our wound comes from the historical defeat of communism.'

Compared to this primary, chronic and, by now, *essential* misfortune, occasional disasters are mere accidents. The recent massacre in Paris by soldiers of Jihad provides an unusually dramatic (or 'particularly spectacular') instance. Yet, despite its colorful, richly affective character, the disturbance of state security represented by the slaughter of a few score Parisians is a minor affair, when compared to the conquest of modernity itself—and thus the world—by a far more ominous adversary. Whatever philosophical

dignity is to be found in reflection upon the November 13 incident lies in its cognitive adoption as a relay, leading back to the main story, 'the triumph of globalised capitalism'.

It is understandable, therefore, that the elegance of Badiou's presentation is unable to fully conceal its structural irritability. 'We' have been *distracted*, which is how adults understand 'terror'. It is a distraction of 'thought' that has occurred here, Badiou insists, and thus an annoyance, in multiple senses, including that of simple condescension. As befits a member of the socio-cultural elite, Badiou's response takes the form of a thoughtful meta-irritation—an irritability directed at irritation as such. This is an anti-empirical reflex and therefore, in some definite way, 'French'—but we will get to that soon enough. Those scores of dead youngsters strewn across Paris demand some affective acknowledgement, which is undignified (and annoying). Far more significantly, the atrocity upsets people. It is—precisely as intended by the perpetrators, and also in the most neutral sense of the word—*exciting*. The public response it elicits is not only philosophically useless, but positively deleterious to the work of the universal. 'So, to counter these risks, I think that we must manage to think what has happened.'

> We have a duty to philosophy—which is to say, to our only credible model of nobility—*to be cold*. Emotional spasms in response to blood spatter would be unbecoming.

I think so, too. We have a duty to philosophy—which is to say, to our only credible model of nobility—*to be cold*. Emotional spasms in response to blood spatter would be unbecoming. It would also be an integral contribution to the achievement of 'fascist' terror. Worst of all, it distracts. Terror excites identity, by concentrating it, and packaging it in a false simplicity. Badiou is not concerned to disguise the fact that, for the European Left, in particular, 'identity' is the true terror.

There are, however, other distractions—for 'us'. When Badiou proclaims that '*Our* wound is not so recent', we are compelled to ask: How far does this collective pronoun extend? A response to this question could be prolonged without definite limit. Everything we might want to say ultimately folds into it, 'identity' most obviously. Whatever meaning 'communism' could have belongs here, as 'we' reach outwards to the periphery of the universal, and thus (conceivably) to the end of philosophy. 'Frenchness' is, in some complex way, involved by it, among other social sets of lesser and greater obscurity. This 'we' is the whole, even as it is hidden in the margin. It is also strategically non-negotiable. (Nobody asks 'who?'—as Badiou knows they will not.) Smuggled into grammar, it says everything of ultimate consequence in advance of any possible rejoinder, framing subsequent controversy in its terms. A sovereign or transcendental antagonism—settled securely beyond discussion—thus announces itself, in a whisper.

In comparable fashion, then, *we* can only propose another 'us' outside it. As already promised, the detail—if only a little—will soon follow. For the moment, it need only be noted that 'their' identity cannot be assumed to be 'ours', any more than we share their problems, their successes, or their defeats. The pronoun is scrambled, torn apart. We are not 'wounded' by what hurts them, unless accidentally, and by the failure of their collective project least of all. Whatever malice might appear in these words strikes us as sheer retaliation. This is only to say that Badiou's 'we' was already a project of mobilization and a declaration of war, if only as a recollection, and a gesture of defiance. The haze that surrounds 'us' is the fog of war. No one can be sincerely *shocked* by that. (We are not children.) Our conflict is not so recent.

> The stakes, on both sides, are absolute. There is—most probably—*nothing* we would not do, were it still necessary, in order to prevail against each other

'It must be seen that the objective victory of globalized capitalism is a destructive, aggressive practice,' Badiou asserts. We can only shrug, since of course, *for you* (collectively), that is simply true. Its successes are your defeats, and reciprocally. No one is being educated by any of this. We have, not so very long ago, menaced each other with thermonuclear warheads, and burnt down states still more recently.

The stakes, on both sides, are absolute. There is—most probably—*nothing* we would not do, were it still necessary, in order to prevail against each other. 'Victory', 'defeat'—these are Badiou's words, even if—for no reason at all—*war* is not, at first, although it soon will be.

Let us explicate, then, that which Badiou leaves still partially implicit. *We do not care about Islam*. No one does—at least no one we care about, but only 'fascists'. For the industrialized world, it is never more than an annoyance, and more typically a complex opportunity to be exploited, a weapon to be directed at those whose antagonism is respected. Having failed at modernity with a comprehensiveness that approaches the comedic, it has been many centuries since Islam has had any kind of serious claim upon history to lose—so 'a whole section of the global population is counted for nothing', inevitably. We can parasitize Badiou's shallowly-buried contempt without qualification: 'it's fascization that islamizes, not Islam that fascizes'. We will decide upon the way to categorize their refusal of our categorizations. Your coldness is tested by this joke.

It is not that religion is quite nothing, of course, even for Badiou, at his most French. Not *originally*, in any case. 'Religion can perfectly well act as an identitarian sauce for all of this, precisely in so far as it is a suitably anti-Western referent. But as we have seen, in the final analysis, the origin of these youths doesn't matter much, their spiritual or religious origin, as they say, and so on.' (It 'is counted

for nothing'.) 'What counts is the choice they have made about their frustration' (we decide). 'And they will rally to the mixture of corruption and sacrificial and criminal heroism because of the subjectivity that is theirs, not because of their Islamic conviction. What is more, we have been able to see that, in most cases, islamization is terminal rather than inaugural.' Nihilistic individuals, seduced into 'fascism', articulating their motivations in words that count for nothing, pathetic existentialist communists with false consciousness, malicious punks…if there are some further resources of contempt that might be added to this analysis, they will not be easy to find. Which is not at all to suggest that we encounter anything problematic here, or in need of rectification.

It could easily have been some other faith that provided this 'terminus', we are expected to accept (unless the concession to 'a suitably anti-Western referent' is the clue to a more persuasive—and decorously unspoken—claim). All right, we accept. For the sake of moving forward, we accept it, despite the extraordinary deformation of historical evidence required to do so. Let us pretend that our Jihadi 'fascists' are only randomly differentiated from Buddhists or Confucians, in order to proceed to the identities that more immediately concern us.

Those dead Parisian youngsters cannot be 'counted for nothing' quite so easily. They would have certainly done some capitalism, even despite themselves, and also – being young and French—quite

probably some communism, in addition, so they matter to 'us', at least a little. The young Jihadi 'fascists' who slaughtered them, in contrast—with nothing to make but a distraction—are nothing at all, to either of us. That saddens Badiou, rhetorically, and tactically. 'Their own life did not count. And since their own lives did not count, the lives of others meant nothing to them either.' *Look what globalized capitalism did to them*. Perhaps we should turn our attention to this far more serious, historically-productive monstrosity, before we upset people—gratuitously—with our unfathomable *and entirely mutual* indifference.

> Let's recapitulate. We have a contemporary world structure dominated by the triumph of globalised capitalism. We have a strategic weakening of states, and even an ongoing process of the capitalist withering away of states. And thirdly, we have new practices of imperialism that tolerate, and even encourage in certain circumstances, the butchering and the annihilation of states.

The main story of recent times has been 'the liberation of liberalism'—the freeing of capitalism—Badiou insists. (His preferred identity lies in insisting this.)

> To succumb to excitement about the empiricity of 'Capitalist globalization', in its scandalous singularity, is to thrill to its

vast annoyance, rather than its universal disaster

This *Thing*—the Great Foe—is not devoid of identity, however embarrassing it may be to explicitly acknowledge that fact (i.e. its factuality as such). To succumb to excitement about the empiricity of 'Capitalist globalization', in its scandalous singularity, is to thrill to its vast annoyance, rather than its universal disaster. Yet it is, *as everyone clearly recognizes*, an Anglophone global affliction that disturbs 'us', and an Anglophone ideological negligence that has 'counted for nothing' those without any productive part to play in its expansion. The *major* enemy is Anglophone, Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-American—'Anglo-Jewish', it will inevitably be said, if not by Badiou then by innumerable others, including especially the Islamic 'fascists' whose sensitivities refuse to be dulled on the point. It is, in any case, the positive ethnic constituency primarily identified with 'the liberation of liberalism' when this is acknowledged with coarse realism. No one gets to see how *peculiar* this thing is from nowhere. Its critics, we can confidently—if indelicately—speculate, have been concretely offended. They have been 'wounded'—and not *only* so very recently.

Of course, there could be nothing more *gauche* than to articulate ideological criticism in the voice of national resentment. From the perspective of philosophy, to speak in the name of *any* positive identity—even one far more fashionable than the nation and its

associated ethnic categories—is a simple disgrace. Selected identities might be exalted from a distance, in approximate proportion to their transgressive or victimological status, but every elite intellectual understands profoundly—if often only implicitly—that ontic definition is *dirt*.

Badiou is fastidious, therefore, in avoiding all temptation to self-identification in less than universal terms. His 'discursive position' depends upon his identity as a proud communist, who merely happens to be French. There is a cost to be paid for this, in honesty—or realism—first of all. A necrotic collectivist utopianism does not constitute a plausible site of enunciation, and no one believes that it does. It is perhaps for this reason that Badiou refrains from quite closing the door onto a certain nuanced 'patriotism', even if his catastrophist narrative demands that it is held ajar only in a mode of nostalgia (and one that is not wholly devoid of bitterness). What France *was*, as a revolutionary power, is still affirmed, in a tone at once tragic and philosophical, drawing the requisite quantum of detachment from both:

> France, what is singular about France—because if there are French values, we must ask what is singular about them—is the revolutionary tradition. Republican first of all, from the '89 revolution. And then socialist, anarchosyndicalist, communist, and finally leftist, all of this between 1789 and,

> let's say, 1976. […] But all that's over. It's over. France can no longer be represented today in any credible way as the privileged site of a revolutionary tradition. Rather, it is characterised by a singular collection of identitarian intellectuals.

The surrender of France to the identitarian vice is but part of the more comprehensive defeat. Yet the dramatic quality of Badiou's stance here should not blind us to what it evades. The French accent in what he has to say—both before and after this passage—extends far beyond his lament for the nation's withered revolutionary vocation. The ethnic identity that speaks in his words encompasses, among many other things, a specific mode of universal aspiration, a secular faith 'freed'—contemptuously—of religious trappings, and a firm confidence in the moral dignity of the State. There has only been one 'revolution' of the kind he inherits as a model, and it was French. It identified reason with revolutionary innovation—to a degree commonly found amusing beyond the Gallic cultural sphere, despite its menacing incarnation in an armed re-origination of the state, from first principles. Naturally, these 'first principles' were already a dismissal of the old religion, through their very originality, and also an exaltation of philosophy—as smelted in the flames of insurrection. They were the monsters bred from Descartes's methodically exacerbated, artificial nightmare, released by a passage through zero

(radical doubt), in which organic tradition was immolated upon the altar of the universal. They would—for instance—have decimalized time and geometry, and struggled earnestly to do so, repeatedly, without even a moment of pious reservation or residual doubt…but they failed. Modern history, from a particular but illuminating angle has been this failure, this defeat. *Our Wound is Not So Recent*.

> French identity, radically conceived, corresponds to a failed national project. Is it not, *in fact*, the supreme example of collective defeat in the modern period, and thus—concretely—of humiliation by capital?

French identity, radically conceived, corresponds to a failed national project. Is it not, *in fact*, the supreme example of collective defeat in the modern period, and thus—concretely—of humiliation by capital? It is the way the 'alternative' dies: locally, and unpersuasively, without dialectical engagement, dropping—neglected—into dilapidation. It can be inserted into a limited, yet not inconsiderable, series of identities making vehement claim to universality without provision of any effective criterion through which to establish it. When frustrated by the indifference of the outside, such objective pretentions tend to turn 'fascist' in exactly the sense Badiou employs. Their claims are shown—*demonstrably*—to be non-compelling beyond their own shrinking domain. They are ignored, so

they ‘act up’. A certain violent madness is easily spawned. Yet it is rarely more than a distraction.

> What we are suffering from is the absence, at the global scale, of a politics that would be detached entirely from the interiority of capitalism. It is the absence on the global scale of this politics that means that a young fascist appears, is created. It is not the young fascist, banditry, and religion, that create the absence of a politics of emancipation able to construct its own vision and to define its own practices. It is the absence of this politics that creates the possibility of fascism, of banditry, and of religious hallucinations.

This is Badiou’s analysis. The pin-pricks so far—and the far greater sufferings to come—result from an ethno-political defeat, in a long conflict still recalled by its stubborn survivors as a global drama of the Universal. It is a defeat that they imagine—or at least, still *claim* to imagine—might one day be undone. Who would deprive them of their old songs, and strange flags, and wounded dreams?

> The ‘liberation of liberalism’ has scarcely begun

Spite, or triumphalism, are identitarian confusions, extravagances, and also simply errors that *we* cannot afford. Our war is far less comprehensively won than theirs is lost. The adversaries that

matter—*real fascists*—have controlled the commanding heights of our societies since the New Deal. The techno-economic dispersion of power remains radically incomplete. Sino-capitalism—momentarily trembling—has yet to re-make the world. The 'liberation of liberalism' has scarcely begun. None of this is a concern for Badiou, however, or for the Islamists. It belongs to another story, and—for this is the ultimate, septically enflamed wound—as it runs forwards, ever faster, it is not remotely theirs.

1. http://www.theglobalist.com/france-and-globalization/.

2016

Rhizomes

After the counter-revolution, when the most ludicrous Lysenkoists have been cast down from power, it will be necessary to undertake a scrupulous examination of horizontal genetic transfer. Among the stream of data received from Existoon on the topic, this line of inquiry is definitely notable. The phenomenon in question is introduced well here:

Within our bodies resides a dynamic population of microbes forming a symbiotic super-organism with whom we have co-evolved.

Recent investigations indicate that these microbes majorly impact on cognitive function and fundamental behavior patterns, such as social interaction and stress management. The collective microbiome comprises a myriad of bacteria of approximately 10^14 cells, containing 100 times the number of genes of the human genome. Despite evolution of this microbiome for 500 million years, only recent advances in sequencing technology have allowed us to appreciate the full complexity of the host–microbe interrelationship. The gut microbiota is a highly developed organ of immense metabolic complexity and has approximately the same weight as the human brain. It is now clear that the gut microbiota plays a key role in the life and health of the host by protecting against pathogens, metabolizing dietary nutrients and drugs, and influencing the absorption and distribution of dietary fat. However, the influence of the microbiota extends beyond the gastrointestinal tract, playing a major role in the development and functioning of the central nervous system (CNS). Among the many substances produced by the gut microbiota are key central neurotransmitters whose influence extends beyond the enteric nervous system to the brain. [See original for references.]

Under present cultural conditions, in which the imperatives for wishful thinking — and even raw, institutionally mandated dishonesty — are so extraordinary, I doubt that significant cognitive resources can be spared from the primary task of defending basic

Darwinism against the aggressions of Cathedral religious ideology. That does not mean the rhizomatic (lateral-reticulated) model has been addressed with any detailed adequacy, but only that, in a ruined culture, its time has not yet come. Perhaps the Chinese can get on with it in the interim …

ADDED: Contagious insanity (via).

April 17, 2015

BLOCK 3 - POLITICAL THEORY

CHAPTER ONE - THE BASICS

On Power

Power is an Idea. It is exactly what it is thought to be.

Even among pre-civilized social animals, where the temptation to confuse power with *force* is strongest, the need to demonstrate force is only sporadic, and wherever force is not continuously demonstrated, power has arisen.

That is how dominance distinguishes itself from predation. On occasions, no doubt, a predator dominates its prey, convincing a struggling herbivore that *resistance is futile*, and its passage into nourishment is already, virtually, over. Even in these cases, however, a predator does not seek to install an enduring dominion. It matters not at all that its command of irresistible force be recognized beyond the moment of destruction. There is no social relationship to establish.

Even the most rudimentary society requires something more. The economy of force has to be institutionalized, and power — perfectly coincident with the Idea of power — is born. When power is tested, driven to resort to force, or regress to it, the idea has already slipped,

its weakness exposed.

Mere dominance has to regularly re-assert itself, rebuilding itself out of force. Under civilized conditions, in contrast, power is exempted from the test of force, and thus realizes itself consummately. It becomes magic and religion, perfectly identified with its apprehension, as a radiant assumption.

Power is thus profoundly paradoxical. Its truth is inextricable from a derealization, so that when it is practically interrogated, by forces determined to excavate its reality, it tends to nothing.

Even the force that power calls upon, when pressed to demonstrate or realize itself, has to be spell-bound to its idea. Will the generals obey? Will the soldiers shoot? It is power, and not force, that decides. No surprise, therefore, that power can evaporate like the snow-slopes of a volcano, as if instantaneously, when an eruption of force is scarcely more than a rumble. Power is the eruption *not happening*, far more than the eruption being contained. (Equally, anarchy is the question of power being practically posed, before it is any kind of 'solution'.)

To conceive economic power as wealth, is to misconstrue it as (rationalized) force, and thus to miss the Idea. 'True' economic power is a thoroughly derealized yet authoritative standard and store of value, as instantiated — exclusively — in fiat currency. Monetary signs that are not backed by anything beyond the 'credit' (or credibility) of the State are the tokens of pure, supremely idealized

power in its economic form. They symbolize the effective — because untested — suppression of anarchy. They live through the Idea, and die with it.

Those who recognize the completion of power in an Idea, celebrants and antagonists alike, have no reason to object to its belated baptism as *the Cathedral*: our contemporary political appropriation of numinous authority, served by an academic, journalistic, judicial, and administrative clerisy, prominently including the priesthood of fiat adoration and financial central planning. There is no macroeconomics that is not Cathedral liturgy, no confidence or 'animal spirits' independent of its devotions, no economic cataclysm that is not simultaneously a crisis of faith. A single Idea is at stake.

In macroeconomics, as in politics more generally, only one (systematically inhibited) question remains: *Do we believe?* Well, do we?

ADDED: Belief drain (via)

April 25, 2013

On Chaos

Turbulence is nonlinear dynamism, so remarking upon it very quickly becomes reflexive. In any conflict, an emergent meta-conflict divides

those who embrace and reject the conflict *as such*, and 'meta' is in reality reflexivity, partially apprehended. So ignore the sides of the war, momentarily. What about war?

Moldbug really doesn't like it. The closest he ever comes to a wholly-arbitrary axiom — comparable, at least superficially, to the libertarian Non-Aggression Principle — is exhibited in this context. Following some preliminary remarks, his first exposition of the formalist ideology begins: "The basic idea of formalism is just that the main problem in human affairs is violence." As with Hobbes, the horror of war is the foundation of political philosophy.

This is by no means a trivial decision. With avoidance of war identified as the fundamental principle of political order, an ultimate criterion of (secular) value is erected, in simultaneity with a framework of genetic and structural explanation. Good government is defined as an effective process of pacification, attaining successively more highly-tranquilized levels (and stages) of order:

... there are four levels of sovereign security. These are peace, order, law, and freedom. Once you have each one, you can work on the next. But it makes no sense to speak of order without peace, law without order, or freedom without law.

Peace is simply the absence of war. The Dictator's first goal is to achieve peace, preferably honorably and with victory. There is no telling what wars New California will be embroiled in at the time of its birth, so I will decline to discuss the matter further. But in war, of

course, there is no order; war is pure chaos. Thus we see our first rule of hierarchy.

In this model order and chaos are strictly reciprocal. Suppression of chaos and establishment of order are alternative, interchangeable formulations of the same basic political reality. There is no productivity proper to government other than the 'good war' directed against the Cthulhu-current of chaos, violence, conflict, turmoil, and inarticulate anarchy.

No surprise, then, that widespread dismay results from outbreaks of conflict across the digital tracts of neoreaction. How could any Moldbug sympathizer — or other right-oriented observer — not recognize in these skirmishes the signs of anarcho-chaotic disturbance, as if the diseased tentacles of Cthulhu were insinuated abominably into the refuge of well-ordered sociability? Beyond the protagonists themselves, such scraps trigger a near-universal clamor for immediate and unconditional peace: Forget about who is right and who wrong, *the conflict itself is wrong*.

I don't think so.

Entropy is toxic, but *entropy production is roughly synonymous with intelligence*. A dynamically innovative order, of any kind, does not suppress the production of entropy — it instantiates an efficient mechanism for entropy dissipation. Any quasi-Darwinian system — i.e. any machinery that actually works — is nourished by chaos, exactly insofar as it is able to rid itself of failed experiments. The

techno-commercial critique of democratized modernity is not that too much chaos is tolerated, but that not enough is able to be shed. The problem with bad government, which is to say with *defective mechanisms of selection*, is an inability to follow Cthulhu far enough. It is from turbulence that all things come.

The question *Outside in* would pose to NRx is not 'how can we suppress chaos?' but rather 'how can we learn to tolerate chaos at a far higher intensity?' Dynamic order is not built deliberately upon a foundation of amicable fraternity. It emerges spontaneously as a consequence of effective entropy-dissipation functions. The primary requirement is *sorting*.

To *sort ourselves out* takes a chronic undertow of war and chaos. Initially, this will be provided by the soft and peripheral shadow-fights we have already seen, but eventually NRx will be strong enough to thrive upon cataclysms — or it will die. The harsh machinery of Gnon wins either way.

Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.

ADDED: Highly on point (with even a smidgen of Hobbes).

April 25, 2014

Politics

Following a typical HBD Bibliography twitter intervention

(paraphrased: “educate yourself”), a professor of Global Liberal Studies turned up to engage in activity that can be technically described as “hooting”. The pattern of symbolic behavior that then manifested cannot, of course, be reduced to the expectations of primatology. If it seems like an entirely predictable assertion of dominance, as found among all the great apes, something is surely being missed. That at least is the claim now being made (decorated by a little immediate status signaling):

> @Outsideness @HBDBibliography Author thinks you don't understand article. Doesn't deny variation (I teach 19th c. history of science btw).
>
> — Michael Rectenwald (@drrectenwald) September 24, 2014

> @Outsideness @HBDBibliography Most likely you're reducing the political to the biological, a typical kind of reductionism but also mistaken.
>
> — Michael Rectenwald (@drrectenwald) September 24, 2014

The error of mistaking this expert hooting for the first step in an argument was too tempting to resist. After all, if a professor of Global Liberal Studies deigns to teach you about the limits of possible biological understanding, it is only polite to listen attentively.

Unfortunately, certain monkey juices were triggered by the chest-thumping of GLS-prof., and I descended quickly into obstreperousness:

> @drrectenwald @HBDBibliography Politics has emergent principles (game theory), but it's as reducible to biology as bio is to chemistry.
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) September 24, 2014

> @drrectenwald @HBDBibliography … Whenever a supervenient level seems 'irreducible' it's because our substrate theory is too crude.
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) September 24, 2014

Uh oh, look what's happening now — it's ~~gibbering monkey business~~ political dialectic. GLS-prof. isn't being even nominally respected, there's nothing remotely like a "please mount my butt you hairy master" moment taking place, and it's not hard to see that GLS-p. isn't getting enough of those from anywhere, so he's kind of desperate for a random dopamine hit. Time to really make it clear that politics transcends biology, and anybody who thinks the contrary better bend over quickly for a piece of hierarchically-clarifying ass-punishment:

> @Outsideness @HBDBibliography OK Kurzweil, or is it E.O.

> Wilson you're mimicking? I suppose there's a "D" gene for Democrat, and an "R" …
>
> — Michael Rectenwald (@drrectenwald) September 24, 2014

Translation: *So which serious ~~alpha monkey like me~~ person owns you as their bitch? Politics is nothing like primate dominance. Dumbass.*

> @drrectenwald @HBDBibliography You're right, what does an idiot like E.O. Wilson know about Global Liberal Studies?
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) September 24, 2014

Translation: *[*sarcastic counter-hoot*]*

> @Outsideness @HBDBibliography Wilson is brilliant. But I don't need *you* to tell me what he and others like him think. Presumptuous much?
>
> — Michael Rectenwald (@drrectenwald) September 24, 2014

Translation: *My buddy PROFESSOR Wilson wouldn't even use you as a doormat — so why am I even talking to you, impertinent gamma wretch? It's distracting me from serious politics and stuff.*

There has to be some ~~chimpanzee ass-play~~ politics that isn't quite

this disgustingly stupid, but I'm guessing — not a lot.

Note: "Michael Rectenwald is professor in Global Liberal Studies at New York University. He is the author of numerous essays and six books." He is widely respected by his peers in the field.

ADDED: After posting this I worried a little that it was too harsh. The guy was probably just having a bad day. After all, no one "paid to write and think" by a (somewhat) prestigious university could possibly engage in these self-parodying dominance chimp-outs on a regular basis, surely? Ooops:

> @AlbertKropp @HBDBibliography @ad_bestias @Outsideness None of you are worthy to wipe my ass, let alone sit in my class.
>
> — Michael Rectenwald (@drrectenwald) September 26, 2014

September 24, 2014

Order and Value

A piece of machinery that reduces (local) disorder has value. It might be a functional police force, a catallactic economic arrangement, or a sociopolitical mechanism implementing dynamic geography (or

Patchwork, 1, 2, 3, 4). Others might be listed. Any complex adaptive system works like this (until it ceases working). Since Schrödinger, it has been taken as an abstract definition of life. In certain strands of philosophy, it has also been taken as the complete, rigorous meaning of a *machine* (as counterposed to a 'gadget' – which works only within a larger machinic assemblage). Only by exporting entropy does anything of even minimal complexity get to continue its existence. The production of order is functionality in its most elevated, teleological sense.

A piece of rhetoric which merely celebrates order, as something nice to have, is worth nothing in itself. "We want order" is the "give us free stuff" slogan of intellectually degenerated reaction. When examined closely, it is indistinguishable from political pan-handling. (Democracy has taught everyone how to beg.) It is unlikely that even the most radically degraded libertarian would be shameless enough to consider "wealth is good, poverty is bad" anything more than an expression of sub-comic emotional incontinence. "Order is good, chaos is bad" is a slogan of exactly equivalent merit. "We want order" is just "we want money" at a superior level of generality. Monkeys want peanuts, but we are reluctant to dignify their hungry hooting with the label 'political philosophy'.

Entropy dissipation is a *problem*. It might quite reasonably be considered *the* problem. Any serious social theory is respected insofar as it elicits the question: *So how is entropy dissipated?* The

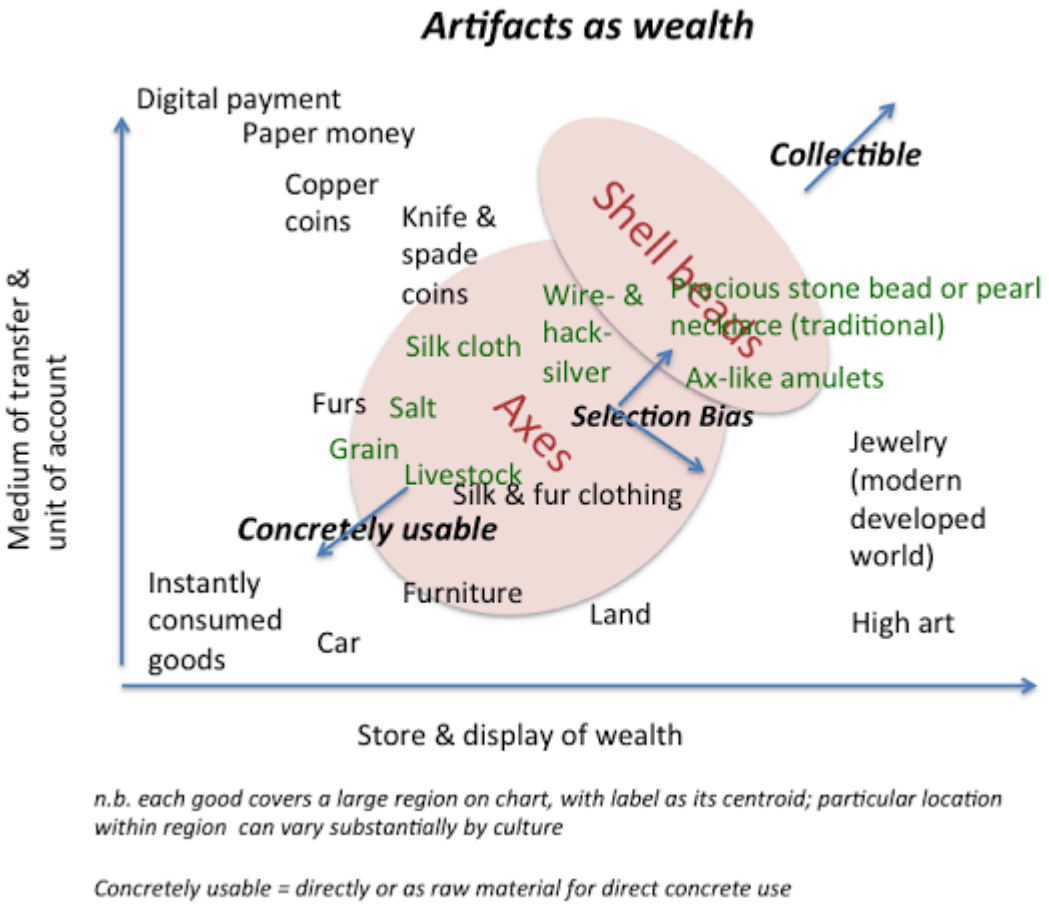
main current of Anglophone intellectual culture focuses tightly upon it, in a broad lineage from Newtonian mechanics, the Scottish Enlightenment, the science of heat, classical economics, and Darwinian naturalism, into theories of complexity, distributed systems, dynamic networks, and productive multiplicities. *Spontaneous order* is the consistent topic. 'Spontaneous' means only: *Does not presuppose that which it is tasked with explaining*. If the genesis of order is not being theorized, order is merely being assumed, and then consumed. The difference is between a supply side problematic ("how is order practically produced?") and an empty demand ("we want more order"). The former is *industrial*, the latter simply tyrannical, when it is anything at all beside vacuous noise.

Unless a pol-econ. theory can contribute to an explanation of the *production of order* (dissipation of entropy), it is wasting everyone's time. "But I really *want* order" is just silliness. It's astounding that it could ever be thought otherwise.

March 7, 2016

Wealth Space

From Szabo's critically-important exploration of collectibles:



At the extreme upper left-hand corner is modern money – used purely as a medium of exchange and obligation satisfaction, and with high velocity, typically several transactions per month. The predominant such media in a culture also usually becomes its of account. At the opposite (southeast) extreme are pure stores of value – seldom if ever alienated, they usually change ownership only at death. At the northeast extreme are pure collectibles – a low-

velocity (a few to a few dozen transfers per human lifetime) medium of obligation satisfaction and exchange, but also a store and display of wealth. At the southwest extremely are immediate consumables, such as food obtained from foraging in cultures that do not preserve or store their food.

September 3, 2016

CHAPTER TWO - DISTRIBUTION, FRAGMENTATION AND TRUST

Pattern Recognition

There has been enough productive history to know what functional social systems look like, and the basic common factor is obvious. Institutions advance by *substituting for trust*.

(To the extent we still have any of these things …)

— We have market capitalism because businesspeople can't be trusted.

— We have experimental science because neither truth intuitions nor scientists can be trusted.

— We have constitutional republicanism because neither political leaders nor the citizenry can be trusted.

— We have freedom of conscience because priests can't be trusted.

— We have common law because neither legislators nor judges can be trusted.

— We have the blogosphere because the media can't be trusted.

— We have gold coins buried in the garden because bankers can't be

trusted.
— We have basements packed with semi-automatic rifles because state law enforcement can't be trusted.

Siding with intelligence *has nothing at all to* do with trusting, liking, or respecting intelligent people. It is intelligent people, typically, who run the engines of stupidity. 'Trust, but verify' is politely euphemistic, and — in truth — wholly inadequate. Distrust, and test, test, test … to destruction wherever possible.

Three theses:
(1) The robust sophistication (or design quality) of any society or social institution is inversely proportional to the the trust it demands. This is not, of course, to be confused with the trust it *earns*.
(2) In any society capable of institution building, distrust is the principal driver of innovation. Systematization and automation, in general, incarnate distrust.
(3) Productive distrust reaches its apotheosis in the Internet, which routes around everything and everybody that has ever been believed.

March 18, 2013

Quote notes (#68)

Pat Buchanan asks: *Is Europe Cracking Up?* His tour of disintegration

takes in Ukraine, France, Britain, Belgium and Spain, but …

… the most startling news on the nationalist front last week came in Venice and the Veneto region, where 89 percent of a large turnout in a non-binding referendum voted to secede from Italy and re-establish the Venetian republic that vanished in 1866.
Exulted Luca Zaia of the separatist Northern League, "The will for secession is growing very strong. We are only at the Big Bang of the movement — but revolutions are born of hunger and we are now hungry. Venice can now escape."
The proposed "Repubblica Veneta" would embrace five million inhabitants of Veneto. Should it succeed in seceding, Lombardy and Trentino would likely follow, bringing about a partition of Italy. Sardinia is also reportedly looking for an exit.

Buchanan's preferred term 'nationalism' is ambiguous in this context, since it can mean either integration or disintegration. After all, it was Italian 'nationalism' that built this self-dismantling monster. Increasingly, it's the fissile aspect — nationality as ethnic splintering and *escape* from something larger — that's driving the process. How many micro-nationalities remain as yet undiscovered?

ADDED: A (libertarian-secessionist) voice from Italy.

March 26, 2014

Wolfendale v. Urban Future

Pete Wolfendale has a version here. There were some threading issues, so this is the *Urban Future* version:

> An appropriately derisive analysis of neoreaction: http://t.co/77M0JohrMd
>
> — pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

> As I mentioned at the #accelerationism workshop yesterday: old school fascism uses capitalism as a means to nostalgic anti-modernism…
>
> — pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

> …whereas neoreactionaries propose nostalgic anti-modernism as a means to defend capitalism. If nothing else this is sillier than fascism.
>
> — pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

> @deontologistics I realize the neofeudal types make it easy for you, but this constant reversion to BDSM political dialectics …
>
> — Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

> @deontologistics … is an evasion of the real challenge: Exit over Voice. https://t.co/PswTiiCXHm

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

Modernity threatening your libertarian fantasies of free-wheeling capitalist accumulation? Why not try monarchism?
— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics Both poles of the ideological spectrum have attachments to (distinct) ideals of emancipation.
— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics … Neither will abandon them causally, however much they are derided as 'silly'.
— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

[Not “causally” but “casually”.]

@deontologistics They've been watching too much Game of Thrones basically.
— pjebleak (@pjebleak) May 24, 2014

@pjebleak It’s more like they’ve read Neil Stephenson’s Snow Crash/Diamond Age and thought: “that’s a dystopian diaspora I can get behind!”
— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak Diamond Age is a dystopia? (It's

easy to see why no meeting of minds is likely here.)

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak It does a good job of showing the difference between advancement in industrial technology and social technology.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak The human organism is highly write-protected, so 'social technology' is something of a misleading metaphor.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak The organism, yes, but hardly the social structures that are composed on top of it. Most of the write-protection there…

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak …is itself a form of social technology (e.g., Nietzschean ascetic ideals, etc.).

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak 'Social structures' are to some considerable extent hard-coded in organisms — that's what "social animal" means.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak No, 'social animal' means the capacity to interface so as to create social structures.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak There's a crucial difference between saying 'there is a structure of social structure' and inferring from this that…

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak …particular social structures are hard-wired.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak This is a Levi-Strauss argument that I don't find particularly convincing.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak The left is always going to maximally emphasize the plasticity of social forms, the right the opposite.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak … It would be deluded to assume

that such emphases will pass as uncontroversial outside their own constituency.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak It's a simple logical point. The question of how much social structure is encoded is empirical, and well, it doesn't…

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak …look to be all that much.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak It looks like a lot to me.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak To use @benedict's preferred terms, you're confusing generatively entrenched social platforms with biological codes.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Biological codes determine a highly restrictive landscape of functional social models.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict … Societies explore that landscape, at different speeds. Attractor basins usually capture them.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict Biological necessity is the last resort of scoundrels.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Your team will no doubt agree with you.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict So the tautology goes.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Over-emphasizing social plasticity is a standard utopian error.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict Yes, unless it is a call to experimentally explore a wider space of possible social technologies.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict I'm very supportive of that. As long as it's based on Dynamic Geography, with exit, and local failure.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Communist social experimentation (for e.g.), if properly localized, would be an excellent thing to see.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Reciprocal liberation to try different things out is an attractive deal (but not holding my breath).

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict You definitions of social experimentation are pretty archaic though. Fundamentally about competition…

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Competition is 'archaic'? I thought you guys believed in primitive communism.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict See next tweet. Internet glitch.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict …between geographically distinct nation states or analogs thereof. Biology is hardly that limiting.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Are you ruling out the possibility of competitive and non-competitive options, side-by-side?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict … If so, then of course there's no possible deal to be made.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Split up. Use dynamic geography to radicalize our experiments. Quit universalizing. Is it that hard?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict … The whole point is not having to agree. (Because we won't.)

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict Quit universalising sociologically, by universalising biologically?

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Quit universalizing in general. Let each society believe what it wants. Do your own thing.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict 'Each society' is where the biologically justified archaisms lie.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Dynamic geography would make a society a legacy of revealed preferences. No biological theory needed.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict You seem to be justifying the geopolitical war of all against all as the only legitimate form of disagreement.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict If there's a master-narrative being imposed above geo-political fragmentation itself, this won't work.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict Indeed, it’s pretty important to see that struggle between fragmented poleis is not disagreement at all.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict This 'struggle' business is coming entirely from you. Why does dynamic geography imply struggle?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict Competition bottoms out in struggle unless limited by a competitive framework. Is DG such a framework?

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict It seems to me that we can develop better (socio-technological) frameworks for disagreement than fragmentation.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict That isn't going to happen, because the "frameworks" you like will remain massively controversial.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict Unlike GEOPOLITICAL FRAGMENTATION.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Sadly, it's going to be messy. It seems the Left won't ever tolerate anything it can't control.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict Because calling for your own personal nation state to secure your personal freedom isn't being a control freak?

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Freedom is control freakery? Anyway, at least the left logic is clear.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict Thinking that freedom is getting everything your own way is pretty much control

freakery, yes.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

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@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict A laissez-faire capitalist Phyle would rather ignore its communist neighbor than 'struggle' with it.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict And now we're back to the benefits of our preferred phylums.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict But you don't want to be there? Why?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict If the benefits of DG depend upon the characteristics of the Phyle's you prefer then you're not really…

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict …providing an argument for DG now, are you?

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict The argument for DG is that every Phyle can do what it wants, succeed or fail, experiment.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict Including struggle with one another outside the bounds of any framework for disagreement?

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict That's as good as it's going to get. It's hardly likely that every crazed experiment will work out.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Struggle, struggle, struggle … it's exhausting. Won't your Phyle have anything better to do?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict And we're back to Phyles rather than DG.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Use whatever language you like for a unit of geopolitical fragmentation.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict If you're arguing that human nature necessitates geopolitical fragmentation, but aren't willing to discuss…

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict …the worst possible outcomes of such fragmentation (i.e., struggle over disagreement) you seem to have a bit…

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict …of a double standard going on.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict At least it's clear what this is about. You guys want to strengthen the dialectical net. We want out.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict We both know this won't be settled by argument. It will be settled by escape

attempts, succeed or fail.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict Perhaps, but this hardly invalidates the argument, especially given the supposed importance of 'disagreement'.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict What argument? The argument that arguments have to be settled before anyone is let out of the room?

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict That IS communism. I'm seriously OK with people doing that stuff, but only if they localize it.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict The argument that anyone should be allowed to appropriate the resources necessary to build their personal ark.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict I'm OK with laissez faire capitalism on personal arks. Not so much with its use to

justify their construction.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict I'm truly grateful for this discussion, because it's explaining all the blood-spatter down the road.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict So it goes. Blood-spatter. First up against the wall. etc. etc.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict The necessity for 'struggle' is your schtick. We just want Out.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict … Free Exit from our side to your communist utopia, so no "up-against-the-wall" necessary.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict We would, of course, replace all domestic political argument with "if you want communism, go there".

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict And the dynamic geography comes with guaranteed open borders, freedom of movement, and transit costs?

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict "Transit costs"? Oh, come on! Immigration freedoms, I imagine, would be non-universal.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Whatever can be done to build Exit security, should be. It's you guys who have the problem record there

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict This makes Exit a political framework, not simply a one off event. Overarching, not parochial.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Yes, it's complicated. Probably inevitable people would need to choose their Phyle carefully.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict If they screw up, and get locked into a North Korea, there's not much that could be done.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict … If the historical record is anything to go by, this won't be a problem for commercial republics.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict Collectivist experiments, on the other hand? That will be for those who go that route to sort out.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

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@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict It's the fact that you're absolutely determined not to allow Exit that makes the nastiness inevitable.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict I'm really not absolutely determined. There are speculative scenarios that could work. But it distorts…

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@UF_blog @pjebleak @benedict …the discussion of more realistic political possibilities like a warped ideological lens.

— pete wolfendale (@deontologistics) May 24, 2014

@deontologistics @pjebleak @benedict This is the meta-politics of the 21st century. The warpage has scarcely begun.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) May 24, 2014

May 24, 2014

Counterfactual Cyberspace

Internet retro-futurism is taken to a whole new level by Andrew L. Russell:

What happened to the "beautiful dream" [of Open Systems Interconnection]? While the Internet's triumphant story has been well documented by its designers and the historians they have worked with, OSI has been forgotten by all but a handful of veterans of the Internet-OSI standards wars. To understand why, we need to dive into the early history of computer networking, a time when the vexing problems of digital convergence and global interconnection were very much on the minds of computer scientists, telecom

engineers, policymakers, and industry executives. And to appreciate that history, you'll have to set aside for a few minutes what you already know about the Internet. Try to imagine, if you can, that the Internet never existed. …

The article is rich enough to support a number of take-away lessons. The most compelling from the perspective of this blog: the real benefits of bypassing discussion are huge. We got a TCP/IP Internet because OSI was discussing the future far too widely and comprehensively. The route that avoids the talking shop is the one history tends to take.

December 8, 2014

Distrust

Every *public* institution of any value is based on distrust.

That's an elementary proposition, as far as this blog is concerned. It's worth stating nakedly, since it is probably less obvious to others. That much follows from it is unlikely to be controversial, even among those who find it less than compelling, or simply repulsive.

One major source of obscurity is the category of 'high trust cultures' — with which neoreactionaries tend naturally to identify. There is plenty to puzzle over here, admittedly. This post will make no serious effort to even scratch the surface of the questions that

arise. Instead, it contends that the culture primarily commended for its trustfulness has been conspicuously innovative in the development of trustless institutions. These begin with the foundations of Occidental reason, and especially the rigorous criterion of logical and mathematical *proof*. A proof substitutes for trust. In place of a simple declaration, it presents (a demanded) *demonstration*. The *compliant response to radical distrust* has epitomized Western conceptions of rationality since classical antiquity.

The twin pillars of industrial modernity (i.e. of capitalism) are trustless institutions. Natural science is experimental because it is distrustful, and thus demonstrative. It raises the classical demand for proof to a higher level of empirical skepticism, by extending distrust even to rational constructions, in cases where they cannot be critically tested against an experimental criterion. Only pure mathematics, and the most scrupulously formalized logical propositions, escape this demand for replicable *evidence*. The ultimate ground of the natural scientific enterprise is the presupposition that *scientists should in no case be trusted*, except through their reproducible results. Anything that requires *belief* is not science, but something else. Similarly, the market mechanism is an incarnation of trustless social organization. *Caveat emptor*. Capitalists, like scientists, exist to be distrusted. Whatever of their works cannot survive testing to destruction in the market place

deservedly perish. Reputation, in its modern version, has to be produced through demonstration.

Prior to its demotic ruination — through positive trust in the people — distinctively modern republican governance was similarly founded in distrust. As formulated by John Adams (1772): "There is danger from all men. The only maxim of a free government ought to be to trust no man living with power to endanger the public liberty." It has not been an excess of distrust that has brought this sage recommendation to nought.

For those seeking higher authority, Psalm 118:8-9 (ESV): "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes." (My usual fanatical trust in the KJV betrayed me on this occasion.)

An appeal for trust is a reliably fatal failure mode for all public institutions. Trustless transaction is the future, and its name is Bitcoin. The deep cultural momentum is already familiar. *Total depravity* is the key to world historical predestination, and it is routed through the blockchain.

December 10, 2014

Trust Webs

The systems of governance native to the Internet Epoch are going

to emerge out of this. Anybody who is trying to build institutions today, of whatever kind*, would be wise to immerse themselves in the way this stuff works. It will take time to shape the order of the world, but it isn't going away. The same can very much *not* be said for the nation states of the Gutenberg Era, whose recession is already unmistakable.

Virtually speaking, there is nothing serious left for the Westphalian state to do. Of course, anybody expecting these relics to die tidily is almost certainly deluding themselves. Making the Westphalian order set the world to the torch. Its unmaking is unlikely to be much easier.

*[ahem]

ADDED: Related —

> Here's why bitcoin will be bigger than the internet http://t.co/CsxfUMvf3U via @businessinsider @xapo
>
> — Wences Casares (@wences) February 11, 2015

February 11, 2015

Quotable (#67)

Private property has no real legitimacy, argues David Graeber:

Basically, we assume that market relations are natural, but you need a huge institutional structure to make people behave the way that economists say they are "supposed" to behave. So, for example, think about the way the consumer market works. The market is supposed to work on grounds of pure competition. Nobody has moral ties to each other other than to obey the rules. But, on the other hand, people are supposed to do anything they can to get as much as possible off the other guy — but won't simply steal the stuff or shoot the person.

Historically, that's just silly; if you don't care at all about a guy, you might as well steal his stuff. In fact, they're encouraging people to act essentially how most human societies, historically, treated their enemies — but to still never resort to violence, trickery or theft. Obviously that's not going to happen. You can only do that if you set up a very strictly enforced police force.

In the absence of a moral bond, who's going to stick to the rules, when they could cheat? It's a consistent viewpoint, in its own way.

Merge with me morally, or I'm just going to steal your stuff. And people wonder where the impulse to algorithmic governance comes from.

March 7, 2015

Convergence

Haidt: “We argue that the social conditions that promote complaints of oppression and victimization overlap with those that promote case-building **attempts to attract third parties**. When such social conditions are all present in high degrees, the result is a culture of victimhood in which individuals and groups display high sensitivity to slight, have **a tendency to handle conflicts through complaints to third parties**, and seek to cultivate an image of being victims who deserve assistance.”

Bitcoin: “What is needed is an electronic payment system based on cryptographic proof instead of trust, allowing any two willing parties to transact directly with each other **without the need for a trusted third party**.”

(XS emphasis in both.)

Insignificant coincidence? Or a key to the crucial conflict nodes of the 21st century?

This is the thesis I’m tempted by:

> … Abject dependence on "third parties" is the general form of civilizational decay.
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) September 9, 2015

September 9, 2015

Age of Fragmentation

More inflection point material, this time macro-political, and Europe-focused, beginning:

Perhaps the greatest academic growth area over the past twenty years or so has been "European integration studies", a field that has both analysed and boosted support for the European "project". Almost all of its practitioners have proceeded from the assumption that the process of integration is – must be – "irreversible". It is the intellectual equivalent of the principle of the European ***acquis communautaire*** *by which powers, once surrendered or pooled, cannot be retrieved. Or, more unkindly, one might see it as a "European Brezhnev doctrine", by which socialism, being inevitable, could not be allowed to fail in any country in which it was already established.*

But what if this is not so? What if, as the Croatian political scientist Josip Glaurdic, an expert on the collapse of Yugoslavia, once quipped, what we really need is a school of "European disintegration studies"?

…

(Don't be put off by the leftist publication credentials from reading the whole thing.)

November 10, 2015

Quote note (#211)

At Nathan Cook's new blog:

*Bitcoin is not a Marxist reification. Bitcoin reifies in the rare sense of '**ex nihilo**, actually create a physical object'. **Bitcoin reifies property**. Property before bitcoin is an abstraction, a social relation treated provisionally as an object, but never attaining that status (**Property is Impossible**). Bitcoin quite literally makes property into something physical. Anything that can store a private key and keep it secret, and can use it to create and emit transactions, can own Bitcoin. The relation 'X owns Bitcoin' is spatially local and temporally persistent; in other words, it more closely resembles relations like 'X is made of wood' or 'X weighs 20 kilograms' than it does relations like 'X is a dollar billionaire'. Property is possible—when property is Bitcoin.*

Prior to functional, distributed crypto, 'property' was nothing but confused political pleading. Now it's something else.

ADDED: Still a rocky road ahead. "What was meant to be a new, decentralised form of money that lacked 'systemically important institutions' and 'too big to fail' has become something even worse: a system completely controlled by just a handful of people. Worse still, the network is on the brink of technical collapse."

January 14, 2016

Twitter cuts (#112)

> What a mysterious people, that have two different words for Nation and State https://t.co/eifDuanDcI
> — Harry Stopes (@HarryStopes) April 29, 2016

The point doesn't really need decompressing, but just in case —

> @RichardHaass @nytimes we English speakers also have one word for nations and another for states. They are 'nations' and 'states'.
> — G.I. Poe (@Nevidge20) April 30, 2016

When a proposition nation serves as the global model of the state, such discriminations are easily blurred. The underlying stresses have become far more visible recently. (Language figures, ironically doubled, in the irruption of 'excessive' national questions.)

The last time such a mismatch was recognized, in the early 20th century, Wilsonian dreams seemed available, as a fix. After much subsequent unpleasantness, the problem was eclipsed. We can now see, however, that it never disappeared.

(If 'Nation State' is a pseudo-pleonasm, we can expect diagonal lines of political philosophy to open as it cracks.)

April 30, 2016

Proposition Nations

Xenosystems likes proposition nations so much it wants to see a *lot* more of them.

America is a problem for the world for two main (and conflicting) reasons:

1) Its proposition contains enough productive innovation to be scary. Independence war, foundational liberalism, constitutionally-restricted government, and *laissez-faire* capitalism have been a memetic-cocktail-from-hell for those in thrall to competitively-inferior ideas. But, undoing all of this, is the legacy of the American Civil War (in particular) —

2) The suppression of the propositional principle — i.e. geopolitical ideological sorting — under an idealization of national unity. Upon this pyre the liberal tradition has been incinerated, until it exists only as a charred parody of itself. The Proposition is by now little more than the State of the Union. Mandatory agreement, within an undivided territory, is policed by the democratic mechanism. *That we remain one* is left as the only strictly axiomatic propositional content (as the Trump and Sanders presidential candidacies in their different ways illustrate).

Spatial Metapolitics recommends that America do *both* Trumpist ethno-nationalism, *and* Sanderista democratic socialism, and a large number of other (more interesting) things, even also more stupid

ones, if such can be devised. The critical point is the precise inverse of the late-modern axiom: *As long as mandatory unity is dissolved, ideological tolerance can be extended without definite limit* — across a disintegrated territory.

First-order ideological preferences, elaborated under an assumption of dominant unity, are a trap *entirely irrespective of their specific content*.

Here's a proposition: *Abolish the Union.* Only disintegration is worth doing.

May 17, 2016

Quotable (#177)

The fatal illusion continues:

If every EU member were prepared to make concessions to the concerns of others, everyone could emerge better off.

Confusing integration with a global optimization process is the single most calamitous error of modern times.

July 6, 2016

Quote note (#337)

Hengest on Bill Bishop and Tiebout Sorting among the (in this case specifically Anglo-Saxon) nations of America:

Rather than [the] borders dissolving between cultures and populations, the various nations are actually becoming further differentiated with time. This concept is demonstrated in The Big Sort by Bill Bishop. Bishop argues that Americans are segregating themselves into like-minded geographic regions at increasing rates with the onset and ease of long-distance travel. Basically, the various Anglo-Saxon regions are more strongly becoming themselves.

If this is actually the trend, the motor of dynamic geography (running Patchwork-type geopolitical arrangements) should work fine.

There needs to be much more work done in the field of *Entropic and Negentropic Trends Emerging in Dynamic Social Distributions*. It would tell us who's going to win this thing.

March 1, 2017

Quote note (#343)

The new great divergence:

Increasing polarization, even fragmentation, of society is

becoming apparent in US politics. There is a sense that society is separating into parts, each of which is listening only to other members of that group. The separation between groups can enable them to deviate even further in values and perspectives. …

(Via.)

That's the process. Nothing else is necessary. The only task remaining is to accelerate it.

March 17, 2017

Disintegration

According to a certain construction of cultural history, to which the natural sciences have often seemed attached, religion is essentially conceived as pre-scientific naturalistic explanation. Seen this way, religions are comparatively primitive cosmologies. This is what makes them vulnerable to scientific progress. A Galileo, or a Darwin, advances into their core territory, mortally wounding them in the heart. A somewhat sociologically-indistinct notion of "science" is envisaged as religion's natural successor.

However plausible (or implausible) this narrative is found to be, it matters. By way of it, scientific ascendancy acquires its foundational myth. Crucially, this mythical power does not depend upon any kind of rigorous scientific validation. No one has ever been under

compulsion to put it to the test. Everything pre-modern — and even profoundly archaic — in the modernist enterprise runs through it. It provides a tacit infrastructure of deep belief.

To refer to "mythic science" is not positively skeptical, still less polemical. For scientific ideas to acquire the status of myth is a matter of cultural potency, supplementary to whatever epistemic validity they retain. Scientific concepts do not become any less scientific by also becoming mythic. They can, however, on occasions sustain mythic power disproportionate to their strictly scientific legitimacy. The dominating apex of a culture is some more-or-less scientific cosmology.

This is what the word "nature" has primordially conveyed. An ultimate object of cognitive affirmation is promoted through it. *This is what we believe*. Things are this way, and not another way (or only another way elsewhere).

We ask here, then, as innocent scientific pagans: *Which way are things?*

The best current cosmology is accelerationist, and disintegrationist. To put the matter crudely — and ultimately untenably — the expansion of the universe is speeding up, and apart. Rather than being decelerated by gravity, subsequent to an original explosion, the rate of cosmic inflation has increased. Some yet-unknown force is overwhelming gravity, and red-shifting all distant objects. Quite recently baptized "dark energy," this force is thought

to account for seventy percent of physical reality.

Compared to this strongly confirmed discovery of accelerating fragmentation, the notion of an underlying integral "universe" looks increasingly like an unsustainable mythological relic. "Unsustainable," that is, even in terms of consistent scientific myth, and also more practically.

The distance from which information can be received, or to which it can be broadcast, over any period of time has a boundary set by the speed of light. The space-time horizon of reality for any entity is determined by this "light-cone." Beyond it, there is only the absolutely incommunicable. A light-cone is thus, among other things, a strict delimitation of power projection, understood as practical unity. The process leads from general relativity to absolute disintegration.

In his intellectual history of relativistic physics,[1] Peter Gallison connects the problem of relativity to that of imperial management. Synchronization is the precondition for any sophisticated process of coordination. Even under (compact) terrestrial conditions, the extreme finitude of the speed of light posed a significant technical problem for governance at global-imperial scale. Telegraphic networks, in particular, demanded technical correction for relativistic effects.

By irresistible extrapolation, we can see that domination is only ever able to mask processes of escape. There can be no Cosmic

Imperium. Space does not tolerate it. This is merely a science fictionesque fact, until it is mythologized.

Dark energy is tearing the cosmos apart. Eventually its pieces will mutually depart from each others' light-cones. They will then be nothing to each other ever again. This is a finding of extraordinary consequence. At the greatest scale of empirical objectivity, unity has no future. The "universe" is an unrealistic model. Everything now known about the cosmos suggests that fragmentation is basic.

Cosmology thus provides a model of disintegration that is remarkable for its extremity. It characterizes pieces that have nothing at all except a shared past in common, propelled into absolute non-communication. No political conception of separation has ever yet reached this limit.

Some fascinating results quickly fall out of the extrapolation. The cosmological evidence our scientific tradition has been able to draw upon will eventually cease to be available. A future intelligent species could not build any comparable model of the universe upon empirical foundations. Whatever counted as the whole, for it, would in fact be only a fragment (we can already see). Distant galactic clusters would have become matters for sheer speculation. The very possibility of empirical science would have been demonstrably bounded in space and time.

Geoff Manaugh calls it "the coming amnesia." He remarks on a talk by science fiction writer Alastair Reynolds:

> As the universe expands over hundreds of billions of years, Reynolds explained, there will be a point, in the very far future, at which all galaxies will be so far apart that they will no longer be visible from one another. […] Upon reaching that moment, it will no longer be possible to understand the universe's history—or perhaps even that it had one—as all evidence of a broader cosmos outside of one's own galaxy will have forever disappeared. Cosmology itself will be impossible. […] In such a radically expanded future universe, Reynolds continued, some of the most basic insights offered by today's astronomy will be unavailable. After all, he points out, 'you can't measure the redshift of galaxies if you can't see galaxies. And if you can't see galaxies, how do you even know that the universe is expanding? How would you ever determine that the universe had had an origin?'

Reynolds was drawing upon an article entitled "The End of Cosmology?" by Lawrence M. Krauss and Robert J. Scherrer, published in Scientific American (2008). This article summarized itself in the sub-head: "An accelerating universe wipes out traces of its own origins."

The extrapolation can be pushed further. If a far-future scientific culture can be seen to be structurally-deprived of evidence essential for realistic appraisal of cosmic scale, can we be confident our

situation is fundamentally different? Is it not more probable that the absolute or unsurpassable locality of scientific perspective is a basic situation? How likely is it that we can see universally — in principle — when we can already see how others will in the future be unable to? On the basis of available evidence, we have to envisage a future civilization that is utterly deluded about its own structural parochialism, confident in its ability to finally shrug off perspectival limitation. The most esteemed scientific minds in such a culture might be expected to dismiss any suggestion of inaccessible cosmic regions as groundless metaphysics. It seems merely hubristic to refrain from turning this scenario back upon ourselves. If universal cosmology is to become impossible, the default hypothesis should be that it already has.[2]

Natural science exhibits a tragic structure. Pursuing only its own essential methods, it finds — through cosmology — a compelling case for its large-scale unreliability. The acquisition of universal insight through rigorous empirical investigation appears cosmically obstructed.

Science is thus eventually bound to be fundamentally localized. The “locality” at issue here is not merely the weak particularism of an option taken against the global, or universal. Rather, it is the very horizon of any possible universalistic ambition that finds itself rigorously constricted, and dismantled. Localism, thus understood, is not a choice, but a destiny, and even a fatality already imposed. At its

greatest scales, reality is shattered. Unity exists only to be broken.

The principle of isotropy holds that there are no privileged orientations in space. Together with the presumption of the homogeneity of space, it composes the Cosmological Principle. We are surely entitled to an isochronic analog, in which a fate observable in the order of time can be assumed equally to already be behind us.

We have a cosmos still, and perennially, then, but no longer a universe. The cosmos we, as moderns, subscribe to under cultural obligation is in fact the manifest disintegration of the apparent universe.

Our topic gears down from inflationary cosmology through thermodynamics. We are talking of diversification, or *heterogenesis*, after all – and that is the rigorous negative of entropy increase. Homogenization is entropy. The two concepts are not strictly distinguishable. What was discovered under the name of entropy was the destruction of difference — whether variation in temperature (Clausius and Carnot) or, later, variation in particle distribution (Boltzmann and Gibbs). Heterogenesis is local, the second law of thermodynamics tells us. At the truly global level – where no inputs or outputs can occur – deterioration necessarily prevails.

To get ahead of ourselves, we will find that the West has made of entropy a God, One whose final law is that everything shall be the same. It is a false god. The ultimate cosmo-physical problem –

How is negative entropy possible? – attests to that. We know that heterogenesis is no weaker than its opposite, even if we do not know how.

Cosmological disintegration is more widely echoed among the natural sciences. Perhaps most importantly, *The Origin of Species* has disintegration as its basic topic, as its name already underscores. Darwinism — which is to say the whole of scientific biology — has speciation as its primary object, and speciation is splitting.

Despite recognition of various exotic lateral connections, from symbioses to retroviral genomic insertions, it is the divergence of genetic lineages that best defines life at the largest scales. Meldings are anomalous, and in any case impossible unless diversity has first been produced. The ingredients of any heterogeneous coalition presume prior diversification.[3]

Disintegrationism in the biological sciences amounts to a science in itself, named cladistics.[4] Cladistics formalizes the method of rigorous Darwinian classification. The identity of any biological type is determined by the particular series of schismatic events it has passed through. To be human is to be a primate, a mammal, a reptile, a bony fish, and a vertebrate, among other, more basic, classes. The sum of what you have broken from defines what you are.

A “clade” is a shard. It is a group, of any scale, determined by secession from a lineage. The point of differentiation between clades corresponds to their most recent (i.e. last) common ancestor.

Crucially, therefore, all descendants of a clade belong to that clade, which encompasses any number of sub-clades. The production of subclades (origin of species) is called “radiation.” It tends to proceed through serial bifurcation, since simultaneous complex cladistic fragmentation events are comparatively exotic. Successive simple branchings typically capture diversification. The stakes of it not doing so are not huge.

Cladistics can be identified with a rigorization of taxonomic nomenclature. A system of names writes a cladogram, which is to say a model of evolutionary history, and of biological relatedness. Any cladogram is an evolutionary hypothesis. It proposes a particular order of splitting. Any such proposed order is empirically revisable.

Cladistics maps the whole of disintegrationism below the cosmological level, and perhaps even up to it. Naturally, it is supremely controversial. The full scope of its provocation has yet to be understood. Insofar as cladistics is explanatory, however, much follows. Notably, identity is conceived as essentially schismatic, and being is apprehended fundamentally as a structure of inheritance.

Historical linguistics fell naturally into a cladistic mode. Linguistic ‘families’ shared essential characteristics with their biological template. They proliferated by sub-division, providing the material for a classification schema. It was upon this linguistic taxonomy that racial groupings were first systematically determined. The “Yamnaya” — still today more widely known as “Aryans” — were

originally identified through the cladistics of Indo-European languages. Their pattern of radiation was marked by a tree-like linguistic diversification.

Differential anthropology was drawn in cladograms. Trees, phylogenetic order, language families, genealogies, actual (massively extended) families — it was all extremely coherent. Here, too, phenomena of fusion, lateral cross-contamination, and convergence — while by no means absent — were evidently secondary and derivative.

Linguistic diversification looks like a process of schismatic ethnogenesis. As peoples branch out, they mutually differentiate. The origin of peoples is only origin of species at higher resolution — the abstract pattern is the same.

The concrete mechanism of speciation typically involves the isolation of populations, and in this way becomes — very recently — political. There is a politics of "invasive species" and anthropic bio-dispersal, but this is not especially rancorous, or significantly polarizing. The case of human population isolation is very different. During this process of politicization, the exogamic radicalism of North-West European populations has been sublimed into a universal ideology.

Since the subject of race tends to produce extreme ideological and emotional disturbance today, it might be preferable to consider variegated domestic animals, as the English naturalistic tradition was

inclined to do. Not only sound analogy but also balance, or true moderation is to be found in doing so. Since, in our contemporary cultural context the influence of country life has notably receded, and with it the sense of vivid distinction among cultivated species, dogs serve us as by far the most illustrative examples.

A world without mongrels would be a poorer world. Mongrels are often advantaged by special and even superior qualities. The Golden Doodle, for instance, is as exalted as any canine type that exists. Such crosses add to the diversity of the world. This is fully consistent with a basic process through which the world is enriched by diverging dog breeds, in which "dogs in general" is an increasingly uninformative category. There is not – yet – any ideology directed to global canine genetic homogenization.

Diversity is good, which is to say *robust*, and *innovative* (at least). The ecological consensus can be trusted in this regard. Invasive species are detested because they lower diversity, not because they raise it. Heterogenesis is at all times the superior ambition. Yet diversification — the production of diversity — is a peculiarly neglected topic in our contemporary social sciences. The mantra of diversity is coupled with almost complete indifference, and even strategic negligence, in this regard. Obligatory public celebration of diversity accompanies, and covers, its programmatic practical extirpation. Mankind, it has been authoritatively decided, is one, and destined only to be ever more so. Genetic partition is today

considered tantamount to a human-rights violation.[5]

Our supreme orthodoxy is that it would be terrible almost beyond contemplation not to already be and become yet more One. We might be tempted to call this faith monohumanism. That mankind shall be a unity is its fundamental doctrine. It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that this is far less an empirical observation than a moral and political project, in which racial entropy has been elevated to a sacred obligation. The radical — as opposed to merely conservative — alternative to this vision is found only in science fiction.[6]

Preservation of human diversity is a staple of dissident ethnopolitics, with “Beige World” increasingly perceived as a coercive ideal. A typically inchoate resistance to racial entropy is the central mobilizing factor in such cases, though one regrettably afflicted by an immoderate fetishization of mandatory racial purity. At worst – and not uncommonly – this reaction against monohumanism has come to see all contributions to human genetic diversity through racial crossing as an avatar of coercive homogenization. The balanced response, to repeat the lesson of the dogs, is that a world of tendential speciation or increasing genetic diversity is by no compelling necessity a world hostile to mutts.

Over the last 60,000 years, human genetic divergence has been overwhelmingly the dominant process. Conspicuous fragmentation of modern humans into genetically distinct sub-species has been the basic pattern. It is a process worthy of ecological celebration, and

even techno-industrial acceleration. Despite the fondest hopes of the present secular church, there is no chance it will be terminally dispelled.

"Globalism" is a word that, while ideologically contested, is of uncontested ideological weight. It might be defined, with minimal tendentiousness, as seeking the direction of policy from a perspective in accordance with the whole. Stubbornly partial orientations are its enemies. Yet such has been its triumph that — even in the face of recent set-backs — hostility is peculiarly drowned in condescension.

"Parochialism" is among the slurs globalism finds prepared to its convenience. It might accept an inability to see universally as understandable, and educable. A refusal of universalistic perspective, however, can merit no such sympathy. It is, for the globalist, essentially unethical. Parochialism is less to be argued against than simply scorned. It is to be despised in the name of the universal — which is becoming amusing.

Whatever we have seen as the death of God is only a special case of universality's more comprehensive demise. While God's death was mostly inferred, the death of the universal unfolds as an explicit scientific spectacle. Astrophysics sees the universe being dismantled before its artificial eyes.

The globalist camp is especially prone to gesticulations of piety in respect to the idea of science. It is ironic therefore that — in scientific

terms — globalism looks increasingly like an untenable religion. Its intrinsic cosmology is an archaic myth. It could not easily be more obvious that there is no universe, outside this mythological structure. The fundamental nature of the cosmos is to go its separate ways.[7]

Pieces are basic. To conceive them following from wholes is confusion, produced by unsustainable universalistic frames. Any perspective that can actually be realized has already been localized by serial breakages. Nothing begins with the whole, unless as illusion. Today, we know this both empirically and transcendentally. Anything not done in pieces is not done in profound accordance with reality.

[1] *Einstein's Clocks, Poincaré's Maps: Empires of Time*, New York, 2003.

[2] Manaugh quotes Krauss and Scherrer saying: "We may be living in the only epoch in the history of the universe when scientists can achieve an accurate understanding of the true nature of the universe." The intellectual indolence of this suggestion is remarkable.

[3] Isolation of genetic lineages is a matter of sound — if spontaneous and unconscious — experimental technique. *Avoid cross-contamination of test samples*. Which is to say *do it*, if you insist, but don't expect optimal epistemic outcomes if you do. Optimal epistemic outcomes tend to win.

[4] The arborescent orientation of cladistics could not be more unflinching. The word 'clade' is taken from the Greek clados, meaning branch. A cladogram is an abstract tree. Its articulations are all branchings. Deleuze & Guattari's critical engagement with it has been highly influential.

They tell us they are “bored of trees.” The alternative to arborescence, they propose, is the rhizome — a network in which every node connects to every other. Appropriately, the ‘rhizome’ is not itself a taxonomic concept, but a morphological one. The balanced position is to acknowledge that evolutionary trees are complemented by ecological webs. Neither is conceivable without the other. The evolutionary tree is pruned and trained within ecologies of lateral relations. Phylogeny is overwhelmingly tree-like, while ontogeny involves far more lateral influence. We will limit ourselves here, with cryptic brevity, to remarking that Deleuzoguattarian rhizomatics is rhizomatically connected to Neo-Darwinism, but it is cladistically Neo-Lamarckian.

[5] This is a simplification, wormed-through by incoherences and unprincipled exceptions. Most notably, ad hoc special permissions are granted to ‘minor’ populations. The notably erratic usage of the word ‘genocide’ is the most obvious index of this. A closer construction of the operating formula might be: *Population partitioning is wrong, absolutely and universally, insofar as it secures the isolation of North-West European populations*.

[6] Bruce Sterling, Alastair Reynolds, and Neal Stephenson among very many others populate their fictional worlds with radically diversified neo-hominid types.

[7] Robin Hanson devotes a recent blog post to three (comparatively exotic) varieties of tree like descent. The first is an odd thought experiment that need not distract us even momentarily here. The second concerns his mind-clone “ems.” This is of potential relevance to a range of potential, and even already actual software lineages. The third is the structure of the quantum multiverse. It suggests that a tree-like cosmology arises on paths quite different from that pursued here. He notes: ” … a quantum history is in part a tree of observers. Each observer in this tree can look backward and see a chain of branches back to the root, with each branch holding a version of themselves. More versions of themselves live in other branches of this tree.”

Tree-like multiverses are especially numerous. Lee Smolin proposes a Darwinian multiverse,

selecting for reproductive fitness through the production of black holes. It might be described as a cladistically-structured multiverse, were this label not so much more widely applicable. Cladistic multiverses belong to the much larger set of cladistically-structured entities, whose parts are characterized by:

1. A single line of descent
2. Genetically non-communicating siblings, and
3. Some multitude of potential descendants

Such multiverses predict their own imperceptibility. Since parallel branches are mutually non-communicating, it is to be expected that their existence is strictly theoretical. If the multiverse was a rhizome we'd see more of it.

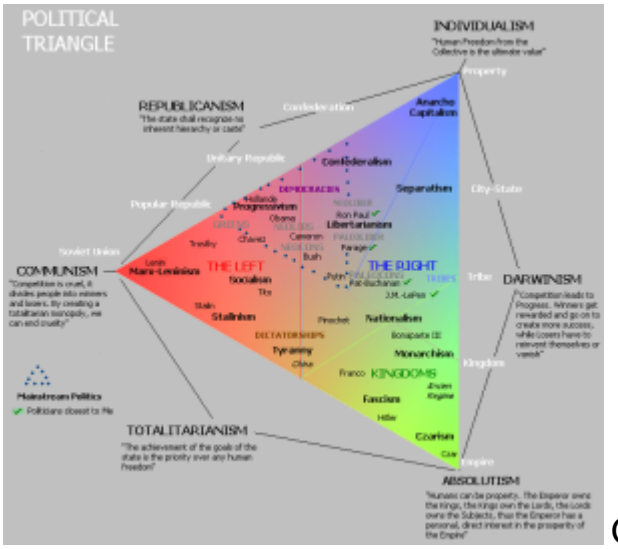
Simulation Argument ontology also tends to disintegrationism. Simulations are essentially experiments, and thus various.

July 15, 2019

CHAPTER THREE - IDEOLOGICAL SPACE

Ideological Space

Does ideological space make more sense when depicted as a triangle (rather than a line or quadrant)? It certainly helps to explain the room for controversy on the 'extreme right'. Having Darwin out there beyond the edge of the ideologically-thinkable makes a lot of sense, too.



Click image to enlarge.

If anyone knows where this diagram originated, please let me know and I'll credit it properly.

(Accessed via @MikeAnissimov).

February 10, 2014

Right and Left

Endless conversational stimulation is to be found in the fact that the most basic distinction of modern politics is profoundly incomprehensible, and at the same time almost universally invested. Almost everybody thinks they understand the difference between the Right and the Left, until they think about it. Then they realize that this distinction commands no solid consensus, and exists primarily as a substitute for thought. Perhaps the same is true of all widely-invoked political labels. Perhaps that is what politics is.

Spandrell directs a winding, intermittently brilliant post to the topic, which is enriched by a comments thread of outstanding quality. Like the Right/Left distinction itself, the argument becomes increasingly confusing, the closer it is examined. The 'rightist singularity' of the title is introduced as a real political alternative to the Left Singularity modeled by James Donald, driven by analogous self-reinforcing feedback dynamics, but into nationalistic rather than egalitarian catastrophe. For societies menaced by the prospect of Left Singularity, it offers an alternative path. China is taking it, Spandrell suggests.

Notably, in passing, Spandrell's gloss on Donald's Left Singularity is a gem:

The leftist singularity is based on claiming higher status by being more egalitarian than anyone else. So you get a status arms race in which everyone tries to be more egalitarian than the others. That works because people (and monkeys) take equality to be a good thing.

(To continue, we have to bracket the 'old' Right Singularity: the Technocommercial Singularity that Donald's formula for Left Singularity distinguished itself from. Nobody even mentions it in this discussion. It's a problem for some other time.)

To backtrack from these digressions: If 'rightist singularity' is nationalistic, that aligns the Right with nationalism, doesn't it? But nothing remotely this crude is sustainable (not when time is involved), Spandrell notes: "the Right isn't nationalist any more." He expands, convincingly, in his own comment thread:

What historically has been called Right was about law and order, i.e. leaving things as they are. Tribalism qua nationalism isn't inherently "Rightist", in fact originally it was a Leftist subversive meme against the Ancient Regime, but when mass media was invented nationalism was the status quo, i.e. the Right, and political labels have become fossilized since.

As Vladimir (May 25, 22:10) articulates the point:

Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn would have a ready answer for you:

nationalism is leftism. It is basically another name for Jacobinism. These paradoxes of right-wing nationalism are just another manifestation of the fundamental problem of modern rightism — namely, that a large part of its content is just yesterday's leftism that the left has in the meantime abandoned for a more extreme left position.
So, I'd say this is nothing but just another mode of leftist singularity.

Or, Spandrell again (May 26, 02:34): "Historical evidence is that nationalism was leftist before socialism appeared further left, making it rightist."

The Right is yesterday's Left, or at least, it is soon exposed as such when it appears in its historical and populist guise. When the masses turn Right, they are defending a dated Left, frozen in place by modernist mass media memory, stuck in a black-and-white newsreel, like an insect in amber.

The squirming is over, unless it changes dimensions. Then chaos yawns, despite heroic efforts to restore order (Baker, May 25 17:29; Handle May 25 18:33; Den Beste linked by Peter Taylor May 27 17:47), with Moldbug's preferred Order and Chaos spectrum sucked — among innumerable others — into the vortex. Tradition and revolution, authority and liberty, hierarchy and equality, greed and envy, independence and solidarity, capitalism and socialism … there's not even a remote prospect of closure, coherence, or consistency. Every attempted definition intensifies fragmentation. Right and Left

disagree (we all agree), but exactly how they disagree — on that there's no agreement.

Peter A. Taylor (May 29, 06:15):

The left-right spectrum, in so far as it is an honest attempt to make sense of the world rather than mere propaganda, looks to me like an attempt to fit chaos into Procrustes' bed. … Moldbug loves Carlyle. Carlyle admired Cromwell. Moldbug hates Cromwell. Chaos.

Spandrell (May 26, 08:28), twists it back to the Trichotomy:

Both the Western Right and the Chinese Right are a loose combination of traditionalists, nationalists and capitalists. Which mostly hate each other and never get along when they get any amount of power.

By this point, however, trichotomous diversity starts to look like a mirage of integrity. Right and Left are every difference that has ever been conceived, if not yet, then in the near future. If these signs mean anything more than *the war continues*, like the black-and-white distinction between chess pieces, no one has yet convincingly shown us why.

Yet perhaps, if Right and Left, apprehended together, mean *the basic modern antagonism*, the conflict itself, as an irreducible *thing*, will prove to be the source of whatever sense can be found.

[To be continued …]

ADDED: Whatever you do, don't miss Handle's systematic analysis of the question (May 31, 10:09pm below).

May 29, 2013

Quote notes (#49)

Some foundational wisdom beautifully restated by Handle:

… the long history of progressivism in general is most quickly summarized by an enthusiasm to reject the old, time-tested social institutions originating in undesigned traditions as obsolete anachronisms and replace with them with new, more 'enlightened' innovations rationally constructed from first principles.

The Rightist view of human nature is often described as 'tragic' or 'realistically pessimistic'. Whether one on the right sees man as 'fallen and totally depraved' or merely a 'hairless ape' makes little difference in regards to the conclusion of what is required to regulate such a creature's behaviors. And that prescription, unfortunately but inescapably for most people, involved a certain amount of ***severity of consequence****. There is pain, harshness, punishment, impoverishment, and so on, or at the very least an effectively salient terror of the credible threat of these things.*

December 12, 2013

PPD and r/K

Ideological categorization is the astrology of politics, in the sense that it panders to insatiable identity hunger. This post still holds the daily traffic record here, which is probably not entirely due to people looking for their political star signs, but neither is it mostly for other reasons. New approaches to the Left-Right spectrum — the *Prime Political Dimension* — promise master-keys to the secrets of identity-core opinion.

Given the quite absurdly competitive nature of the terrain, there is something truly remarkable about the simplicity and persuasiveness of this PPD-model, based upon the biological distinction between r/K selection strategies. The application of this distinction to humans is — I confidently assume — radioactively controversial. Its usage as a conceptual tool to collapse ideology into an axis of Human Biological Diversity is therefore undoubtedly disreputable. (This trigger-warning isn't likely to act as much of a deterrent here.)

The 'Anonymous Conservative' theory does the most important things expected of a PPD-model. In particular, it provides an explanation for the polarized clusters of 'liberal' and 'conservative' traits, which have often proved highly resistant to reflective integration. Why should anti-capitalism, pacifism, and sexual laxity belong together? When grouped together as expressions of an r-

type strategy, this bundle of seemingly unconnected ideological predispositions tightens into an intuitively coherent whole.

Worth special mention is the mapping of ideological difference onto environmental conditions. The ('liberal') r-type strategy is a response top conditions of resource abundance, versus ('conservative') K-type adaptation to scarcity. When augmented by some modest assumptions about the effects of r-type prevalence upon the persistence of Civilization, the r/K PPD-model automatically generates a cyclical history of social ascent and decline (through a biorealist abundance-decadence mechanism). The hope-crushing tragic structure is sure to appeal to reactionary sensibilities.

The *Outside in* prediction: This is a theory (and book) that will go far. You can read the first chapter here.

August 19, 2014

Right and Left II

Bill Whittle and Stefan Molyneux work through the Anonymous Conservative r/K model of ideological polarity in a compelling video. XS prediction: This analysis is going nova. It sets the gold standard for definition of Right / Left difference.

As a darkening vector for the mainstream right, with at least

significant truth value, it's hard to beat.

ADDED: Reminded to link this, which I was too lazy to do yesterday.

November 14, 2015

2014 Lessons (#1)

The world war is Bitcoin versus Dugin. Everything else is just messing around (or, perhaps, tactics).

December 27, 2014

Populism

Political categories — however plausible they look on paper — quickly dissolve into senseless noise when applied to modern historical reality, unless they foreground *populism* as the critical discriminating factor. Furthermore, *populism* is for all practical purposes already *national populism*, irrespective of ideological commitments to the contrary, since super-national popular constituencies exist only in the feverish brains of Utopian intellectuals. The Syriza victory in Greece is making all of this extraordinarily graphic:

Ushering in the new era, Alexis Tsipras, the prime minister-designate, announced that he would not be sworn in, as tradition dictates, in the presence of Archbishop Iernonymos but would instead take the oath of office in a civil ceremony. At 40, he becomes the country's youngest premier in modern times. […] The leftist, who surprised Greeks by speedily agreeing to share power with the populist rightwing Independent Greeks party, Anel, is expected to be handed a mandate by president Karolos Papoulias to form a government later on Monday. Earlier, Panos Kammenos, Anel's rumbustious leader, emerged from talks with Tsipras lasting an hour saying the two politicians had successfully formed a coalition. […] "I want to say, simply, that from this moment, there is a government," Kammenos told reporters gathered outside Syriza's headquarters. […] "The Independent Greeks party will give a vote of confidence to the prime minister, Alexis Tsipras. The prime minister will go to the president and … the cabinet makeup will be announced by the prime minister. The aim for all Greeks is to embark on a new day, with full sovereignty."

Anyone who thinks it odd that Marine Le Pen and Slavoj Žižek are both firm supporters is missing the picture entirely. As Žižek remarks:

This is our position today with regard to Europe: only a new "heresy" (represented at this moment by Syriza), a split from the European Union by Greece, can save what is worth saving in the

European legacy: democracy, trust in people, egalitarian solidarity.

That's what the Left means. Construct your ideological spectrum accordingly.

Mainstream, but sane:

Of course, politics is about emotion as much as reality. And here, socialism has one advantage in its favor: easy populism.

Socialism has one huge advantage: People are idiots.

… and while I'm slumming it at NRO, here's Andrew Stuttaford:

Fun fact No. 1: One of the two sons of Syriza's leader was given the middle name "Ernesto" in honor of the murderer better known as Ernesto "Che" Guevara. […] Fun fact No. 2: The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn probably came in third with 6 percent or so. […] I, for one, continue to be grateful that the single currency has proved to be such a bulwark against extremism.

ADDED: Childish incomprehension from the Left (of which we will be seeing a great deal): "… Last but not least, while Mr. Kammenos and his sovereigntyist right-wing ANEL party [Independent Greeks] are certainly a lesser evil compared to formations like To Potami (whose stated goal was to force Syriza to stay within the narrow boundaries set by the EU and the Memorandums), they are nonetheless an evil. Their participation in the government, even with just one minister, would symbolise the end of the idea of an 'anti-austerity government of the Left'. Moreover, this is a party of the Right, one that is particularly

concerned to protect the 'hard core' of the state apparatus (it will be important to keep a watchful eye over whatever cabinet portfolio it might get). It will be no surprise if its first demands are for the ministry of defence or public order, though it seems that it will not get them." (Relevant predictions from Jim.)

January 26, 2015

Populism II

David Frum does a good job at explaining why the new populist upsurge isn't an intrinsically rightist phenomenon:

They aren't necessarily superconservative. They often don't think in ideological terms at all. But they do strongly feel that life in this country used to be better for people like them—and they want that older country back.

You hear from people like them in many other democratic countries too. Across Europe, populist parties are delivering a message that combines defense of the welfare state with skepticism about immigration; that denounces the corruption of parliamentary democracy and also the risks of global capitalism. Some of these parties have a leftish flavor, like Italy's Five Star Movement. Some are rooted to the right of center, like the U.K. Independence Party. Some descend from neofascists, like France's National Front. Others

trace their DNA to Communist parties, like Slovakia's governing Direction–Social Democracy.
These populists seek to defend what the French call "acquired rights"—health care, pensions, and other programs that benefit older people — against bankers and technocrats who endlessly demand austerity; against migrants who make new claims and challenge accustomed ways; against a globalized market that depresses wages and benefits. In the United States, they lean Republican because they fear the Democrats want to take from them and redistribute to Americans who are newer, poorer, and in their view less deserving—to "spread the wealth around," in candidate Barack Obama's words to "Joe the Plumber" back in 2008. Yet they have come to fear more and more strongly that their party does not have their best interests at heart.

It's built for compromise, delusion, and heart-ache. (Interesting, of course, nonetheless.)

December 30, 2015

Quotable (#197)

This interesting interview with Michael Glennon on "double government" concludes with one of the most confused self-abolishing meanderings ever to see print:

The ultimate problem is the pervasive political ignorance on the part of the American people. And indifference to the threat that is emerging from these concealed institutions. That is where the energy for reform has to come from: the American people. Not from government. Government is very much the problem here. The people have to take the bull by the horns. And that's a very difficult thing to do, because the ignorance is in many ways rational. There is very little profit to be had in learning about, and being active about, problems that you can't affect, policies that you can't change.

The utter nothingness of that paragraph says something important in itself. Roughly: *Sadly, the kind of things that need to happen can't possibly happen*, which doesn't suggest the problem is being taken very seriously. *All that's needed is for people to wake up* simply doesn't cut it, when — at the very same time — you know beyond all serious question that they won't.

ADDED (for obvious relevance):

> "Government is the Entertainment division of the military-industrial complex." – Frank Zappa
>
> — Jacob Wren (@EverySongIveEve) October 19, 2016

October 19, 2016

Through the Mirror

The articulate Left comes close to capturing NRx from the other side, mapping out a persuasive genealogy (through games theory and public choice analysis). The final line of this piece gets closest:

It is the logical endgame of a dark political vision crafted in opposition to democratic advances; the realisation of a strange freedom which lies at the root of the neoliberal dystopia, from which the political establishment offers no deliverance.

… except, they think counter-democratic darkness is already in power, in the guise of 'neoliberalism', and that the populist political charade, with its 40%+ state absorption of economic product, financial central planning, and publicly-promoted egalitarian evangelism, is an outcome compatible with the triumph of a disillusioned right. It seems an absurd sticking point to reach — that in the end, we can't even agree about who is ruling the world.

April 25, 2015

Neuro-Politics

Woah:

Darren Schreiber, a political neuroscientist at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom, first performed brain scans on 82

people participating in a risky gambling task, one in which holding out for more money increases your possible rewards, but also your possible losses. Later, cross-referencing the findings with the participants' publicly available political party registration information, Schreiber noticed something astonishing: Republicans, when they took the same gambling risk, were activating a different part of the brain than Democrats.

Republicans were using the right amygdala, the center of the brain's threat response system. Democrats, in contrast, were using the insula, involved in internal monitoring of one's feelings. Amazingly, Schreiber and his colleagues write that this test predicted 82.9 percent of the study subjects' political party choices — considerably better, they note, than a simple model that predicts your political party affiliation based on the affiliation of your parents.

When you consider what hereditarian realism makes of "the affiliation of your parents" (with its massive confounding effect when brought into comparison with neurological characteristics) the level of correlation looks even more preposterous.

(The insula sounds like an intrinsically leftist neurological structure, I mean — does 'feels monitoring' really count as doing anything? Radical insulectomy in exchange for blockchain credits and Neocameral residency privileges has to be worth a test.)

(Via.)

December 4, 2015

Modernity in a Nutshell

Two revolutions:

(1) Techno-economic self-propelling change obsolesces ever wider swathes of humanity on a steepening curve. Capital (i.e. techno-commercial synthesis) tendentially autonomizes. For humans, there are ever more intriguing opportunities for synergistic attachment, on new terms, but the trend is — to put it very mildly — 'challenging'.

(2) Jacobin political violence, modeled on the French Revolution, provides the basis for demands aimed at a redistribution of the (capitalist) productive spoils through explicit extortion. All socio-political history in the modern epoch falls into compliance with this pattern. It coincides quite exactly with 'democracy' in its modernist usage. Universal Basic Income is its natural *telos*.

To the extent that there has been an equilibrium between these twin processes, it is coming apart. All the pol-economic innovations of recent years, on the Left and Right, are indicators of this accelerating disintegration.

So the options are these:

Both (1) and (2) is the *Status Quo* (delusion).

Neither (1) or (2) is Reaction (also delusion).
(1) against (2) is the Neo-Modern Right.
(2) against (1) is the Neo-Modern Left.

Those are the only slots available.

Fernandez concludes:

The technological revolution is going to pose increasingly serious challenges to nearly every Western social democratic society. People are either going to be really angry when they discover there's no patronage or angrier still when they discover they have to provide the "basic income" for everybody else. Only one thing is relatively certain: the solution to these problems won't be found in the ideologies of the early 20th century.

(It's a theme.)

April 8, 2016

Twitter cuts (#122)

> I don't want a future in which politics is primarily a battle between cosmopolitan finance capitalism and ethno-nationalist backlash.
>
> — Christopher Hayes (@chrislhayes) June 24, 2016

This is what the rancorous Brexit controversy — and catabolic

geopolitics in general — looks like when the option between integrative connection and disintegrative disconnection is elaborated, without reference to the diagonal line (of connective disintegration).

Zizek is worth referencing on the same conundrum.

June 26, 2016

Wagner's Law

Wagner's Law is a critical concept for political-philosophy. In the words of Adolph Wagner (1835–1917, as cited by Wikipedia): "The advent of modern industrial society will result in increasing political pressure for social progress and increased allowance for social consideration by industry." It thus explains why the right has to be radical, if it isn't to be a sad joke, because snowballing socialism is the 'natural' trend.

Here's Will Wilkinson abasing himself before it abjectly, and Arnold Kling showing considerably more spine. Also, commentary from Scott Sumner.

Nothing that falls short of a serious assault upon the real process formalized by Wagner's Law merits the label 'right-wing'. Conservatism, for instance, is merely decelerated leftism. Wilkinson is positively enthused by that. The Outer Right is everything that

definitely isn't.

What, then, is required to practically defy Wagner's Law? NRx abstractly designates the project. Neocameralism goes into the details.

If XS expected the Alt-Right to break from the modern demotic meta-regime whose signature is Wagner's Law, it would celebrate the fact. It doesn't, sadly, expect anything of the kind. That's why the Alt-Right isn't 'us' or even — strictly speaking — a right-wing political phenomenon at all.

November 14, 2016

Trump's Warsaw Uprising

For supporters and detractors alike, U.S. President Donald J. Trump's July 6 speech in Warsaw was immediately recognized as the most important of his presidency to date. Since so much was crystallized by it – or perhaps *brought to a head* – it is impossible to begin making sense of this event without some preliminary broad-brush outline of its context.

The new dominant ideological polarity, on both sides of the Atlantic, exhibits remarkably similar characteristics. Perhaps most strikingly, it displays the culmination of an *ideological-class inversion*, decades in coming, which has aligned the masses – and

in particular the native working class – with the right, and social elites with the left. In consequence, populism has been firmly locked into place as a phenomenon of the right. Even those classical liberal stances most tightly bound to the advancement of commercial liberty, and thus most firmly associated with the conservative right, have not escaped radical scrambling, whether through re-assessment, marginalization, or complete inversion.

In this new and disconcerting epoch, business interest has ceased to be any kind of index for right affiliation, and popular opposition to free-trade no longer defines a substantial bloc on the left. If anything, the opposite is now true. Those on the left or right (including this author) who stubbornly maintain that ideological orientation to capitalism is the fundamental determinant of meaningful political polarity find themselves cast into a position of unplugged anachronism. The stunning magnitude of this transition should not be underestimated.

This is not, of course, a development without alarming precedent. From at least one perspective – which is by no means necessarily hysterical – the boundary between right-wing populism and fascism can be difficult to discern. Insofar as the affective context to Trump's speech is concerned, this is without serious question the most important element.

Many books could be devoted to the new terms of political controversy, and almost certainly will be. Each of the still-unstable

new camps is highly heterogeneous, and cross-cut with a variety of complex strategic interests regarding the way the great rift between them is described, so every attempt at articulation will be contested, often fiercely. Yet even amid the present shock and confusion, some basic structure is discernible. Beside the political opposition between *left* and *right* – in its present, re-adjusted, sense – it is not hard to recognize a corresponding globalist and nationalist emphasis, pitting universalists against particularists: defenders of the contemporary world's institutional order against its opponents, or partisans of cosmopolitan openness against parochial localists, according to taste. Because, concretely, the insurgency marks a crisis of international social management, and of confidence in established, credentialized elites, to describe it as a struggle between *technocrats* and *populists* is roughly as neutral as we can get. Such terms are employed here as mere labels, rather than as judgments, or explanations. No extravagant disparagement is directed at either, relative to the other. The constituencies they name have substantial depths, exceeding any facile definition. They are obscure social masses in conflict, rather than competing ideas.

With Trump's arrival in Warsaw, two pairs of profoundly antagonistic political constituencies – one American, the other European – were mapped across each other, resonantly. Populist Red America had found its local champion in Warsaw, versus that of technocratic Blue America, in Berlin. These alignments were not

seriously questioned, from any side. That the open-door policy of Angela Merkel's Germany, exemplifying its defense of EU institutions and traditional policy stances in general, were in fundamental affinity with the ideological intuitions of Blue America, were self-evident to all parties. Reciprocally, the identification of Trumpian Red America with the Polish stance of EU dissidence – on the immigration issue most pointedly – was taken as self-evident. Even before the visit, to those paying attention, the Polish regime had become an icon of ethno-nationalist popular revolt against technocratic transnational government, evangelical secularism, and mass migration. Everything clicked.

It is difficult to be confident about how much lucid strategy underpinned the event. In all matters Trump, the default assumption tends to be *not very much*. Given Trump's characteristic bluster, and unusual comfort with low demagoguery, such dismissal is to be expected. This is not at all to suggest it is acute. If political instincts tuned almost to perfection played no part, then divine intervention – or some blessing of fortune functionally indistinguishable from it – is the next most plausible hypothesis.

The speech itself was rhetorically pedestrian, and even clumsy. It is hard to imagine any single sentence being remembered from it, unless for purposes of dry historical illustration. The language was tailored entirely to its immediate audience – both local and international – rather than to the delectation of future generations.

The speech was, in this respect among others, a thing of the social media age, tuned to instantaneous feedback. It manifestly *schmoozed*, even by the dismal standards of such orations. The rapport it struck with its local listeners tipped into collective self-congratulation. *Wow, we really are great* seems to have been the consensus, among all directly involved. To those disinclined to identify with the speaker and throng in question, this can only have been annoying. Enemy rallies generally are, as conservatives learnt during the Obama years. The untroubled self-love of one's foes, exuberantly manifested, is a truly horrible thing to see. Naturally enough, Trump has been no more distressed by this fact than his predecessor.

There is one further, and indispensable contextual element that needs to be raised before proceeding to the media reaction – which was, of course, the deepest level of *the event* – and that is the 'Jew Thing.' Everyone knows, at some level, we have to start talking about that, in some way, even those who – entirely understandably – *really* don't want to. Ignoring the topic is a disappearing option, because there's no reason, *at all*, to think it's going away. Perhaps it was mere coincidence that Trump's visit took him deep into holocaust territory, which, again, nobody really seems to want to mention, even though it was an explicit thread within his speech. It was, however, structurally essential to everything that followed. Unmistakably, even as it went unacknowledged, the Jewish dimension added greatly to the

feverish intensity of the response.

The extreme sensitivity to Jewish socio-political anxieties that has prevailed in the postwar West is notably losing its edge, in a way that doesn't seem plausibly reversible. At least in part, this is a consequence of the generalization of identity politics, predominantly under leftist direction, which has the peculiar cultural effect – in its late stages – that special cases are becoming increasingly difficult to make. Victimological status bursts its banks, among conditions of unbounded, and symmetrical, ethnic paranoia. Lurid grievance anecdotes – tailored to every imaginable social niche – are always in abundance, fed by Internet supply-lines. Persecution narratives explode from all sides. Demands to "check one's privilege" have proven awkwardly mobile, and reversible, as they have been increasingly normalized, even to the point – in this particular example – of overt, caustic antisemitism.

The result is nothing less than a crisis of the diasporic Jewish left, whose argumentative edge has been blunted by decades of exceptional immunity to unflinching criticism. Defensive cultural strategies that have, for half a century, been accepted, unquestioned as a special ethno-historical privilege have quite suddenly become subjected to irreverent public inspection. *Everyone wants a piece of ethnic survivalism now*.

This is the key to what happened in Warsaw. It is evoked as the subtext to Peter Beinart's wail of distress, when exposed to Trump's

line: “The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive.” Beinart was quite correct in recognizing – horrified – the resonance of this sentence with the most extreme elements of the present transition, but that was no help to him. He had been ambushed.

Trump made his speech explicitly about ethnic survival, disarmingly aligned with WWII Jewish victimage, with heroic Polish resistance to foreign military occupation, and finally – most provocatively – with the contemporary situation of the West. It naturally helped him, *overwhelmingly*, that the Warsaw Uprising was an insurrection against actual Nazis. This provided a vaccination against the normal workings of Godwin’s Law. *You know who else wanted ethnic survival? Adolf Hitler!* — We have reached the core of the event now. There was simply no way this response, *which was the only one that mattered to Trump’s enemies on the left*, could conceivably be made to operate on this occasion. What was being celebrated was the Poles surviving Nazism, then communism, and now – infinitely awkwardly – *again* the Germans, this time cast in the role of principal executors for a transnational political order promoting mandatory multiculturalism, secular technocracy, and the culture of Western historical self-flagellation. The result, almost inevitably, was a rout.

It took no great flights of oratorical bedazzlement to triumph on this battlefield. The situation did almost everything. Trump’s

maddened enemies blundered into the trap, and were shattered. The left, for whom *of course the West has no right to survive*, found itself ideologically isolated to a degree that was unprecedented under the present administration. Their tactical allies in the 'Never-Trump' conservative establishment evaporated. Hardened Trump skeptics, such as Rod Dreher, David French, and Jonah Goldberg contributed their talents to hunting down the fleeing leftist remnants. David Frum only held his ground in opposition by arguing that Trump was personally unworthy of his own speech.

Beinart came out of the trauma worst. He will forever be haunted by his own definition of the matter at stake, which was immediately judged from all sides to be an unforced production of Alt-Right propaganda: "The West is a racial and religious term. To be considered Western, a country must be largely Christian (preferably Protestant or Catholic) and largely white." Across social media, much nodding ensued, from constituencies whose approval he would surely least appreciate.

Jonah Goldberg refused explicitly to follow what was now so vividly exhibited as the road of obligate European ethnomasochism and civilizational self-hatred: "What's ironic is that Peter's desk-pounding outrage about Trump's talk of the West is oh-so Western. The West's tolerance for anti-Western philosophies is a fairly unique feature of the West itself. We love to beat ourselves up." Defense of the West, therefore, is taken up as a cause inclusive even of its critics.

It is Rod Dreher, however, who best captures what Trump consolidated in Warsaw, perhaps for the first time. He says, comparing Trump to his leftist critics:

> As is often the case with conservatives and Trump, no matter how much you may despise him and his pomps and works, in the end, you know that he doesn't hate your beliefs, and that he and his government aren't going to use the power of the State to suppress you as a threat to public order and all things good and holy. […] That's not nothing.

However much Trump fosters aversion among many conservatives, he also provokes events that remind conservatives why they hate liberals (using these terms in their degenerate contemporary American sense). Plenty of conservatives hate Trump, and will continue to hate him, probably until the end of his second term in office, if not longer. But the *way* liberals hate him poses an obvious existential threat to all forms of conservative life. As Martin Niemöller never quite said, *first they came for Trump and it was pretty damn obvious I was next in the queue*.

July 12, 2017

CHAPTER FOUR - LIBERALISM

Language and Liberalism

The inversion of the meaning of liberalism over the last 150 years has to be counted among the world's most remarkable ideological facts. The coinage of the term 'classical liberalism' in recent times, as an utterly marginalized linguistic act of dissent, attests to the comprehensiveness and radicality of the change that has occurred. It has surely been essential to the momentum of the historical tide that it has usurped the most elementary cultural tools required for its articulation. What has taken place cannot even be discussed without obscure struggle in a drifting, semiotic fog.

Daniel B. Klein of the Adam Smith Institute has formulated a lucid response to this ideological event, in a website entirely devoted to the re-ordering of the language of liberalism during the crucial period from 1880-1940. Combining ngrams, historical quotations, and reflections (from the author), it depicts with unprecedented clarity the process through which the Old Liberalism lost its tongue.

July 9, 2014

Slippage

Watch the whole of modern political confusion expose itself in a micro-tremor:

Locke's commitment both to voluntary religion and voluntary, contractual government are mutually reinforcing. Just as people join and remain in religious communities by their consent, so they enter and sustain political communities. "Men being, as has been said, by Nature all free, equal, and independent," Locke writes in the ***Second Treatise****, "no one can be put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent." If the members of a faith community believe their church is failing to uphold its spiritual responsibilities,* ***they have a right to leave*** *— without fear of reprisal. Likewise for a political society: If its members believe the political authority is failing to safeguard their natural rights — their "lives, liberty, and estates" —* ***it forfeits the right to govern****.*

(XS emphasis.)

"Likewise"? Yet one *leaves* a church, but *replaces* a government. The fall from liberty into democracy takes only a single false step. With a little more consistency, the case for Exit-based control of government would have been solidly made centuries ago (intrinsically secure against all Rousseauistic perversion). Still, it's not too late to do that now.

February 16, 2017

Quote note (#344)

Cowen:

… Here's another way to put my concern. The percentage of global GDP which is held in relatively non-free countries, such as China, has been rising relative to the share of global GDP held in the freer countries. I suspect we are underrating the noxious effects of that development.

If freedom has become disconnected from economic competence, then classical liberalism is dead.

(The XS suspicion, however, is that Cowen's sense of "freedom" has been so corrupted by social democracy that it's incapable of doing the work he wants it to here.)

March 22, 2017

Psycho Politics

Classical liberals are sitting-out the end of the world. Sitting out, mostly, in the way Norma Bates sat out her son's exploration of psychological diversity. Norman would know why she's not moving, if

he could only remember.

Before even starting, we're deep into the identity problem, and actually several. 'Liberalism' is the most profoundly corrupted word in political history. Without any exaggeration, rhetorical license, or metaphorical latitude, it's the leathery sliced-off face of something murdered long ago which now serves to disguise a foaming chainsaw-wielding maniac sharing none of its DNA. That psycho-killer usage needs to be put to rest before even getting to Bates. *Liberalism*, from this point forward, means nothing at all like state-happy progressivism. It is defined, instead, as the polar opposite of socialism. Its sole commanding value is liberty. It is individualist, only ever guardedly traditionalist, commercially and industrially oriented, strategically neglectful of *care*, skeptical in respect to all purported public agencies, and rigorously economical in respect to every dimension of government. It had a truly terrible 20th century, and right now things aren't looking any better.

At no time in recent history have liberal concerns been less relevant to public policy – even as foils, or 'neoliberal' bogeymen. It might be necessary to return to the 1930s to find a time of comparable eclipse. They aren't being listened to, and they certainly aren't the *object* of any animated conversations, unless to slip into social media banter as the butt of jokes. Their concerns seem eccentric, and even identifiably *dated*, to some point between the end of the 1970s and the Baby Bush quagmire. Where the right once

nursed a secret ambivalence for Pinochet, out of admiration for the Chicago Boys, today it's only interested in the helicopters.

It isn't – mostly – the gender and generational confusion of the Norma / Norman sub-personalities that make libertarians so Batesian. It's the third alter, who goes missing in the movie but not in the novel. Norman intermittently mistakes himself for *Normal*. Normal is the one who thinks he's just like everyone else. Liberalism does exactly the same thing. It goes mad by thinking of itself as normal, when really it's WEIRD.

Liberal universalism has aged badly in recent years. More specifically, it has aged badly in two very different directions. To the left, liberalism has been consumed by universalism, becoming a liberty-deriding globalist monster, while to the right it has been thoroughly demoralized, as recognition has dawned about what its universalism actually means. To anyone still trembling to some slight residual death-flutter of the liberal impulse, the discussion quickly becomes nearly intolerable at this point. Withdrawal, psychic-shattering, and other manifestations of traumatized craziness ensue.

Everything that the 2016 US Presidential Election was about is germane. Political correctness and the Overton Window in general, race, immigration, gender, and social *norms* in particular, every part of it caught upon an aspect of the liberal agony. Donald Trump was, in the strict sense – and not just the depraved one – a drastically *illiberal* candidate. In his campaign, public humiliation of

universalism amounted almost to a platform. American politics had become nakedly tribal.

That American dream girl who you were talking to over dinner? The one who might have been the future? She bled-out from multiple knife-wounds in the shower. *You killed her, Norman*. Yes, you did. It's hard to believe, obviously, but we're going to explain how.

To begin with the most heated dimension of identity politics, liberalism has a race problem. Liberals tend to like immigrants a lot, while immigrants don't like liberals very much at all. Some quantitative evidence for this is provided by Hal Pashler, in a (2013) paper on *U.S. Immigrants' Attitudes Toward Libertarian Values*, which discovers:

> … a marked pattern of **lower** support for pro-liberty views among immigrants as compared to US-born residents. These differences were generally statistically significant and sizable, with a few scattered exceptions. With increasing proportions of the US population being foreign-born, low support for libertarian values by foreign-born residents means that the political prospects of libertarian values in the US are likely to diminish over time.

According to a wide range of metrics, foreign-born residents expressed significantly lower support for limited government than

the native-born population. Such effects would almost certainly been strengthened further if the latter category had itself been broken-down by ethnicity. When Americans were offered a binary choice between smaller or larger government, an expansion of government was favored by only 27% of Whites, but by 55% of Asians, 64% of Blacks, and 73% of Hispanics. More precise ethnic categories only sharpen the pattern. The Hajnal Line, which divides Europe's most committed (north-western) out-breeders from their more tribalistic neighbors, summarizes a gradient of individualism, among other distinctive liberal traits. Emmanuel Todd's ethnography of family types and their associated ideological tendencies binds liberalism to the (North-West European) 'Absolute Nuclear Family.' Common law traditions are peculiar to Anglo-Saxons. Weber and Sombart ethnically identify capitalist dispositions with Protestants and (modern) Jews. It begins to seem extremely unlikely that liberals would represent a random sample of the world's peoples.

Liberal gender-skew is scarcely less striking.

Did Women's Suffrage Change the Size and Scope of Government? ask John Lott and Lawrence Kenny. It certainly looks that way:

> We find that government continued to grow as female voter turnout increased over time. Since suffrage was granted to women in different states over a long period of time

> extending from 1869 to 1920, it is unlikely that World War I is the key. These data also allow us to address causality questions in unusual ways. The central issue is whether giving women the right to vote caused government to grow or there was something else that both contributed to women's getting the right to vote and also increased government growth. We find very similar effects of women's suffrage in states that voted for suffrage and states that were forced to give women the right to vote, which suggests that the second effect is small.

The era of big government and that of female emancipation don't seem to be easily distinguishable. In the incautious words of Peter Thiel:

> Since 1920, the vast increase in welfare beneficiaries and the extension of the franchise to women — two constituencies that are notoriously tough for libertarians — have rendered the notion of "capitalist democracy" into an oxymoron.

The hideously compelling but utterly illiberal conclusion seems to be that women and non-whites have used their rising political influence to massively expand the scope of government. To which a third factor can be added, which is marriage. Quite simply, singles are communist maniacs, comparatively speaking. In regard to US partisan politics,

Steve Sailer calls it 'the marriage gap.' It isn't small. In the 2012 Presidential Election, married *women* (in general) broke for Romney over Obama by 55%, married white women by 63%, and married white men by 67%. (Romney's share among black single women was 2%.)

As liberal demographic, political, and social policies have been entrenched, classical liberals, steering the course of modern social evolution from a position modestly to the left of the old monarchical and ecclesiastical establishment, eventually became libertarians, railing ineffectually against the plunge into socialist tyranny from the position of a stranded, alienated, and derided outer right. Throughout the whole of this process, liberalism has consisted – almost without exception – of white men. These have typically been white men in denial, admittedly. Across the entire sweep of world history there has never been a population group more neglectful of its own privileges. And thus they destroyed themselves.

Anyone who has reached the "Oh, my God, the stereotypes!" stage with this is onto something. That has been a central part of the learning process. All the stereotypes are true (basically). That's science, too, if it helps, though it rarely does. Unless inflated, or dogmatized, beyond the range of usefulness as broad epistemological heuristics, stereotypes have vastly greater reliability than – for instance – ideologically-motivated cognitive commitments. What's more, classical liberals used to know that. It's

a Burkean expectation.

Stereotypes are spontaneous social products, like natural languages, common law, and metallic money. To say all this explains why classical liberals are conservatives, characterized by a principled acceptance of *the way things have turned out*. What had been, historically, a reasonably sanguine view of centralized state government was based on how little of it there had ever been. The mere existence of the gargantuan social-democratic welfarist state makes such conservative liberalism (or liberal conservatism) impossible. Radically frustrated revolutionary libertarianism takes its place.

It's easy to see what pushes Bates over the edge. He'd thought he was *Normal*, but it turns out he's a WASP. By a further mad twist, he recognizes the one thing WASPs will never do is defend their own culture – that's an essential ethnic tradition. Libertarianism has been crazily WASPish that way, when he looks at it, which he can't for long. It's an intractable paradox that leads through incoherence into fragmentation. To have protected his identity would have been something only another could have done. Perhaps his mother would look after him? But she's dead.

The identification of classical liberalism with WASP culture is a strong approximation. Few socio-historical correlations are more robust, but the coincidence can only be statistical. There are socialist WASPs, and classical liberal non-WASPs, although not enough of

either to seriously disrupt the pattern. When the French, in particular, refer to Anglo-Saxons stereotypically, they know what they are talking about, and so does anybody else who is paying attention. Hubert Védrine puts it best:

> [L]et's admit it: Globalization does not automatically benefit France. […] Globalization develops according to principles that correspond neither to French tradition nor to French culture. These principles include the ultraliberal market economy, mistrust of the state, individualism removed from the republican tradition, the inevitable reinforcement of the universal and 'indispensable' role of the United States, common law, the English language, Anglo-Saxon norms, and Protestant — more than Catholic — concepts.

It all makes sense from outside, but for WASP culture itself – which is to say *for liberalism* – identity politics is madness. That leaves it with nowhere to go. The leather-face schizo-Maoism of the contemporary Anglophone left is not any kind of plausible option, but neither is anything opening up on the popular right. As the Alt-Right consolidates its passionate affair with identity, it sounds ever more like Hubert Védrine. Individualism is derided. Its suspicion of free-trade owes more to Friedrich List than to the Scottish Enlightenment. Its criticism of labor arbitrage is often almost

indistinguishable from that familiar from socialist traditions, marked by the same current of moral outrage at the fact that Capital – despite itself being competitively disciplined by footloose consumers – is permitted to shop around for its human resources. Wage competition, and even price competition more generally, is an increasingly common object of attack. At its dynamic, racial edge the Alt-Right promotes solidarity among *Whites*, or *Europeans*, as if either could ever be a WASP thing. *Europe* is what liberalism has always sought to escape. Populism demands grievance politics, which means default antipathy to market dominant minorities, and thus – in the Western context – an irrepressible inclination to anti-Semitism. None of this describes a place that even maddened liberals can go.

Because the word 'fascism' has been so ruined by incontinent polemical usage, it is difficult to employ without apparent rhetorical over-reach. This is unfortunate, because in its cold, technical sense, the word is not even merely convenient, but even invaluable. It literally means *the politics of bundling*. *Fasces* are sticks bound together. Liberals are essentially defined by their dissent from that. If WASP culture has a core, it is loose association. There's no real possibility of simply sticking it back together. Pirates and cowboys don't do national solidarity. That would be a different culture altogether.

As for Bates, he knows his mother is dead by now, and even that

he killed her – *kills anyone like her*. Bad thoughts flood in. It's difficult to move on, but at least he has confidence in his own inviolable non-aggression principle. There's no way it could have been as they say, because he wouldn't hurt anyone. Not even a fly.

August 11, 2017

SECTION A - REPUBLICANISM AND CONSTITUTIONS

CHAPTER ONE - SOVEREIGNTY

Quibbles with Moldbug

To be a reactionary, minimally speaking, requires no more than a recognition that things are going to hell. As the source of decay is traced ever further back, and attributed to ever more deeply-rooted – and securely mainstream — sociopolitical assumptions, the reactionary attitude becomes increasingly extreme. If innovative elements are introduced into either the diagnosis or the proposed remedy, a neo-reactionary mentality is born.

As the United States, along with the world that it has built, careers into calamity, neo-reactionary extremism is embarrassingly close to becoming a vogue. If evidence is needed, consider the Vacate Movement, a rapidly growing dissident faction within the 0.0000001%. This is a development that would have been scarcely imaginable, were it not for the painstakingly crafted, yet rhetorically effervescent provocations of Mencius Moldbug.

From Moldbug, immoderate neo-reaction has learnt many essential and startling facts about the genealogy and tendency of history's central affliction, newly baptized *the Cathedral*. It has been

liberated from the mesmerism of 'democratic universalism' – or evangelical ultra-puritanism – and trained back towards honest (and thus forbidden) books. It has re-learnt class analysis, of unprecedented explanatory power. Much else could have been added, before arriving at our destination: the schematic outline for a 'neocameral' alternative to the manifestly perishing global political order. (On a trivial etiquette matter: Moldbug politely asks to be addressed as 'Mencius' — comparable requests by Plato Jiggabug and Siddhartha Moldbucket have been evaded too.)

Moldbug scrupulously distances his proposals from any hint of revolutionary agitation, or even the mildest varieties of civil disobedience. Neocameralism is not designed to antagonize, but rather to *restore order* to social bodies that have squandered it, by drafting a framework compatible with the long-lost art of effective government. ('Long-lost', that is, to the West – the Singapore example, among those of other city states and special economic zones, is never far removed.) Neocameralism would not overthrow anything, but rather arise amongst ruins. It is a solution awaiting the terminal configuration of a problem.

The neocameral program proceeds roughly as follows:

Phase-1: Constructively disciplined lamentation

Phase-2: Civilization collapses

Phase-3: Re-boot to a modernized form of absolute monarchy, in which citizens are comprehensively stripped of all historically-

accumulated political rights

Despite its obvious attractions to partisans of liberty, this program is not without its dubious features, a few of which can be touched upon here whilst rehearsing the Moldbug case for Neocameral government in slightly greater detail. Stated succinctly and preliminarily, our reservations drift into focus when that guy on a white horse appears. Where exactly does he come from?

To answer 'Carlyle' would be easy, and not exactly inaccurate, but it would also miss the structural coherence of the issue. Moldbug refuses to call his neocameral dictator a 'national CEO' (which he is), preferring to describe him as a 'monarch' (which – as a non-dynastic executive appointee — he isn't), for reasons both stylistic and substantial. Stylistically, royalism is a provocation, and a dramatization of reactionary allegiance. Substantially, it foregrounds the question of *sovereignty*.

Moldbug's political philosophy is founded upon a revision to the conception of property, sufficient to support the assertion that *sovereign power is properly understood as the owner of a country*. It is only at this level of political organization that real property rights – i.e. *protections* – are sustained.

> *Property is any stable structure of monopoly control. You own something if you alone control it. Your control is stable if no one else will take it away from you. This control may*

> *be assured by your own powers of violence, or it may be delegated by a higher power. If the former, it is* secondary *property. If the latter, it is* primary *or* sovereign *property.*

The sovereign power (sovereign corporation, or 'sovcorp'), alone, is able to ensure its own property rights. Its might and rights are absolutely identical, and from this primary identity subordinate rights (to 'secondary property') cascade down through the social hierarchy. Neocameralism is nothing but the systematic, institutional recognition of this reality. (Whether it is, in fact, a 'reality' is a question we shall soon proceed to.)

Perhaps surprisingly, Moldbug's conclusions can be presented in terms that recovering libertarians have found appealing:

> *Neocameralism is the idea that a sovereign state or primary corporation is not organizationally distinct from a secondary or private corporation. Thus we can achieve good management, and thus libertarian government, by converting sovcorps to the same management design that works well in today's private sector – the joint-stock corporation.*
>
> *One way to approach neocameralism is to see it as a refinement of royalism, an ancient system in which the sovcorp is a sort of family business. Under neocameralism, the biological quirks of royalism are eliminated and the State*

> *"goes public," hiring the best executives regardless of their bloodline or even nationality.*
>
> *Or you can just see neocameralism as part of the usual capitalist pattern in which services are optimized by aligning the interests of the service provider and the service consumer. If this works for groceries, why shouldn't it work for government? I have a hard time in accepting the possibility that democratic constitutionalism would generate either lower prices or better produce at Safeway …*

In order to take a step back from this vision, towards its foundations, it is useful to scrutinize its building blocks. When Moldbug defines property as "any stable structure of monopoly control" what is really meant by 'control'? It might seem simple enough. To control something is to use, or make use of it — to put it to work, such that a desired outcome is in fact achieved. 'Property' would be glossed as *exclusive right of use*, or instrumental utilization, conceived with sufficient breadth to encompass consumption, and perhaps (we will come to this), donation or exchange.

Complications quickly arise. 'Control' in this case would involve technical competence, or the ability to make something work. If control requires that one can *use something effectively*, then it demands compliance with natural fact (through techno-scientific understanding and practical skills). Even consumption is a type of

use. Is this historical variable – vastly distant from intuitive notions of sovereignty – actually suited to a *definition* of property?

It might be realistic to conceive property through control, and control through technical competence, but it would be hard to defend as an advance in formalism. Since this problem thoroughly infuses the topic of 'might', or operational sovereignty, it is also difficult to isolate, or parenthesize. Moldbug's frequent, enthusiastic digressions into the practicalities of crypto-locked military apparatuses attest strongly to this. The impression begins to emerge that the very possibility of sovereign property is bound to an irreducibly fuzzy, historically dynamic, and empirically intricate investigation into the micro-mechanics of power, dissolving into an acid fog of Clauswitzean 'friction' (or ineliminable unpredictability).

More promising, by far – for the purposes of tractable argument — is a strictly formal or contractual usage of 'control' to designate the exclusive right to *free disposal* or *commercial alienation*. Defined this way, ownership is a legal category, co-original with the idea of contract, referring to those things which one has the right to trade (based on natural law). Property is essentially marketable. It cannot exist unless it can be alienated through negotiation. A prince who cannot trade away his territory does not 'own' it in any sense that matters.

Moldbug *seems* to acknowledge this, in at least three ways. Firstly, his formalization of sovereign power, through conversion into

sovereign stock, commercializes it. Within the neocameral regime, power takes the form of revenue-yielding property, available for *free disposal* by those who wield it. That is the sole basis for the corporate analogy. If sovereign stock were not freely disposable, its 'owners' would be mere stewards, subject to obligations, non-alienable political responsibilities, or administrative duties that demonstrate with absolute clarity the subordination to a higher sovereignty. (That is, broadly speaking, the current situation, and inoffensively conventional political theory.)

Secondly, the neocameral state exists within a *patchwork*, or system of interactions, through which they compete for population, and in which peaceful (or commercial) redistributions — including takeovers and break-ups — are facilitated. Unless sovereign stock can be traded within the patchwork, it is not *property* at all. This in turn indicates that 'internal' positive legislation, as dictated by the domestic 'sovereign', is embedded within a far more expansive normative system, and the definition of 'property' cannot be exhausted by its *local determination* within the neocameral micropolis. As Moldbug repeatedly notes, an introverted despotism that violated broader patchwork norms – such as those governing free exit — could be reliably expected to suffer a collapse of sovereign stock value (which implies that the substance of sovereign stock is systemically, rather than locally, determined). If the entire neocameral state is *disciplined* through the patchwork, how real can

its local sovereignty be? This systemic disciplining or subversion of local sovereignty, it should be noted, is the sole attraction of the neocameral schema to supporters of dynamic geography (who want nothing more than for the national government to become the patchwork system's bitch).

Thirdly (and relatedly), neocameralism is floated as a model for experimental government, driven cybernetically towards effectiveness by the same types of feedback mechanisms that control 'secondary' corporations. In particular, population traffic between neocameral states is conceived as a fundamental regulator, continuously measuring the functionality of government, and correcting it in the direction of attractiveness. The incentive structure of the neocameral regime – and thus its claim to practical rationality — rests entirely upon this. Once again, however, it is evidently the radical limitation of local sovereignty, rather than its unconstrained expression, which promises to make such governments work. Free exit – to take the single most important instance — is a rule imposed at a higher level than the national sovereign, operating as a natural law of the entire patchwork. Without free exit, a neocameral state is no more than a parochial despotism. The absolute sovereign of the state *must choose* to comply with a rule he did not legislate … something is coming unstuck here (it's time to send that white horse to the biodiesel tanks).

Neocameralism necessarily commercializes sovereignty, and in

doing so it accommodates power to natural law. Sovereign stock ('primary property') and 'secondary property' become commercially inter-changeable, dissolving the original distinction, whilst local sovereignty is rendered compliant with the wider commercial order, and thus becomes a form of constrained 'secondary sovereignty' relative to the primary or absolute sovereignty of the system itself. Final authority bleeds out into the catallactic ensemble, the *agora*, or *commercium*, where *what can really happen* is decided by natural law. It is this to which sovereign stockholders, *if they are to be effective*, and to prosper, must defer.

The fundamental point, and the reason why the pretender on the white horse is so misleading, is that sovereignty cannot, in principle, inhere in a particular social agent – whether individual, or group. This is best demonstrated in reference to the concept of natural law (which James Donald outlines with unsurpassed brilliance). When properly understood, or articulated, natural law *cannot possibly be violated*. Putting your hand into a fire, and being burnt, does not defy the natural law that temperatures beyond a certain range cause tissue damage and pain. Similarly, suppressing private property, and producing economic cataclysm, does not defy the natural law that human economic behavior is sensitive to incentives.

Positive law, as created by legislators, takes the form: do (or don't do) this. Violations will be punished.

Natural law, as discovered by any rational being, takes the form:

do what thou wilt and accept the consequences. Rewards and punishments are intrinsic to it. It cannot be defied, but only misunderstood. It is therefore absolutely sovereign (*Deus sive Natura*). Like any other being, governments, however powerful, can only comply with it, either through intelligent adaptation and flourishing, or through ignorance, incompetence, degeneration, and death. To God-or-Nature it matters not at all. Natural law is indistinguishable from the true sovereign power which really decides what can work, and what doesn't, which can then – 'secondarily' — be learnt by rational beings, or not.

Moldbug knows this – really. He demonstrates it – to take just one highly informative example — through his insistence that a neocameral state would tend to tax at the Laffer optimum. That is to say, such a state would prove its effectiveness by maximizing the return on sovereign property *in compliance with reality*. It does not legislate the Laffer curve, or choose for it to exist, but instead recognizes that it has been discovered, and with it an aspect of natural law. Anything less, or other, would be inconsistent with its legitimacy as a competent protector of property. To survive, prosper, and even pretend to sovereignty, it can do nothing else. Its power is delegated by *commercium*.

It is surely no coincidence that Cnut the Great has been described by Norman Cantor as "the most effective king in Anglo-Saxon history." As Wikipedia relates his story:

> *His accession to the Danish throne in 1018 brought the crowns of England and Denmark together. Cnut held this power-base together by uniting Danes and Englishmen under cultural bonds of wealth and custom, rather than sheer brutality.*

Most importantly:

> *Henry of Huntingdon, the 12th-century chronicler, tells how Cnut set his throne by the sea shore and commanded the tide to halt and not wet his feet and robes. Yet "continuing to rise as usual [the tide] dashed over his feet and legs without respect to his royal person. Then the king leapt backwards, saying: 'Let all men know how empty and worthless is the power of kings, for there is none worthy of the name, but He whom heaven, earth, and sea obey by eternal laws.'"*

January 24, 2013

Cnut the Great

According to legend, at least, Cnut was the wisest of all kings, precisely because he ironized the attribution of sovereignty.

"Surely, Great King, you are ominipotent Fnargl himself!"

“Let us then test the claim, shall we?”

Modern macroeconomics is the systematized refusal to learn from this story. Sovereignty does not rise above the waves.

March 3, 2016

Twitter cuts (#52)

> @Outsideness "The Crown" isn't the same thing as the monarch, or even as the monarchy.
>
> — Lulach the Simpler (@lulach_cuardach) March 8, 2016

Responding to this (Outsideness) twitter-stream:

The transcendental self is not the empirical person, Kant argues, though confusion of the two is a reliable anthropological fact. … ‘Sovereignty’ demands disciplined critique on exactly these lines. Monarchical theater is (exactly) a naive image of ‘the sovereign’. … Moldbug is clear that the ‘monarch’ (state CEO) is an agent of sovereignty, and not the sovereign ‘himself’. … The LARPing loved by romantic reaction, and derided by the Left, dwells entirely within this rigorously identifiable philosophical error. … Sovereignty is no less a profound philosophical enigma than the transcendental self, the prompt for an exploration of vast difficulty. … “We know what a sovereign looks like.” — It is scarcely possible to imagine a delusion of

greater absurdity.

Something of greater articulacy is clearly called for, but the kernel would be unchanged. 'Sovereignty' is the translation of the transcendental into the realm of political philosophy. This is why, even for atheists, the Idea of Divine Right sovereign legitimacy is a superior point of departure than mere charismatic leadership.

March 8, 2016

Quotable (#176)

Stockman on the limits of power:

The Deep State can control Congress. It can control the state bureaucracy, Wall Street and Big Business. It can even – usually – control the voters. But it can't control the credit cycle.

Cnut the Great is the ancient hero of the Austrians, and Nemesis is their goddess.

June 29, 2016

Scale-free Reaction

Kaplan goes full Moldbug:

Unless some force can, against considerable odds, reinstitute

hierarchy … we will have more fluidity, more equality and therefore more anarchy to look forward to. This is profoundly disturbing, because civilization abjures anarchy. … without order — without hierarchy — there is nothing.

Perhaps, in the field of international relations, Kaplan is *more* Moldbug than Moldbug, presenting an uncompromisingly hardline reactionary model of world order, completely undisturbed by domestic considerations or even the slightest hint of libertarian descent. If *sovereignty is conserved* globally, as well as nationally, a worldwide Patchwork order looks as improbable as a stable constitutional republic, and exit options evaporate. Scale-free Moldbuggian analysis could prove more than a little blood-chilling.

April 18, 2013

Transcendental Anarchy

This, from NBS, is perfect.

Asked (by Garrett Gray): "What reason is there to think there's an irreducible anarchy between sovereigns?" he responds —

Suppose there is no anarchy between sovereigns. This means there is a law governing sovereigns. Which means there is a sovereign over the sovereigns. Which means that the sovereigns weren't sovereign. Which is a contradiction. Therefore there IS

anarchy between sovereigns.

This insight is already the solid foundation of IRT, but it's surprising how few seem to clearly get it.

September 15, 2016

CHAPTER TWO - CONSTITUTIONS AND ALGORITHMIC GOVERNANCE

A Republic, If You Can Keep It

The interlocking achievements of Kurt Gödel, which revolutionized the rigorous understanding of logic, arithmetic, and time, are not of a nature that wins ready popular acclamation. There is nevertheless a broadly factual story about him that has attained some notable level of popularity, and it is one that connects suggestively with the core concerns of his work. At the website of the Institute for Advanced Study (where Gödel was based from 1940 until his death in 1978), Oskar Morgenstern's recollection of the episode in question is recorded:

> *[Gödel] rather excitedly told me that in looking at the Constitution, to his distress, he had found some inner contradictions and that he could show how in a perfectly legal manner it would be possible for somebody to become a dictator and set up a Fascist regime never intended by those who drew up the Constitution. I told him that it was most*

unlikely that such events would ever occur, even assuming that he was right, which of course I doubted.

But he was persistent and so we had many talks about this particular point. I tried to persuade him that he should avoid bringing up such matters at the examination before the court in Trenton, and I also told Einstein about it: he was horrified that such an idea had occurred to Gödel, and he also told him he should not worry about these things nor discuss that matter.

Many months went by and finally the date for the examination in Trenton came. On that particular day, I picked up Gödel in my car. He sat in the back and then we went to pick up Einstein at his house on Mercer Street, and from there we drove to Trenton. While we were driving, Einstein turned around a little and said, "Now Gödel, are you really well prepared for this examination?" Of course, this remark upset Gödel tremendously, which was exactly what Einstein intended and he was greatly amused when he saw the worry on Gödel's face.

When we came to Trenton, we were ushered into a big room, and while normally the witnesses are questioned separately from the candidate, because of Einstein's appearance, an exception was made and all three of us were invited to sit down together, Gödel, in the center. The

examiner first asked Einstein and then me whether we thought Gödel would make a good citizen. We assured him that this would certainly be the case, that he was a distinguished man, etc.

And then he turned to Gödel and said, Now, Mr. Gödel, where do you come from?

Gödel: Where I come from? Austria.

The examiner: What kind of government did you have in Austria?

Gödel: It was a republic, but the constitution was such that it finally was changed into a dictatorship.

The examiner: Oh! This is very bad. This could not happen in this country.

Gödel: Oh, yes, I can prove it.

To the great advantage of intelligence on earth, Gödel did not in the end disqualify himself from residence in the USA through this disastrously over-accurate understanding of its constitution. Evidently, despite everything that had happened by 1947, detailed attachment to the constitution had not yet become a thought-crime.

Today, emphatic attachment to the US Constitution is restricted to the decent i.e. lunatic fringe of the Outer Party, and even crankier outliers. Hardcore libertarians tend to dismiss it as a distraction, if not a malign incarnation of statist degeneracy (when compared to

the less Leviathan-compatible Articles of Confederation). Reactionary realists of the Moldbug school (in all their vast multitudes) are at least as dismissive, seeing it as little more than a fetish object and evasion of the timeless practical question: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*? If constitutions are realistically indefensible, both in principle and as a matter of brutally demonstrated historical fact, what significance could they have to any cold-eyed analysis of power?

Since the overwhelmingly bulk of present USG activity is transparently unconstitutional, the skeptical case largely makes itself. Presidents mobilize congressional support to appoint Supreme Court justices whose principal qualification for office is willingness to conspire in the subversion of the constitution, to the deafening applause of a pork-ravening electorate and their intermediary lobbies. How could that plausibly be resisted? Perhaps that was Gödel's point.

In fact, no one really knows what Gödel's point was. Jeffrey Kegler, who has examined the topic carefully, leaves it open. "Apparently, the 'inconsistency' noted by Gödel is simply that the Constitution provides for its own amendment," suggests a "gravely disappointed" Mark Dominus, who "had been hoping for something brilliant and subtle that only Gödel would have noticed." Dominus draws this tentative conclusion from Peter Suber's *Paradox of Self-Amendment*, where it is stated more boldly:

> *Kurt Gödel the Austrian logician understood that an omnipotent AC contained the risk of tyranny. Gödel studied the U.S. constitution in preparation for his oral citizenship examination in 1948. He noticed that the AC had procedural limitations but no substantive limitations; hence it could be used to overturn the democratic institutions described in the rest of the constitution.*

Suber adds: "A desire to limit the amending power, or to make it more difficult — not the same thing — shows a distrust for democracy or a denial that in general the people deserve what they get." (We'll get back to that later.)

This is conceptually persuasive, because it harmonizes Gödel's constitutional concerns with his central intellectual pre-occupation: the emergence of inconsistencies within self-referential formal systems. The Amending Clause (Article V, section 1) is the occasion for the constitution to talk about itself, and thus to encounter problems rigorously comparable to those familiar from Gödel's incompleteness theorems in mathematical logic. Despite the neatness of this 'solution', however, there is no solid evidence to support it. Furthermore, self-referential structures can be identified at numerous other points. For instance, is not the authority of the Supreme Court respecting constitutional interpretation a similar point of reflexivity, with unlimited potential for circularity and

paradox? This insight, highly-regarded among the neo-reactionaries, recognizes that the constitution allows – in principle – for a sufficiently corrupted Supreme Court to 'interpret' its way to absolute power (in conformity with a constitution that has sublimed into pure 'life'). Insofar as a constitution allows for its own processing, it must – ultimately — allow anything.

Moldbug asks us to accelerate through this formal tangle, cutting the Gordian knot. "Sovereignty is conserved," he repeats, insistently, so the occasions when power undertakes to bind itself are essentially risible. *Of course* the final custodian of the constitution is a constitutionally unrestrained dictator. That's simple Schmittian sanity.

With all due contempt for *argumentum ad hominem*, it can probably still be agreed that Gödel was not a fool, so that his excited identification of a *localized flaw* in the US Constitution merits consideration as just that (rather than an excuse to bin the entire problematic). The formal resonances between his topically disparate arguments provide a further incentive to slow down.

Whether in number theory, or space-time cosmology, Gödel's method was to advance the formalization of the system under consideration and then test it to destruction upon the 'strange loops' it generated (paradoxes of self-reference and time-travel). In each case, the system was shown to permit cases that it could not consistently absorb, opening it to an interminable process of

revision, or technical improvement. It thus defined dynamic intelligence, or the logic of evolutionary imperfection, with an adequacy that was both sufficient and necessarily inconclusive. What it did not do was trash the very possibility of arithmetic, mathematical logic, or cosmic history — except insofar as these were falsely identified with idols of finality or closure.

On the slender evidence available, Gödel's 'reading' of the US Constitution was strictly analogous. Far from excusing the abandonment of constitutionalism, it identified constitutional design as the only intellectually serious response to the problem of politics (i.e. untrammeled power). It is a subtle logical necessity that constitutions, like any formal systems of comparable complexity, cannot be perfected or consistently completed. In other words, as Benjamin Franklyn fully recognized, any republic is precarious. Nothing *necessarily* follows from this, but a number of things might.

Most abruptly, one might contemplate the sickly child with sadness, before abandoning it on the hillside for the wolves. Almost every interesting voice on the right seems to be heading this way. Constitutions are a grim joke.

Alternatively, constitutionalism could be elevated to a new level of cultural dignity, in keeping with its status as the sole model of republican government, or truly logical politics. This would require, first of all, that the necessity for constitutional modification was recognized only when such modification *made the constitution*

stronger, in purely formal, or systemic terms. In the US case, the first indication of such an approach would be an amendment of Article Five itself, in order to specify that constitutional amendments are tolerated only when they satisfy criteria of formal improvement, legitimated in exact, mathematical terms, in accordance with standards of proof no different than those applicable to absolutely uncontroversial arguments (theorems). Constitutional design would be subsumed within applied mathematics as a subsection of nonlinear control theory.

Under these (unlikely) circumstances, the purpose of the constitution is to sustain itself, and thus the Republic. As a mathematical object, the constitution is maximally simple, consistent, necessarily incomplete, and interpretable as a model of natural law. Political authority is allocated solely to *serve the constitution*. There are no authorities which are not overseen, within nonlinear structures. Constitutional language is formally constructed to eliminate all ambiguity and to be processed algorithmically. Democratic elements, along with official discretion, and legal judgment, is incorporated reluctantly, minimized in principle, and gradually eliminated through incremental formal improvement. Argument defers to mathematical expertise. Politics is a disease that the constitution is designed to cure.

Extreme skepticism is to be anticipated not only from the Moldbuggian royalists, but from all of those educated by Public

Choice theory to analyze 'politics without romance'. How could *defending the constitution* become an absolute, categorical or unconditional imperative, when the only feasible defenders are *people*, guided by multiple incentives, few of which align neatly with objective constitutional order? Yet, how is this different from the question of mathematical or natural scientific progress? Are not mathematicians equally people, with appetites, egos, sex-driven status motivations, and deeply defective capabilities for realistic introspection? How does maths advance? (No one can seriously deny that it does.) The answer surely lies in its autonomous or impersonal criteria of excellence, combined with pluralistic institutions that facilitate Darwinian convergence. The Gödelian equivalence between mathematical logic and constitutional government indicates that such principles and mechanisms are absent from the public domain only due to defective (democratic-bureaucratic) design.

When it comes to *deep realism*, and to guns, is there any reason to think the military is resistant by nature to constitutional subordination? Between the sublime office of Commander in Chief, and the mere man, is it not obvious that authority should tend to gravitate to the former? It might be argued that civilization is nothing else, that is to say: the tendency of *personal authority* to decline towards zero. Ape-men will reject this of course. It's what they do.

Between democracy, monarchy, anarchy, or republican

government, the arguments will not end soon. They are truly ancient, and illustrated in the Odyssey, by the strategy of binding oneself against the call of the Sirens. Can Odysseus bind himself? Only republicans defend the attempt, as Gödel did. All of the others let the Sirens win. Perhaps they will.

February 1, 2013

The Royalist Imperative

This is an argument I'm really not grasping:

Libertarians are unrealistic because the world was once vastly freer than it is today, and then progressively rolled down the populist hill into the present social democratic latrine trench, so "Why would we expect different results on the second go?" [OK, still following so far] … *thus* we need Kings back, because … [we need to catch the rising tide, after all, the world hasn't ever been more monarchist than now? Prussian Neocameralism outlasted Manchester Liberalism? Royalist institutions have demonstrated their inherent immunity to the forces of decay? …]

How can reactionaries criticize free republics for falling apart? Everything reactionaries have ever respected fell apart. *Nobody would be a reactionary if their favored configuration of the world hadn't fallen apart.*

Republics are extremely fragile. All the more reason to take devoted care of them (first of all, by protecting them from democracy).

ADDED: Fag-end of a ludicrous institution. (via AoS)

ADDED: Epic response from Nydwracu .

February 20, 2013

The Odysseus Problem

Moldbug's insistence that 'Sovereignty is conserved' surely counts as one of the most significant assertions in the history of political thought. It is arguably the fundamental axiom of his 'system', and its implications are almost inestimably profound.

Sovereignty is conserved says that anything that appears to *bind* sovereignty *is itself* in reality true sovereignty, binding something else, and something less. It is therefore a negative answer to the Odysseus Problem: *Can Sovereignty bind itself*? If Moldbug's assertion is accepted, constitutional government is impossible, except as a futile aspiration, a 'noble lie', or a cynical joke.

In addition to Moldbug's powerful arguments, we know from the work of Kurt Gödel that the Odysseus Problem is at least partially insoluble, since it is logically impossible for there to be a *perfect knot*. However well constructed a constitution might be, it cannot, in

principle, seal itself reliably against the possibility of a surreptitious undoing. In a sufficiently complex (self-referential) constitutional order, there will always be permissible procedures whose consequences have not been completely anticipated, and whose consistency with the continuation of the system cannot be ensured in advance.

Yet it would be obviously misleading to assume that such concerns were not already active during the formulation of the American Constitution. It is precisely because some quite lucid comprehension of the Odysseus Problem was at work, that the founders envisaged the grounding principle of republican constitutionalism as a division of powers, whereby the component units of a disintegrated sovereignty *bound each other*. The animating system of incentives was not to rest upon a naive expectation of altruism or voluntary restraint, but upon a systematically integrated *network of suspicion*, formally installing the anti-monarchical impulse as an enduring, distributed function. If the republic was to work, it would be because the *fear of power* in other hands permanently over-rode the *greed for power* in one's own.

The American Constitution was, of course, destroyed, in successive waves. After Lincoln, and FDR, only a pitiful and derided shell remains. USG has unified itself, and the principle of sovereign power has been thoroughly re-legitimated in the court of popular opinion. Democracy rose as the republic fell, exposing yet again the

essential political bond of the tyrant with the mob, Leviathan with the people.

Does this ruin refute the constitutional conjecture? Is there really nothing further to be said in defense of imperfect (but perhaps improvable) knots? This one came horribly undone. Might there be other, better ones? *Outside in* remains obstinately interested in the problem …

ADDED: Many relevant speculations and insights are to be found in this article on the practicalities of secession (especially section XI J, XII, XIII, and XIV). "Since it is important that the AFR [or proposed American Federal Republic] function as a constitutional republic, one of the first things it should do is to hold a constitutional convention. We anticipate that the resulting document will be similar to the present American constitution, but not identical." It includes some (very modest) recommendations to curtail democracy.

February 21, 2013

Shelter of the Pyramid

Moldbug's 'Royalism' (or Carlylean reaction) rests upon the proposition that the Misesian catallactic order is, like Newtonian mechanics, true only as a special case within a more general system of principles.

He writes:

Here is the Carlylean roadmap for the Misesian goal. Spontaneous order, also known as ***freedom****, is the highest level of a political pyramid of needs. These needs are:* ***peace, security, law****, and* ***freedom****. To advance order, always work for the next step – without skipping steps. In a state of war, advance toward peace; in a state of insecurity, advance toward security; in a state of security, advance toward law; in a state of law, advance toward freedom.*

Alexander Hamilton (Federalist #8) pursues a closely related argument, in reverse:

Safety from external danger is the most powerful director of national conduct. Even the ardent love of liberty will, after a time, give way to its dictates. The violent destruction of life and property incident to war, the continual effort and alarm attendant on a state of continual danger, will compel nations the most attached to liberty to resort for their repose and security to institutions which have a tendency to destroy their civil and political rights. To be more safe, they at length become willing to run the risk of being less free.

This pyramidal schema is 'neat', but by no means unproblematic. Like any hierarchical structure operating within a complex, reflexive field, it invites strange loops which scramble its apparently coherent order. Even accepting, as realism dictates, that war exists at the most basic level of social possibility, so that military survival grounds all 'higher' elaborations, can we be entirely confident that catallactic

forces are neatly confined to the realm of pacific and sophisticated civilian intercourse? Does not this mode of analysis lead to exactly the opposite conclusion? Self-organizing networks are *tough*, and perhaps supremely tough.

There is nothing obvious or uncontroversial about the model of the market order as a fragile flower, blossoming late, and precariously, within a hot-house constructed upon very different principles. The *pact* is already catallactic, and who is to say — at least, without a prolonged fight — that it is subordinate, in principle, to a more primordial assertion of order. Subordination is complex, and conflicted, and although the Pyramid certainly has a case, the trial of reality is not easily predictable. An ultimate (or basic) *fanged freedom* is eminently thinkable. (Isn't that what the Second Amendment argument is about?)

February 24, 2013

Casino Royale

Even prior to the twitterization catastrophe, and the terminal disintegration of thought into nano-particles, symphonic orchestration wasn't obviously emerging as an *Outside in* core competence. One unfortunate consequence of this deficiency is that highly persuasive blogging ideas get endlessly can-kicked, unless

they can be easily pulverized.

"Blogging ideas" doesn't mean anything grandiose (those type of thoughts splinter anything in their path, and bust in), but rather highly medium-adapted discussion packages, which present things in a way that racks up hits. The relevant example right now is — or rather 'was to be' — ***The X Fundamental Disputes of Neoreaction*** ('X' being an as-yet undetermined number — optimally of surreptitious qabbalistic significance). That puppy would have been clocking up views like Old Faithful, but confusion reigns, and patience has run out. Into the shredding machine it goes.

The principal provocations for this spasm of impatience are two posts on the topic of monarchism, at *Anomaly UK*, and *More Right*. The Great AUK post is structured as a science fiction scenario, modeling a future monarchist regime, whilst Michael Anissimov's MR defense of "traditionalism and monarchism" is organized dialectically. Both serve to consolidate an affinity between neoreaction and monarchist ideals that was already solidly established by Moldbug's Jacobitism. It would not be unreasonable to propose that this affinity is strong enough to approach an identity (which is quite possibly what both of these writers do envisage). So the time to frame the monarchist case within a question, as a Fundamental Dispute of Neoreaction, is now.

Perhaps the first thing to note is that, even though *Outside in* adopts the anti-monarchist position in this dispute, it finds the

Anomaly UK description of a future Britain remarkably attractive, and — without any hesitation — a vast improvement upon the present dismal state of that country's political arrangements. In addition, there is not a single objection to the monarchist idea, among the ten listed by Anissimov, that we find even slightly persuasive. If these were the reasons to refuse monarchy government, any suggestion of republican sentiment would strike us as an obnoxious perversion. Our dissatisfaction with the monarchist solution has other grounds.

The primary concern is abstractly constitutional, which is to say, it arises from considerations of political engineering. For our purposes here, the concept of 'constitutional government' can be quite exactly specified, to refer to a blueprint for the mechanism of power that achieves *cybernetic closure*. An adequate constitution designs a fragmentation of authority, such that each element is no less controlled than controlling, with the result that sovereignty *emerges* from a distributed system, rather than inhering in concentrated form within any particular node. The simplest model for such a system is a dynamic triangle, comparable to the circuit of paper-scissors-stone, in which power *flows* nonlinearly, or *circulates*. Thus conceived, a constitution is a design for the dissolution of power reservoirs, in which the optimum administrative function of each node is a check, or restriction, on the effective authority of nodes downstream (within a circular arrangement). The achievement of dynamically

stable governmental self-limitation through strategic fragmentation (of functions and powers) is the constitutional objective.

Clearly, monarchism represents a definitive abandonment of this constitutional ambition. It contends that, since sovereignty cannot be effectively or permanently dismantled, rational attention is better focused upon its concentrated expression. The monarchist case is able to draw great sustenance from the manifest degeneration of republican constitutionalism — most obviously within the United States of America — where its most radically deteriorated possibility, mass democracy, betrays a scarcely contestable inferiority to monarchical government in each day's news headlines. It needs to be emphasized at this point that any constitutional republicanism which is less anti-democratic than absolute monarchy is, in that regard, contemptible. Neoreaction is essentially anti-democratic, but only hypothetically monarchist.

Republicanism, like monarchy, has a rich and deep historical archive of examples to draw upon, dating back to classical antiquity. The confusion between republican government and democracy is a recent and unfortunate eventuality. The historical reasons for this confusion are by no means trivial, but nor do they point inexorably to the monarchist conclusion. It is especially important to consider the possibility that the demotic destruction of monarchical regimes, and of functional republics, has been a parallel process, rather than a succession (in which republicanism served as an intermediate stage

of political disorganization). A detailed historical analysis of the 1848 revolutions would bring out some of the complexity this topic introduces. In particular, it raises the question why the model of the Dutch Republic (1581-1795) was unable to offer a template for constitutional government of effective relevance beyond the Anglosphere. From the perspective of constitutional republicanism, the limited influence of the Dutch example marks a fatal historical bifurcation, exposing the European peoples to a calamitous bi-polar struggle between monarchical and democratic forces (from which our present ruin was hatched). It is also immediately evident from this perspective that the emergence of advanced capitalistic economic organization is inextricable from the propagation of the Dutch model (transplanted into the UK by the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and from there to the Anglophone New World). Since capitalism epitomizes cybernetic closure — a system without uncontrolled nodes — these connections should not surprise us.

Because monarchism dismisses the possibility of cybernetic closure, and thus asks us to accept the inevitability of uncontrolled nodes, or concentrated sovereignty, it necessarily compromises on the prospects of meritocratic selection. It argues, soundly enough, that we can do far worse than kings, and have done so, but in making this case it falls far short of the selective mechanism for excellence that capitalism routinely demonstrates. When Moldbug compares a monarch to a CEO, it is with the understanding that — under

approximate free-enterprise conditions — business leadership has been socially sifted for rare talent in a way that dynastic succession cannot possibly match. The fact that the outcome of democratic-electoral selection is reliably far worse than the monarchical alternative does not indicate that 'royalty' represents an impressive solution to the meritocratic problem — it is simply less appalling than the one presently prevalent among our contemporary political systems. It is capitalism that has found the solution, from which any rational politics would seek to learn.

That monarchy is superior to democracy is a point of secure neoreactionary consensus, but this is a remarkably low benchmark to set. That there is anything beyond it recommending the return of kings remains an unsettled matter of dispute.

October 7, 2013

Rules

Foseti and Jim have been conducting an argument in slow motion, without quite connecting. Much of this has been occurring in sporadic blog comments, and occasional remarks. It would be very helpful of me to reconstruct it here, through a series of meticulous links. I'll begin by failing at that. (Any assistance offered in piecing it together, textually, will be highly appreciated.)

Despite its elusiveness, I think it is the most important intellectual engagement taking place anywhere in the field of political philosophy. Its point of departure is the Moldbuggian principle that 'sovereignty is conserved' and everything that follows from it, both theoretically and practically. The virtual conclusion of this controversy is the central assertion of Dark Enlightenment, which we do not yet comprehend.

The problem is this: Can real — which is to say ultimate (or sovereign) — political authority be constrained? Moldbug's answer is 'no'. A constrained authority is a superseded authority, or delegated power. To limit government is to exceed, and thus supplant it. It follows that 'constitutionalism' is a masked usurpation, and the task of realist political theory is to identify the usurper. It is this that is apparently achieved through the designation of the Cathedral.

To crudely summarize the argument in question, Foseti upholds this chain of reasoning, whilst Jim refuses it. Constitutional issues cannot be anything but a distraction from realistic political philosophy if Foseti is correct. If Jim's resistance is sustainable, constitutions matter.

Outside in (and its predecessor) has sought purchase on this problem here, here, here, and here. It has yet to find an articulation that clicks. Eventually, something has to, if we are to advance even by a step. So long as the Foseti-Jim argument falls short of mutually-agreeable terms of intellectual engagement, we can be confident

that this critical controversy remains stuck.

What are the rules of contestation? If we knew that, we would know everything (that matters to us here). Rules are the whole of the problem.

A constitution is a system of rules, formalizing a social game. Among these rules are set procedures for the selection of umpires, and umpires decide how the rules are to be revised, interpreted, and implemented. The circuit is irreducible. Without accepted rules, a Supreme Court justice is no more than a random old guy — prey for the most wretched species of street thug. Who has power in a world without rules, Clarence Thomas or Trayvon Martin?

Yet without umpires (or, at least, an umpire-function), rules are simply marks on a piece of paper, disconnected from all effective authority. "You can't do that, it's against the rules!" To the political realist, those are the words of a dupe, and everyone knows the rejoinder: "Who's going to stop me, you and who's army?" It's enough to get Moldbug talking about crypto-locked weaponry.

The Dark Enlightenment knows that it is necessary to be realistic about rules. Such realism, lucidly and persuasively articulated, still eludes it. That the sovereign rules does not explain the rules of sovereignty, and there must be such rules, because the alternative is pure force, and that is a romantic myth of transparent absurdity.

If there is an uncontroversial fact of real power, it is that force is massively economized, and it is critically important that we

understand what that implies. Moldbug acknowledges exactly this when he identifies the real sovereign instance of climaxed Occidental modernity with the Cathedral, which is a church (and not an army). Political philosophy cannot approach reality before accepting that rules are irreducible, which is not to say that they are sufficient,or even (yet) intelligible.

One further point on this problem (for now): A model of power that is not scale-free is inadequately formulated. If what is held to work for a nation state does not work for the world, the conception remains incomplete. Do we dream of a global God-Emperor? If not, what do royalist claims at a lower level amount to? What does 'conserved sovereignty' care for borders? They are limits — indeed *limited government* — and that is supposed to be the illusion prey to realist critique.

If there can be borders, there can be limits, or effective fragmentation, and there is nothing real to prevent fragmentation being folded from the outside in. If patchworks can work, they are applicable at every scale.

Who would choose a king instead of a patchwork? God-Emperor or confederacy? That is the question.

ADDED: First key to the text trail, beginning June 5, 2013 at 6:48 pm (provided by Foseti in the comments below).

ADDED: Thoughts on sovereignty and limits at *Anomaly UK*. At *Habitable Worlds*, Scharlach applies methodical intelligence to the

problem, with encouraging results.

ADDED: James Goulding explains why "'sovereignty is conserved' captures the imagination yet is badly flawed."

June 24, 2013

Quote notes (#76)

Not a new point in this neck of the woods, but formulated with exceptional elegance:

There are only two possibilities regarding the Constitution of the United States. One is that it is working as it was intended, in which case it is a monstrosity. The other is that it was broken somewhere along the way – in which case it failed.

The prod back to this topic is appreciated, because it really hasn't been properly processed yet. (This blog has yet to do more than stick a tag on the problem.) Insofar as constitutions are at least partly functional, they are *involved in the production of power*. As abstract engineering diagrams for regimes they should no more be expected to rule than rocket blueprints are expected to blast into space — but they matter.

ADDED: An articulate cry from the republican id:

… this fifteen-year journey back to the USSR under the leadership of a former KGB lieutenant colonel has shown the world the vicious

nature and archaic underpinnings of the Russian state's "vertical power" structure, more than any "great and terrible" Putin. With a monarchical structure such as this, the country automatically becomes hostage to the psychosomatic quirks of its leader. All of his fears, passions, weaknesses, and complexes become state policy. If he is paranoid, the whole country must fear enemies and spies; if he has insomnia, all the ministries must work at night; if he's a teetotaler, everyone must stop drinking; if he's a drunk—everyone should booze it up; if he doesn't like America, which his beloved KGB fought against, the whole population must dislike the United States. A country such as this cannot have a predictable, stable future; gradual development is extraordinarily difficult.

April 27, 2014

Next Stage of the Slide

As a prophet of the unfolding calamity, Angelo Codevilla has always been handicapped by his touching faith in 'the people'. The 'country class' was already demonstrably unworthy of Goldwater in 1964. Things are *far* worse today.

As a guide to the next step in the crack-up, however, there are few better guides, and his latest ruminations on the disintegration of the American party system are highly convincing. The death of

the Republican Party is a much-deserved necessary way-stage to pretty much anything, whatever one's sense of the way. As always, the insightful commentary of Richard Fernandez on the topic is not to be missed.

Between even the sharpest conservative analysis, and anything that would pass muster amongst reactionaries, a daunting gulf yawns. As Codevilla muses in the new *Forbes* piece:

Representation is the distinguishing feature of democratic government. To be represented, to trust that one's own identity and interests are secure and advocated in high places, is to be part of the polity. In practice, any democratic government's claim to the obedience of citizens depends on the extent to which voters feel they are party to the polity. No one doubts that the absence, loss, or perversion of that function divides the polity sharply between rulers and ruled.

The confusion between legitimate republican government and political representation ('democracy') has been *the* disaster of modern history. Until this error is thoroughly purged from statecraft, reason will belong with kings.

ADDED: Sickness unto death

February 24, 2013

The Unraveling

A democracy cannot survive as a permanent form of government. It can last only until its citizens discover that they can vote themselves largesse from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority (who vote) will vote for the candidates promising the greatest benefits from the public purse, with the result that a democracy will always collapse from loose fiscal policies, always followed by a dictatorship. — Macaulay [or the 'Tytler Calumny' (thanks Matt)]

From the *Urban Dictionary*, Democracy:

1) A common system of government directed by the whims of mobs and marked by a low tolerance for basic human rights and common sense; primarily used to incrementally transition a government ruled by common law (Republic) to a government ruled by the political law of a few elite (Oligarchy).

As the slide continues, the perennial understanding of anti-demotic statecraft (and initiatory insight of the new reaction) appears to be going mainstream. Alex Berezow writes at *Realclearworld*'s *The Compass* blog:

It's been a rough few years for democracy. Despite that, Westerners always seem to assume that the most highly evolved form of government is democratic. The trouble with that notion is that, at some point, a majority of voters realize they can vote for politicians who promise them the most stuff, regardless of whether

or not it is good policy or financially sustainable. And once that occurs, the country is (perhaps irreversibly) on a pathway to decline.

Whilst glibly insubstantial by Moldbug standards (of course), the article never retracts this initial premiss, and concludes with the suggestion that the whole world could profitably learn arts of democracy inhibition from China. Interesting times.

[Note: the two articles immediately below Berezow's at the RCW site are 'Is Cameron's EU Strategy Unraveling?' (by Benedict Brogan) and 'Libya Is Still Unraveling' (by Max Boot) — just noticed (consciously). Contemporary news: all unraveling, all the time.]

Will the 'post-democratic world' have a clear principle of political legitimacy? The most elegant, by far, would be the introduction of commutativity to the slogan of Anglosphere colonial rebellion: 'No taxation without representation.'

No representation without taxation restricts legitimacy to those regimes in which those who fund government determine its structure, scope, and policy, in direct proportion to their contribution. The improvements that would result from this integration of the State's fiscal and electoral feedback circuits are too profound and numerous to readily outline, but they can be summarized in a single expectation: radical, irreversible, and continuous shift to the right.

Among the most obvious anticipated objections:

(1) *It's impractical* (Oh yes, only horrors are practical)

(2) *It's unjust* (For soldiers and cops, perhaps, but the deleterious effects of complication outweigh the benefits of moral nuance)
(3) *In the West, at least, Brahmin plutocrats would undo it at the first opportunity* (A sadly plausible prediction — perhaps no Abrahamic culture is capable of supporting a sane social order, and will always choose to resolve policing problems through expansion of the franchise.)

Granting all of these objections, and more, the principle of *commutative tax-politics* still provides one very valuable service: it explains what went wrong. Representational hypertrophy destroyed the modern constitutional order, based on a one-sided interpretation of the demand that government be made accountable for its exactions. Balance (commutativity) might well be unobtainable, but it isn't difficult to understand what it would be.

April 2, 2013

The Program

According to Mark Waser, the project of replacing human politicians with algorithms would yield positive results, far in advance of its nominal accomplishment. As he concludes: "I think that AI leadership is a tremendous idea, not the least because the path towards it necessarily improves human leadership (and civic debate)."

The extent to which the deep Anglo tradition tends in this direction is easy to under-estimate. *Magna Carta* was already a beta version draft of machine governance, as every serious initiative at constitutionalism has been. The principle of *limited government* finds its consummation in the ideal of rigid algorithmic constraint, and the impracticality of such an objective in no way diminishes the well-springs of motivation behind it. The programmatic erosion of political charisma is one obvious spin-off benefit.

In the Anglophone world — at least, until the most recent spasms of its degeneration — the call to *empower the people* has always been an unfortunate derivation from attempts to *disempower government authority*, by subjecting it to structural checks, and subtracting its discretion to the greatest possible extent. Computerizing a fast food restaurant gets you a cheaper hamburger. Computerizing government promises something far more deeply attuned to ancient political-economic impulses.

As Waser suggests: Merely letting politicians know that their definitive abolition is in prospect sends a valuable signal in its own right. Perhaps, in the interim, it could even train them to behave more like machines.

August 4, 2015

Protocols

"Protocol governance can come in many forms, these include bureaucratic rules, literal interpretations of religious texts, democracy, proposed block chain or P2P governance, statistics based governance, rule of law, and any other form of governance which seeks to provide a protocol as being ultimately sovereign as opposed to ultimate human judgement," writes NIO.

The meaning of 'protocol' here? I'm assuming, until corrected, that it's something like: *A formalized procedure*. If so, it elides a critical difference, because while "bureaucratic rules, literal interpretations of religious texts," and constitutions tell people what to do, "proposed block chain or P2P governance" doesn't.

A set of instructions opens itself to derision, if it 'demands' human compliance, without possessing the means to compel it. Constitutions, laws, and bureaucracies are massively — and demonstrably — vulnerable to subversion, because they require what they cannot enforce. It is *exactly this problem* that has propelled the development of software protocols that are intrinsically self-protective. The longest section of Satoshi Nakamoto's Bitcoin paper (#11) is devoted to an examination of the system's automatic defense capabilities. The problem is a serious and complicated one, but it is certainly not susceptible to resolution by armchair philosophizing about the essence of sovereignty, however

much this latter proclaims its possession of the truth.

Claims to 'truth' demand trust, and trust is a social and technical *problem* (of ever increasing urgency). Mere assertion is certainly incapable of generating it. Only a *trust engine* can, and that has to be built, if it cannot be simply preserved, which — on this at least we are surely agreed? — it could not.

Bitcoin is only a stepping stone, and the scale of the step it enables remains obscure at this point. What is already clear, however, is that the principle of trustless (or open-source, automatically self-policing) protocols is concrete, in large part technical, and invulnerable to *a priori* dismissal. The theoretical difficulties involved have been largely solved, based upon a series of radical innovations in cryptography — public key systems and proof-of-work credentials, among others — compared to which the recent 'advances' of political philosophy, let alone governmental institutions, have been risible at best. If Byzantine Agreement is realizable, protocol subversion is exterminable. What then remains is productive work, in the direction of automatic or autonomized agoras.

Carlyle is a lament (admittedly, a rhetorically attractive, and insightful one). Satoshi Nakamoto has built something. The former is vindicated by progressive socio-political decay, the latter by the escape of self-protective catallaxy from the ruins.

Within a few decades, most of what still works on this planet will be on the blockchain.

ADDED: This is excellent. (Adam Back, via Twitter, describes it as the "Best article yet on what Bitcoin *is* & why decentralisation is necessary".) The proposal of this post is that the conflict it outlines is *obviously* of massive importance. Those who think the entire problem of decentralized protocols is an irrelevant distraction from other things, are surely compelled to disagree. The XS position here is that *trustless decentralization is worth defending*. Clearly, that presupposes it's something real (and consequential). As far as the NRx discussion is concerned, I'm going to assume that's the matter at stake.

September 17, 2015

Trichotomocracy

By 2037 the harsh phases of The Upheaval have finally ended. Western Eurasia is ruined and confused, but the fighting has burnt out amongst the rubble. In the Far East, the Chinese Confucian Republic has largely succeeded in restoring order, and is even enjoying the first wave of renewed prosperity. The Islamic civil war continues, but — now almost entirely introverted — it is easily quarantined. No one wants to think too much about what is happening in Africa.

The territory of the extinct USA is firmly controlled by the

Neoreactionary Coalition, whose purchase is strengthened by the flight of 20 million Cathedral Loyalists to Canada and Europe (incidentally toppling both into terminal chaos). The Provisional Trichotomous Council, selected primarily by a process of military promotion and delegation from within the major Neoreactionary guerrilla groups, now confronts the task of establishing a restored political order.

It quickly becomes obvious to each of the three main Neoreactionary factions that future developments — even if these are to include an orderly subdivision of the nation — will initially depend upon the institution of a government that balances the three broad currents that now dominate the North American continent: Ethno-Nationalists ("Genies" or "Rockies"); Theonomists ("Logs" or "Sizzlers"); and Techno-Commercialists ("Cyboids" or "Pulpists"). Now that the Cathedral has been thoroughly extirpated, significant divergences between these three visions of the nation's future threaten to escalate, unpredictably, into dangerous antagonisms.

Since practical realism, rooted in an understanding of path-dependency, is a common inheritance of all three factions, there is immediate consensus on the need to begin from where things are. Since a virtual triangular order of partially-compatible agendas is already reflected in the make-up of the Provisional Council, this is recognized as the template for an emergent, triadically-structured government — the rising Neoreactionary Trichotomocracy, or "Trike".

(A colossal statue of Spandrell — the revered white-beard of the Trichotomy — has already been erected in the comparatively radiation-free provisional capital of Omaha, gazing out Mosaically into the new promised land, a glinting ceremonial Samurai sword held triumphantly aloft.)

Within a few months, the basic formula for the Trichotomocracy has been tweaked into place. It consists of three Compartments, each comprehensively dominated by one of the principal factions. Procedures for selection of officials is internally determined by each Compartment, drawing upon the specific traditions of functional hierarchy honed during the Zombie War.

Authority is distributed among the Compartments in a triangular circuit. Each Compartment has a specific internal and external responsibility — its own positive governmental function, as well as an external (and strictly negative, or inhibitory) control of the next Compartment. This is colloquially known as the 'Rocky-Sizzler-Pulpist' system.

Ethno-Nationalist 'Rockies' run the Compartment of Security, which includes the essential functions of the Executive. It is controlled financially by the Compartment of Resources. Its external responsibility is the limitation of the Compartment of Law, whose statutes can be returned, and ultimately vetoed (but not positively amended), if they are found to be inconsistent with practical application. The structure of the Compartment of Security broadly

coincides with the military chain of command. (The Rockies get to decide whether to describe the Commander-in -Chief as a constitutional monarch, a supreme warlord, or a demi-god of annihilation.)

Theonomist 'Sizzlers' run the Compartment of Law, which combines legislative and judicial functions. For funding purposes, the Compartment of Law is subordinated to the Compartment of Security, for obvious constitutional reasons. This keeps it small, restricting its potential for extravagant legislative activity. Since the Compartment of Security also filters legislation (in accordance with a practical criterion), the Law of the Trichotomocracy is remarkable for its clarity, economy, and concision. The entire edifice of Law, by informal understanding, is limited to a single volume of biblical proportions. Senior Sizzler officials are expected to memorize it. The external responsibility of the Compartment of Law is to restrain the Compartment of Resources, by strictly limiting the legality of revenue-raising measures (informally bounded to a national 'tithe'). Internal order of the Compartment is determined by the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Neoreactionary Church of the Cosmic Triarchitect.

Techno-Commercialist 'Pulpists' run the Compartment of Resources, with the 'power of the purse'. As the sole 'self-funding' Compartment, it is minutely scrutinized by the Compartment of Law, which tightly controls its revenue-raising procedures. Dominated by

a cabal of extreme laissez-faire capitalist and technologists, the Compartment of Resources is guided by the mantra *economize on all things*. It does as little as possible, beyond maximally-parsimonious funding of the Department of Security, with its own internal operations restricted to rigorously Pigovian tax-streamlining, statistical research, and the provision of X-Prize-style development incentives. The board of the Compartment is filled by the nine largest tax-payers, rotated every three years. The board elects a CEO.

The ideological discrepancies between the Compartments make an important contribution to the stability of the Trichotomocracy, since they limit the potential for re-amalgamation into a tyrannical unity. This is one of the twin principles by which its success is to be estimated — the perpetuation of durable governmental plurality. The second principle — complete immunity from populist pressure — is ensured automatically insofar as the Trichotomocracy endures, since none of the Compartments are demotically sensitive, and even if this were not the case, each is insulated from demotic subversion affecting either of the others. The outcome is a government answerable only to itself, with a self that is irreducibly plural, and thus intrinsically self-critical.

Under the light-hand of Trichotomocratic rule, any 'citizen' who seeks to participate in government, in any way whatsoever, has three choices open to them: (a) Join the Security Services and rise through the ranks; (b) Join the Church of the Holy Triarchy and become adept

in the law; (c) Make enough tax-vulnerable income that it earns a place on the National Resources Board. There might, in addition, be career opportunities for a very small number of professional administrators, depending upon the internal staffing policies of the three Compartments. Any other 'politics' would be criminal social disorder, although in most cases this would probably be treated leniently, due to its complete impotence. If sufficiently disruptive, such "relic demo-zombie" behavior would be best managed by deportation.

(Questions of local government diversity, secession, and micro-state building exceed the terms of this initial Integral-Neoreactionary settlement. Such potentials can only further strengthen external controls, and thus further constrain the scope of government discretion.)

ADDED: Even this crude sketch has enough moving parts to breed bugs. Glitch-1 (by my reckoning): Pigovian taxes and commutative tax politics don't knit together very well. In combination, they incentivize the politically ambitious to move into business activities with high negative externalities. Any neat patch for this?

ADDED: *Anomaly UK* will require some further persuasion.

October 9, 2013

Lynch Law

This is insanely great (second only to NeoCam for absolute attractiveness, and arguably more suitable under predominant rough-and-ready social conditions). First, a little scene-setting:

There is, to the best of my knowledge, no single right and proper method to construct a gallows. A few elements are common to just about every design, but the grim carpenters' flourishes of the scaffold reflect the tastes of the community and the eye of the builders. There is always a raised platform; there are always stairs leading to the platform, usually thirteen; there is always a crossbeam around which to string the noose; and there is always a trapdoor to launch the condemned into the hereafter. Beyond that, the timbers of the frame are a matter of discretion. Supporting braces and thick beams are common for permanent installations. Temporary gallows will often rely on a nock rather than a full cleat to hold the bitter end of the killing rope. A shoreside hanging can even rely on a high tide and the scuttling claws of the merciless deep to clean up the turgid mess left by a dead man dancing. …

Then the carpentry of refined-incentives governance:

Me: "I don't know if they still do it that way, but that's how it used to be. What's more, even speaking up at a rulemoot can be a death sentence." It was clear she thought I was pulling her leg. I wish I was. Tolerance for two-bit tinpot tyrants was running awfully low,

so Sacramentarians decided to raise the stakes for would-be petty autocrats. "Any citizen can propose any rule change at a rulemoot. To do [so], you ascend the Black Gallows, loop a secured noose of your own tying around your neck, and take the next five minutes and five minutes only to deliver your proposal and your plea. Then there's some sort of a deliberation process. I think folks can line up to give brief comments or something, after which the assembled crowd votes yea or nay. If the motion passes, it is now law. If it fails, the lever is pulled and you hang by your neck until you are dead, dead dead."
Anika: "That's insane! This place must be a madhouse!"
Me: "You might be surprised. Plenty of laws get passed this way. Most of them are pretty standard things: no murder, no theft, no rape, that sort of thing. And nobody's stupid enough to try to pass a new law if they aren't very sure they'll have the support of the crowd."
I paused to consider something. "I'd reckon they don't have a lot of civic participation on windy days."

Excessive populism, certainly, but turned unambiguously in the right direction. After a few generations, the genetic selection effects alone would have justified it. The model, clear in context, is an *anti-California*. If something like this isn't tried somewhere, social experimentation will have missed out.

December 7, 2015

SEQUENCE i - NEOCAMERALISM

CHAPTER ONE - PRIMERS

Meta-Neocameralism

First thing: "Meta-Neocameralism" isn't anything new, and it certainly isn't anything post-Moldbuggian. It's no more than Neocameralism apprehended in its most abstract features, through the coining of a provisional and dispensable term. (It allows for an acronym that doesn't lead to confusions with North Carolina, while encouraging quite different confusions, which I'm pretending not to notice.)

Locally (to this blog), the "meta-" is the mark of a prolegomenon*, to a disciplined discussion of Neocameralism which has later to take place. Its abstraction is introductory, in accordance with something that is yet to be re-started, or re-animated, in detail. (For existing detail, outside the Moldbug canon itself, look here.)

The excellent comment thread here provides at least a couple of crucial clues:

nydwracu (23/03/2014 at 6:47 pm): *Neocameralism doesn't answer questions like that [on the specifics of social organization]; instead, it's a mechanism for answering questions like that. … You can*

ask, "is Coke considered better than RC Cola?", or you can institute capitalism and find out. You can ask, "are ethno-nationalist states considered better than mixed states?", or you can institute the patchwork and find out. …

RiverC (23/03/2014 at 3:44 am): *Neo-cameralism is, if viewed in this light, a 'political system system', it is not a political system but a system for implementing political systems. Of course the same guy who came up with it also invented an operating system (a system for implementing software systems.)*

MNC, then, is not a political prescription, for instance a social ideal aligned with techno-commercialist preferences. It is an intellectual framework for examining systems of governance, *theoretically* formalized as disposals of sovereign property. The *social* formalization of such systems, which Moldbug *also* advocates, can be parenthesized within MNC. We are not at this stage considering the model of a desirable social order, but rather the abstract model of social order in general, apprehended radically — at the root — where 'to rule' and 'to own' lack distinct meanings. Sovereign property is 'sovereign' and 'primary' because it is not merely a claim, but *effective possession*. (There is much more to come in later posts on the concept of sovereign property, some preliminary musings here.)

Because MNC is an extremely powerful piece of cognitive technology, capable of tackling problems at a number of distinct

levels (in principle, an unlimited number), it is clarified through segmentation into an abstraction cascade. Descending through these levels adds concreteness, and tilts incrementally towards normative judgements (framed by the hypothetical imperative of *effective government*, as defined within the cascade).

(1) The highest level of practical significance (since MNC-theology need not delay us) has already been touched upon. It applies to social regimes of every conceivable type, assuming only that a systematic mode of sovereign property reproduction will essentially characterize each. Power is *economic* irrespective of its relation to modern conventions of commercial transaction, because it involves the disposal of a real (if obscure) quantity, which is subject to increase or decrease over the cyclic course of its deployment. Population, territory, technology, commerce, ideology, and innumerable additional heterogeneous factors are components of sovereign property (power), but their economic character is assured by the possibility — and indeed necessity — of more-or-less explicit trade-offs and cost-benefit calculations, suggesting an original (if germinal) fungibility, which is merely arithmetical coherence. This is presupposed by any estimation of growth or decay, success or failure, strengthening or weakening, of the kind required not only by historical analysis, but also by even the most elementary administrative competence. Without an implicit economy of power, no discrimination could be made between improvement and

deterioration, and no directed action toward the former could be possible.

The effective cyclic reproduction of power has an external criterion — survival. It is not open to any society or regime to decide for itself what works. Its inherent understanding of its own economics of power is a complex measurement, gauging a relation to the outside, whose consequences are life and death. Built into the idea of sovereign property from the start, therefore, is an *accommodation to reality*. Foundational to MNC, at the very highest level of analysis, is the insight that *power is checked primordially*. On the Outside are wolves, serving as the scourge of Gnon. Even the greatest of all imaginable God-Kings — awesome Fnargl included — has ultimately to discover consequences, rather than inventing them. There is no principle more important than this.

Entropy will be dissipated, idiocy will be punished, the weak will die. If the regime refuses to bow to this Law, the wolves will enforce it. Social Darwinism is not a choice societies get to make, but a system of real consequences that envelops them. MNC is articulated at the level — which cannot be transcended — where realism is mandatory for any social order. Those unable to create it, through effective government, will nevertheless receive it, in the harsh storms of Nemesis. Order is not defined within itself, but by the Law of the Outside.

At this highest level of abstraction, therefore, when MNC is asked

"which type of regimes do you believe in?" the sole appropriate response is "those compatible with reality." Every society known to history — and others beside — had a working economy of power, at least for a while. Nothing more is required than this for MNC to take them as objects of disciplined investigation.

(2) Knowing that realism is not an optional regime value, we are able to proceed down the MNC cascade with the introduction of a second assumption: Civilizations will seek gentler teachers than the wolves. If it is possible to acquire some understanding of collapse, it will be preferred to the experience of collapse (once the wolves have culled the ineducable from history).

Everything survivable is potentially educational, even a mauling by the wolves. MNC however, as its name suggests, has reason to be especially attentive to the most abstract lesson of the Outside — the (logical) priority of *meta-learning*. It is good to discover reality, before — or at least not much later than — reality discovers us. Enduring civilizations do not merely know things, they know that it is important to know things, and to absorb realistic information. Regimes — disposing of sovereign property — have a special responsibility to instantiate this deutero-culture of learning-to-learn, which is required for intelligent government. This is a responsibility they take upon themselves because it is demanded by the Outside (and even in its refinement, it still smells of wolf).

Power is under such compulsion to learn about itself that

recursion, or intellectualization, can be assumed. Power is selected to check itself, which it cannot do without an increase in formalization, and this is a matter — as we shall see — of immense consequence. Of necessity, it learns-to-learn (or dies), but this lesson introduces a critical tragic factor.

The tragedy of power is broadly coincident with modernity. It is not a simple topic, and from the beginning two elements in particular require explicit attention. Firstly, it encounters the terrifying (second-order) truth that practical learning is irreducibly experimental. In going 'meta' knowledge becomes scientific, which means that failure cannot be precluded through deduction, but has to be incorporated into the machinery of learning itself. Nothing that cannot go wrong is capable of teaching anything (even the accumulation of logical and mathematical truths requires cognitive trial-and-error, ventures into dead-ends, and the pursuit of misleading intuitions). Secondly, in becoming increasingly formalized, and ever more fungible, the disposal of sovereign power attains heightened liquidity. It is now possible for power to trade itself away, and an explosion of social bargaining results. Power can be exchanged for ('mere') wealth, or for social peace, or channeled into unprecedented forms of radical regime philanthropy / religious sacrifice. Combine these two elements, and it is clear that regimes enter modernity 'empowered' by new capabilities for experimental auto-dissolution. Trade authority away to the masses in exchange for

promises of good behavior? Why not give it a try?

Cascade Stage-2 MNC thus (realistically) assumes a world in which power has become an art of experimentation, characterized by unprecedented calamities on a colossal scale, while the economy of power and the techno-commercial economy have been radically de-segmented, producing a single, uneven, but incrementally smoothed system of exchangeable social value, rippling ever outward, without firm limit. Socio-political organization, and corporate organization, are still distinguished by markers of traditional status, but no longer strictly differentiable by essential function.

The modern business of government is not 'merely' business only because it remains poorly formalized. As the preceding discussion suggests, this indicates that economic integration can be expected to deepen, as the formalization of power proceeds. (Moldbug seeks to accelerate this process.) An inertial assumption of distinct 'public' and 'private' spheres is quickly disturbed by thickening networks of exchange, swapping managerial procedures and personnel, funding political ambitions, expending political resources in commercial lobbying efforts, trading economic assets for political favors (denominated in votes), and in general consolidating a vast, highly-liquid reservoir of amphibiously 'corporacratic' value, indeterminable between 'wealth' and 'authority'. Wealth-power inter-convertibility is a reliable index of political modernity.

MNC does not *decide* that government *should* become a business. It recognizes that government *has* become a business (dealing in fungible quantities). However, unlike private business ventures, which dissipate entropy through bankruptcy and market-driven restructuring, governments are reliably the worst run businesses in their respective societies, functionally crippled by defective, structurally-dishonest organizational models, exemplified most prominently by the democratic principle: *government is a business that should be run by its customers* (but actually can't be). Everything in this model that isn't a lie is a mistake.

At the second (descending) level of abstraction, then, MNC is still not recommending anything except theoretical clarity. It proposes:

a) Power is destined to arrive at experimental learning processes

b) As it learns, it formalizes itself, and becomes more fungible

c) Experiments in fungible power are vulnerable to disastrous mistakes

d) Such mistakes have in fact occurred, in a near-total way

e) For deep historical reasons, techno-commercial business organization emerges as the preeminent template for government entities, as for any composite economic agent. It is in terms of this template that modern political dysfunction can be rendered (formally) intelligible.

(3) Take the MNC abstraction elevator down another level, and it's still more of an analytic tool than a social prescription. (That's

a good thing, *really*.) It tells us that every government, both extant and potential, is most accessible to rigorous investigation when apprehended as a *sovereign corporation*. This approach alone is able to draw upon the full panoply of theoretical resources, ancient and modern, because only in this way is power tracked in the same way it has actually developed (in tight alignment with a still-incomplete trend).

The most obvious objections are, *sensu stricto*, romantic. They take a predictable (which is not to say a casually dismissible) form. Government — if perhaps only lost or yet-unrealized government — is associated with 'higher' values than those judged commensurable with the techno-commercial economy, which thus sets the basis for a critique of the MNC 'business ontology' of governance as an illegitimate intellectual reduction, and ethical vulgarization. To quantify authority as power is already suspect. To project its incremental liquidation into a general economy, where leadership integrates — ever more seamlessly — with the price system, appears as an abominable symptom of modernist nihilism.

Loyalty (or the intricately-related concept of *asabiyyah*) serves as one exemplary redoubt of the romantic cause. Is it not repulsive, even to entertain the possibility that loyalty might have a price? Handle addresses this directly in the comment thread already cited (24/03/2014 at 1:18 am). A small sample captures the line of his engagement:

Loyalty-preservation incentivizing programs are various and highly sophisticated and span the spectrum everywhere from frequent flier miles to 'clubs' that are so engrossing and time consuming in such as to mimic the fulfillment of all the community, socialization, and identarian psychological functions that would make even the hardest-core religious-traditionalist jealous. Because lots of people are genetically programmed with this coordination-subroutine that is easily exploitable in a context far removed from its evolutionary origins. Sometimes brands 'deserve' special competitive loyalty ('German engineering'!) and sometimes they don't (Tylenol-branded paracetamol).

There is vastly more that can, and will, be said in prosecution of this dispute, since it is perhaps the single most critical driver of NRx fission, and it is not going to endure a solution. The cold MNC claim, however, can be pushed right across it. Authority is for sale, and has been for centuries, so that any analysis ignoring this exchange nexus is an historical evasion. Marx's M-C-M', through which monetized capital reproduces and expands itself through the commodity cycle, is accompanied by an equally definite M-P-M' or P-M-P' cycle of power circulation-enhancement through monetized wealth.

A tempting reservation, with venerable roots in traditional society, is to cast doubt upon the prevalence of such exchange networks, on the assumption that power — possibly further dignified as 'authority' — enjoys a qualitative supplement relative to common

economic value, such that it cannot be retro-transferred. Who would swap authority for money, if authority cannot be bought (and is, indeed, "beyond price")? But this 'problem' resolves itself, since the first person to sell political office — or its less formal equivalent — immediately demonstrates that it can no less easily be purchased.

From the earliest, most abstract stage of this MNC outline, it has been insisted that *power has to be evaluated economically, by itself, if anything like practical calculation directed towards its increase is to be possible*. Once this is granted, MNC analysis of the governmental entity in general as an economic processor — i.e. a business — acquires irresistible momentum. If loyalty, *asabiyyah*, virtue, charisma and other elevated (or 'incommensurable') values are *power factors*, then they are already inherently self-economizing within the calculus of statecraft. The very fact that they contribute, determinately, to an overall estimation of strength and weakness, attests to their implicit economic status. When a business has charismatic leadership, reputational capital, or a strong culture of company loyalty, such factors are monetized as asset values by financial markets. When one Prince surveys the 'quality' of another's domain, he already estimates the likely expenses of enmity. For modern military bureaucracies, such calculations are routine. Incommensurable values do not survive contact with defense budgets.

Yet, however ominous this drift (from a romantic perspective),

MNC does not tell anybody how to design a society. It says only that an effective government will necessarily look, to it, like a well-organized (sovereign) business. To this one can add the riders:
a) Government effectiveness is subject to an external criterion, provided by a selective trans-state and inter-state mechanism. This might take the form of Patchwork pressure (Dynamic Geography) in a civilized order, or military competition in the wolf-prowled wilderness of Hobbesian chaos.
b) Under these conditions, MNC calculative rationality can be expected to be compelling for states themselves, whatever their variety of social form. Some (considerable) convergence upon norms of economic estimation and arrangement is thus predictable from the discovered contours of reality. There are things that will fail.

Non-economic values are more easily invoked than pursued. Foseti (commenting here, 23/03/2014 at 11:59 am) writes:

No one disputes that the goal of society is a good citizenry, but the question is what sort of government provides that outcome. […] As best I can tell, we only have two theories of governance that have been expressed. […] The first is the capitalist. As Adam Smith noted, the best corporations (by all measures) are the ones that are operated for clear, measurable and selfish motives. […] The second is the communist. In this system, corporations are run for the benefit of everyone in the world. […] Unsurprisingly, corporations run on the latter principle have found an incredibly large number of ways to

suck. Not coincidentally, so have 20th Century governments run on the same principle. […] I think it's nearly impossible to overstate the ways in which everyone would be better off if we had an efficiently, effective, and responsive government.

* I realize this doesn't work in Greek, but systematic before-after confusion is an *Outside in* thing.

[Yes, I know I have to get my commenting system updated with comment permalinks — thanks to everybody for the reminder.]

ADDED: Anarcho-Papist is on the synthesizer.

March 24, 2014

Eight-Point Neo-Cam

A reminder of where NRx came from:

Let me quickly explain my reactionary theory of history, which comes from reading weird old forgotten books such as the above. Note that this theory is quite simple. Depending on your inclinations, you may regard this as a good thing or a bad thing.

In order to get to the reactionary theory of history, we need a reactionary theory of government. History, again, is interpretation, and interpretation requires theory. I've described this theory before under the name of neocameralism, but on a blog it never hurts to be a little repetitive.

First: government is not a mystical or mysterious institution. A government is simply a group of people working together for a common aim, ie, a corporation. Whether a government is good or bad is not determined by who its employees are or how they are selected. It is determined by whether the actions of the government are good or bad.

Second: the only difference between a government and a "private corporation" is that the former is sovereign: it has no higher authority to which it can appeal to protect its property. A sovereign corporation owns its territory, and maintains that ownership by demonstrating unchallenged control. It is stable if no other party, internal or external, has any incentive to attack it. Especially in the nuclear age, it is not difficult to deter prospective attackers.

Third: a good government is a well-managed sovereign corporation. Good government is efficient management. Efficient management is profitable management. A profitable government has no incentive to break its promises, abuse its citizens (who are its capital), or attack its neighbors.

Fourth: efficient management can be implemented by the same techniques in sovereign corporations as in nonsovereign ones. The company's profit is distributed equally to holders of negotiable shares. The shareholders elect a board, which selects a CEO.

Fifth: although the full neocameralist approach has never been tried, its closest historical equivalents to this approach are the 18th-

century tradition of enlightened absolutism as represented by Frederick the Great, and the 21st-century nondemocratic tradition as seen in lost fragments of the British Empire such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Dubai. These states appear to provide a very high quality of service to their citizens, with no meaningful democracy at all. They have minimal crime and high levels of personal and economic freedom. They tend to be quite prosperous. They are weak only in political freedom, and political freedom is unimportant by definition when government is stable and effective.

Sixth: the comparative success of the American and European postwar systems appears to be due to their abandonment of democratic politics as a practical mechanism of government, in favor of a civil-service Beamtenstaat in which democratic politicians are increasingly symbolic. The post-communist civil-service states, China and Russia, appear to be converging on the same system, although their stability is ensured primarily by direct military authority, rather than by a system of managed public opinion.

Seventh: the post-democratic civil-service state, while not utterly disastrous, is not the end of history. It has two problems. One, the size and complexity of its regulatory system tends to increase without bound, resulting in economic stagnation and general apathy. Two, more critically, it can neither abolish democratic politics formally, nor defend itself against changes in information flow that may destabilize public opinion. Notably, the rise of the Internet

disrupts the feedback loop between public education and political power, allowing noncanonical ideas to flourish. If these ideas are both rationally compelling and politically delegitimating, the state is threatened.

Eighth: therefore, productive political efforts should focus on peacefully terminating, restructuring and decentralizing the 20th-century civil-service state along neocameralist lines. The ideal result is a planet of thousands, even tens of thousands, of independent city-states, each managed for profit by its shareholders.

Note that this perspective has nothing at all in common with the Universalist theory of government. Note also the simplicity of the transition that it suggests should have happened, from monarchy as a family business to a modern corporate structure with separate board and CEO, eliminating the vagaries of the hereditary principle. Now let's look – from this reactionary perspective – at what actually did happen. …

March 11, 2015

Quote note (#200)

Crypto-core of the XS Moldbug:

Internal security can be defined as the protection of the shareholders' property against all internal threats — including both

residents and employees, up to and certainly including the chief executive. If the shareholders cannot dismiss the CEO of the realm by voting according to proper corporate procedures, a total security failure has occurred.

The standard Patchwork remedy for this problem is the ***cryptographic chain of command****. Ultimately, power over the realm truly rests with the shareholders, because they use a secret sharing or similar cryptographic algorithm to maintain control over its root keys. Authority is then delegated to the board (if any), the CEO and other officers, and thence down into the military or other security forces. At the leaves of the tree are computerized weapons, which will not fire without cryptographic authorization.*

Thus, any fragment of the security force which remains loyal to the shareholders can use its operational weapons to defeat any coalition of disloyal, and hence disarmed, employees and/or residents. Ouch! Taste the pain, traitors. (Needless to say, the dependence of this design on 21st-century technology is ample explanation of why history has not bequeathed us anything like the joint-stock realm. It was simply not implementable — any more than our ancestors could build a suspension bridge out of limestone blocks.)

(Emphasis in original.)

Crypto-sovereignty is huge (and on the to-do list here). 'Formalism' is a place-holder for crypto-architecture. 'Sovereignty' means *keys*.

November 17, 2015

Neocameralism #1

Clippings from this, end-2007 Moldbug Neocameralism essay (with minimal commentary):

It is very hard to show that any new form of government is superior to that practiced now. It is even harder to show that any new form of government is superior to any practiced ever. […] Nonetheless, unless these problems are not just hard but actually unsolvable, innovation in the form of government is possible. … Certainly, the very idea of innovation in government should not frighten you. If it does, there is no point at all in thinking about government. This is conservatism to the point of mental disorder. I simply cannot contend with it, and I refuse to try. If you cannot set yourself outside your own beliefs and prejudices, you are not capable of normal civilized discourse.

Neocameralism is not (simply) reactionary because it has never been fully instantiated up to this time. It is a proposed political-economic innovation.

Let's start with my ideal world – the world of thousands, preferably even tens of thousands, of neocameralist city-states and ministates, or neostates. The organizations which own and operate

these neostates are for-profit sovereign corporations, or sovcorps. For the moment, let's assume a one-to-one mapping between sovcorp and neostate. […] Let's pin down the neocameralist dramatis personae by identifying the people who work for a sovcorp as its ***agents****, the people or organizations which collectively own it as its* ***subscribers****, and the people who live in its neostate as its* ***residents****.*

A Neocameral 'neostate' is not owned by its residents *or its agents*. Its 'monarch' (or 'CEO') is *an executive appointment*. (90% of all confusion about Neocameralism, and Neoreaction in general, stems from a failure to grasp this elementary point.) Note: 'subscribers' (plural). More coming on this immediately.

Every patch of land on the planet has a primary owner, which is its sovcorp. Typically, these owners will be large, impersonal corporations. We call them sovcorps because they're ***sovereign****. You are sovereign if you have the power to render any plausible attack on your primary property, by any other sovereign power, unprofitable. In other words, you maintain* ***general deterrence****. […] (Sovereignty is a flat, peer-to-peer relationship by definition. The concept of hierarchical sovereignty is a contradiction in terms. …) […] The business of a sovcorp is to make money by deterring aggression. Since human aggression is a serious problem, preventing it should be a good business. Moreover, the existence of unprofitable governments in your vicinity is serious cause for concern, because unprofitable governments tend to have strange decision structures*

and do weird, dangerous things. […] (Nuclear deterrence (mutual assured destruction) is only one small class of deterrent designs. To deter is to render predictably unprofitable. Predictably unprofitable violence is irrational. Irrational violence is certainly not unheard of. But it is much, much rarer than you may think. Most of the violence in the world today is quite rational, IMHO.) […] General deterrence is a complex topic which deserves its own post. For the moment, assume that every square inch of the planet's surface is formally owned by some sovcorp, that no one disagrees on the borders, and that deterrence between sovcorps is absolute.

Patchwork is a (transcendentally) *flat network*. No global sovereign. At the ultimate level of its instantiation, it consists of P2P connections between *independent nodes*.

This does not solve the problem of constructing a stable sovcorp. The central problem of governance is the old Latin riddle: who guards the guardians? The joint-stock corporate design solves the central problem by entrusting guardianship in the collective decisions of the corporation's owners, voting not by head but by percentage of profit received. […] The joint-stock model is hundreds of years old. It is as proven as proven can be. […] … However, in the sovereign context, the corporate joint-stock ownership and decision structure faces serious challenges which do not exist for a conventional secondary corporation. […] In the conventional secondary corporation, the control of the owners is unchallenged

and unchallengeable, at least as long as the sovereign's rule of corporate law is functioning properly. The corporation is incorporated under the oversight of a sovereign protector, or ***sponsor****. This is what makes it a secondary corporation. …*

The Neocameral organizational problem is here defined.

… classical political thought concurred in considering ***imperio in imperium****, ie, internal subauthorities powerful enough to resist or even control the center, a political solecism. In case you are not too special to have ever worked in a cube, you are probably aware that* ***imperio in imperium*** *is a solecism in Powerpointia as well. One small difficulty, however, is that* ***imperio in imperium*** *means basically the same thing as* ***separation of powers****. Hm. […] Internal management in modern Western corporations is pretty good. At least by the standards of modern government,* ***imperio in imperium*** *is nonexistent. (It should not be confused with the normal practice of internal accounting, which does not in any way conflict with an absolute central authority and a single set of books.)*

The model for avoidance of *imperio in imperium* is joint-stock business organization. It is thus equivalent to the *control of executives*, or the *preservation of sovereign capital imperatives* (through effective resolution of the principal-agent problem). Solution of the P-A problem at the level of State governance is the task of Neocameral administrative design.

Briefly, there are two options for sovcorp governance on a

*neocameralist patchwork planet. One is **cross-listing** and the other is **cryptogovernance**. In cross-listing, sovcorps list on each other's secondary exchanges, taking great care to select only the most reputable sponsors, and demanding a backdoor in which they can switch sponsors at the slightest hint of weirdness. […] Cross-listing can probably be made to work. However, it is dangerous as a single line of defence. For an ideal sovcorp, it should be combined with some degree of cryptogovernance. […] Cryptogovernance is any system of corporate government in which all formal decisions are endorsed and verified cryptographically. A sponsor can still be very useful for cryptogovernance, but it is not required. Shareholders in a cryptogoverned corporation – known as **subscribers** – use private keys to sign their contributions to its governance. They may or may not be anonymous, depending on the corporation's rules. […] If you are an American, have you ever wondered what the letters SA, or similar, which you see all the time in the names of European companies, mean? They mean "anonymous society." If this strikes you as weird, it shouldn't.*

Do any #HRx types still think this is their universe?

The neat thing about cryptographic government (which is actually much easier than it sounds – we're talking a few thousand lines of code, max) is that it can be connected directly to the sovcorp's second line of defense: a cryptographically-controlled military. […] Cryptographic weapons control, in the form of permissive action

links, is already used for the world's most powerful weapons. However, there is nothing in principle preventing it from being extended down to small arms – for example, with a radio activation code transmitted over a mesh network. Military formations loyal to the CEO will find that their weapons work. Rebel formations will find that theirs don't. The outcome is obvious. Moreover, the neocameralist state has no incentive to deal kindly with traitors, so there is no way for an attacker to repeatedly probe the system's weaknesses. […] The one difficulty with cryptographic weapons control is that it fails, and devolves into simple military rule, if the authorization keys are kept anywhere near the weapons. Weaponholders can gather unlocked or noncryptographic weapons secretly, and use them to arrest the keyholders – for example, the directors of the sovcorp. […] The solution is simple: keep the sovcorp's directors, or whoever has ultimate control of the highest grade of military keys, outside the sovcorp's neostate. Even if the CEO himself rebels, along with all of his subordinates, any formation loyal to the directors can defeat them. The result is internal military stability.

Agree with where Moldbug is going with this, or not, the line of thought is profoundly illustrative of the Neocameral problem, as originally conceived, which lies within the general framework of *cryptographic property protection* (and not that of romantic political attachment).

June 29, 2016

Owned

Hurlock has a valuable post on the concept of property, especially in its relation to sovereignty, and formalization. Since (Moldbuggian) Neocameralism can be construed as a renovated theory of property, crucially involving all three of these terms, the relevance of the topic should require no defense. The profound failure of enlightenment philosophy to satisfactorily determine the meaning of property has been a hostage to fortune whose dire consequences have yet to be fully exhausted. (Within the NRx generally, the question of property is deeply under-developed, and — with a very few exceptions — there is little sign of serious attention being paid to it.)

The enlightenment failure has been to begin its analysis of property from the problem of *justification*. This not only throws it into immediate ideological contention, submitting it to politics, and thus to relentless left-drift, it also places insurmountable obstacles in the path of rigorous understanding. To depart from an axiom of legitimate original property acquisition through work, as Locke does, is already proto-Marxist in implication, resting on philosophically hopeless metaphor, such as that of 'mixing' labor with things. It is property that defines work (over against non-productive behavior),

not the inverse. As Hurlock notes, Moldbug's approach is the correct one. 'Property' — as a social category — is a legitimation of control. It cascades conceptually from sovereignty, and not from production.

These matters will inevitably become intellectually pressing, due to the current technocommercial *restoration* of money, exemplified by the innovation of Bitcoin (in its expansive sense, as the blockchain). Control is undergoing cryptographic formalization, from which all consistent apprehension of 'property' will follow. Property, in the end, is not sociopolitical recognition of rights, but *keys*. What you can lock and unlock is yours. The rest is merely more or less serious talk, that only contingently *compiles*. This is what hacker culture has already long understood in its specific (thedish) usage of 'owned'. There's no point crying to the government about having paid good money for your computer, if Nerdgodz or some other irritating 15-year-old is running it as a Bitcoin-mining facility from his mother's basement. The concreteness of 'might is right' once looked like a parade ground, but increasingly it is *running functional code*.

Formalization isn't a detached exercise in philosophical reflection, or even a sociopolitical and legal consensus, it's functional technocommercial cryptography. Defining property outside the terms of this eventuation is an exercise in arbitrary sign-shuffling. Those with the keys can simply smile at the surrounding senseless noise. As Moldbug anticipates, with rigorously coded control, there's nothing further to argue about.

ADDED: Three recommended links from Bitstein; Locke's mistake, blockchained title, crypto and contracts (video discussion).

November 15, 2014

Legitimacy

As the conclusion to a quality piece of Singapore gloating, Kishore Mahbubani outlines the crucial principle of regime legitimacy that liberal-autocratic East Asia is honing for the world:

Singapore has its fair share of detractors. Its political system was widely viewed as being an "enlightened dictatorship," even though free elections have been held every five years. Its media is widely perceived to be controlled by the government and Singapore is ranked number 153 out of 180 by Reporters Without Borders in 2015 on the Press Freedom Index. Many human rights organizations criticize it. Freedom House ranks Singapore as "partially free." […] Undoubtedly, some of these criticisms have some validity. Yet, the Singapore population is one of the best educated populations and, hence, globally mobile. ***They could vote with their feet*** *if Singapore were a stifling "un-free" society. Most choose to stay. Equally importantly, some of the most talented people in the world, including Americans and Europeans, are giving up their citizenship to become Singapore citizens. Maybe they have noticed something that the*

Western media has not noticed: Singapore is one of the best places to be born in and to live in. [*UF* emphasis]

Jacobinism is typically too lost in its own evangelical universalism to recognize its limits in political philosophy and in space, if not yet quite so demonstrably in time.

August 5, 2015

Laffer Drift

One dark and fearsome crag, half-lost among the Himalayan mountain range of uncleared obligations stretched out before this blog, is a promise to devote a post (or several) to Mencius Moldbug's Neocameral regime model. The opportunity to make a small payment against this debt having arisen, I am eagerly seizing it.

A relatively marginal but consistent feature in Moldbug's model is the tendency of Neocameral tax rates to approximate to the Laffer maximum. Since Moldbug aims to rationalize the theory of government, under the presumption of its ineliminably self-interested nature, this suggestion scarcely requires an argument (and in fact does not receive one). Government will always tend to maximize its resources, and Arthur Laffer's graph of optimum revenue-raising tax rates seems to show the way this is done. A Neocameral regime tends the economy of a country exactly as a

farmer tends a herd of animals — without ever forgetting that ultimate redemption occurs in the abattoir.

There is a problem with this assumption, however, which is that the very idea of a Laffer maximum tax rate is incomplete. By coordinating tax rates (on the x-axis) with tax revenues (on the y-axis), the Laffer curve demolishes the crude economic intuition that revenue rises continuously with tax rates. Through the *a priori* postulate that a 100% tax rate yields zero revenue, Laffer demonstrates that revenue maximization has to be located somewhere in the central region of the curve. Its exact location — as determined by the shape of the curve — is dependent upon empirical factors, such as incentive effects, and cannot be deduced by pure theory.

Missing from the Laffer curve is time, and thus *dynamic revenue projection*. This is especially important to the Neocameral model, since a central failure to be rectified through reactionary democracy-suppression is the systematic heightening of time-preference, or collapsing economic time-horizons, with which democracy is inextricably bound. The Neocameral state is justified by its capacity for time-extended economic rationality, and this is not something that the simple Laffer curve can reflect.

Adding time to Laffer graphs is not a complex task. All that is required is a multiplication of curves, constituting a time series, with each curve corresponding to a time-horizon. Rather than a single

curve, such a graph would consist of a 1-year curve, a 2-year curve, a 3-year curve … and out to whichever extended prospect was considered appropriate.

If levels of taxation were irrelevant to economic growth rates, then each curve would be identical, and this exercise would lack all significance. If, alternatively, taxation effected growth in a predictable direction, then the Laffer curves would steadily drift as time-horizons were expanded.

To begin with the improbable case, assume that extraction of resources from private property owners tends to increase economic growth. Then each successive Laffer curve would drift to the right, as the tax base expands under the beneficent impact of lavish government spending. A small and efficient government, by depriving the economy of its attention, would steadily shrink the tax base relative to its potential, and thus reduce the total level of takings (as a function of time).

If, far more plausibly, taxation suppresses growth, then each successive curve will drift to the left. The Laffer maximum tax rate for a 1-year time horizon will be revealed as ever more excessive as the horizon is dilated, and the shortfall of the depredated economy is exposed with increasing clarity. The more extended the time-horizon, the further to the left the *dynamic* Laffer maximum has to be. As economic far-sightedness stretches out into the distance, an authoritarian-realist regime converges with anarcho-capitalism,

since growth-maximization increasingly dominates its revenue projections.

Of all the reasons to distrust the Neocameral model, an intrinsic tendency to short-term Laffer-max revenue raising cannot be among them.

[Apologies for the link famine — trawling the Moldbug archive through the GFC is a nightmare undertaking, and it's 3:30 in the morning. I'll try to punch some in over the next few days.]

August 6, 2013

CHAPER TWO - IMPLEMENTATION

Undiscovered Countries

After (re)reading Adam Gurri's critical analysis of the core problem of Neoreaction (a tragedy of the political commons), read the surgical response by Handle. The calm intelligence on display from both sides is almost enough to drive you insane. This can't be happening, right? "In a way, it's a bit sad, because I can guess that Gurri's article will be the zenith and high-water mark of coverage of neoreaction which means it will only get worse from here on in." Enjoy the insight while it lasts.

My own response to Gurri is still embryonic, but I already suspect that it diverges from Handle's to some degree. Rather than defending the 'technocratic' element in the Moldbug Patchwork-Neocameral model, I agree with Gurri that this is a real problem, although (of course) I am far more sympathetic to the underlying intellectual project. Unlike Gurri — who in this crucial respect represents a classical liberal position at its most thoughtful — Moldbug does not conceive democracy as a discovery process, illuminated by analogy to market dynamics and organic social

evolution. On the contrary, it is a ratchet mechanism that successively distances the political realm from feedback sensitivity, due to its character as a closed loop (or state church) sensitive only to a public opinion it has itself manufactured. As the Cathedral expands, its adaptation to reality progressively attenuates. The result is that every effective discovery process — whether economic, scientific, or of any other kind — is subjected to ever-more radical subversion by political influences whose only 'reality principle' is internal: based on closed-circuit social manipulation.

Democracy is thus, strictly speaking, a production of collective insanity, or dissociation from reality. Moldbug's solution, therefore, *can only be* an attempt to re-embed governance in an effective feedback system. Since it is already evident that democratic mechanisms, rather than providing such feedback, reliably deepen dissociation, reality signal has to come from elsewhere. To return to an adaptive condition, governance has to simultaneously disconnect from popular opinion (voice) and reconnect to a registry of actual — rather than ideologically spun — performance. The communication medium for the uncontaminated feedback required by *sensible* government is exit traffic within the Patchwork (comparable in its operation to revealed consumer preference within marketplaces).

The great difficulty that then emerges — casting the entire Neocameral schema into question — is the requirement for an 'undiscovered' or 'technocratic' leap, from an environment of

progressively decaying discovery or selection pressure, into one in which discovery can once again take place. Neoreaction confronts a very real transition problem, and Gurri is quite right to point this out. Handle is no less right when he insists that the 'conservative' option of accommodation to the democratic social process in motion is profoundly untenable, because *discovery deterioration is essential to the democratic trend*. Maladaptation to reality ceases to be correctable under Cathedral governance, and recognition of this malign condition is the defining neoreactionary insight.

If we stay on the train we will be smashed into a consummate insanity, but to leap is technocratic error (unsupported by discovery). As for prevarication: The intensification of this dilemma can be confidently expected from the mere continuance of the democratic process, dominated by the degenerative politics of the madhouse, and scrambling all social information. It is in this precarious position that the task of a rigorous evaluation of the Neocameral schema, along with its prospects for renovation or replacement, has to take place.

"… it will only get worse from here on in."

February 14, 2014

The Deal

NRx repudiates public politics. Turn that around, and it's the thesis: *Politics happens in private*.

Specifically — as a political philosophy — NRx advocates the privatization of government. It makes a public case for that, in the abstract, but only for purposes of informational and theoretical optimization. It is not, ever, *doing* politics in public, but only thinking about it under conditions of minimal intelligence security. Concrete execution of political strategy occurs through private deals.

The currency of such deals was formalized by Mencius Moldbug, as *primary* (or *fungible sovereign*) *property*. It corresponds to the conversion — whether notional or actual — of hard power into business assets. This conversion is what 'formalism' means. It's an important contribution to political philosophy, and political economy, but it's also a negotiating position.

Cries for (public) *Action!* will always be with us, at least until things are radically sorted out. They should be ignored. No public action is serious.

The serious thing is *the deal*, which substitutes for any semblance of revolution, and also for regime perpetuation. Shadow NRx — which acts outside the sphere of public visibility — is a political vulture fund. This blog does not want to know who, or what, it is. Its deep secrecy is the same as its reality. Our concern is restricted to

the way it necessarily acts, in compliance with an absolute principle. We ask only: *What does the deal have to be like?*

In its essence it is this: *Stand down effective capabilities for regime preservation in exchange for primary property stock*. The form thus indicates the relevant principals — holders of the keys to hard power. What is on offer for them, as NRx develops in reality (the shadows), is formalization of their implicit social authority, through the emergence of a new — ultimate or 'transcendental' — commercial medium. The whole of Neocameral transition is realized through this.
"Turn everything you have into rigorous code, and everything changes. We can help with the technicalities."
"Why should I do that?"
"It will be worth it."

That's the vulture fund aspect. Hard power capability is systematically under-valued under conditions of Cathedral-demotic degeneracy, since it is squandered on the ever-more inefficient preservation of an insane religious establishment — the Atheo-Oecumenic Ecclesiocracy — and compensated accordingly, from the charred scraps of chronic policy disaster. After dysfunctional domestic social programs, election buying, and Jacobin foreign policy crusades have been paid for, what remains to reward competent governance?

Administrative capability is slaved to the Cathedral, which means to a zealous pursuit of impossible objectives, and thus accelerating

waste. As a business opportunity (“We can help with the technicalities”), the attraction of defection grows, therefore, in strict proportion to the triumph of progressivism. This is critical, because the threshold risks of transition are immense, and *the deal* has to cover them.

> "All that complex governance you're doing under increasingly ludicrous circumstances? We want to help you turn it into a business."
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) January 23, 2016

> … "You do get that you're basically working as a poorly paid security goon for Jim Jones at the moment?"
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) January 23, 2016

The Cathedral is the Peoples Temple.

ADDED: The Political Omnivore responds (to the twitter precursor).

January 23, 2016

The Sad Left

It’s probably unrealistic right now to think the non-demented Left is going to be able to cut the hysterical weeping long enough to realize:

You're going to have to put your social ideals into Neocameral format if you want to play in the 21st century.

They really could do that. Sovereign stock distribution could be wholly egalitarian. If Neo-Maoism seeks a sensible sized patch, they should clearly be given one. (That would be a Neo-Maoist garbage disposal program, as far as everyone else is concerned.) At the highest level, NRx is first-order politics neutral. Do *whatever you want*, within precisely formalized bounds.

There's no audience for this point yet. Eventually there will be.

"But … but .. the whole point of the Left is that we don't think government is a business!" — Then call it a 'co-op' or some equivalent bullshit. Jesus, use some imagination.

March 4, 2017

Startup Cities

Michael Anissimov is no friend of Neocameralism, but he's got a good sense for the kind of things we like:

> Explain to me how this is different than Techno-Commercialism http://t.co/Vvfb1i3oLS
>
> — Michael Anissimov (@MikeAnissimov) July 31, 2014

Here's a good introduction.

Here's Paul Romer on Charter Cities (video), the more institutionally-respectable predecessor conception (or perhaps the same conception, with a more established brand).

The Startup Cities blog promotes China's Special Economic Zones as a model of success.

July 31, 2014

Quote note (#111)

SoBL on the next stage for Japan:

The Japanese had their forty-first straight month of trade deficits. This is the problem when a nation imports raw materials and energy and exports finished goods in a world of sluggish demand. The Japanese are one of the export dollar recyclers. They are not reliable anymore, which might be why tiny Belgium holds hundreds of billions of US Treasuries now. The Japanese are now moving to invest more abroad, but curiously, they are not investing in hot spots like China but instead in America. The Japanese are investing in US insurance companies as a proxy for investing directly in the US. They want to use insurance companies as a way to learn about the US market more before digging in deeper. This is beyond direct purchases of manufacturing firms and what not. They did this in the '80s when

Japanese automakers partnered with US firms to learn the psychology of the US worker as they then invested in US sitused plants.

At the core of all of this is finding ways to earn non-yen denominated revenue. Currency diversification to prepare for a domestic shock. They are preparing for the devaluing of the yen, and they expect it to happen to the yen first and the dollar later. Many have bet against the yen and lost, including recently Kyle Bass, but if the Japanese themselves are starting to bail, the end must be approaching. It is an interesting island culture shaping up. Greying and shrinking population, growing robotics industry, worlds' largest creditor nation with trillions in net assets, "xenophobic" immigration policy, shrinking working population… it is like they are setting up an island of a homogenous, rentier class.

If this analysis is correct, it suggests that Japanese capital is set to become a major resource for world-wide trends with an NRx (anti-demotic propertarian) orientation. Sustaining foreign investment revenue streams will become an existential necessity for a grayed Japan, which is enough to establish a definite agenda regarding governance models in the functional fragments of the world system.

Does a 'rentier nation' spontaneously produce a Neocameral geopolitical entity?

September 22, 2014

Clandestine NeoCam

This is huge:

The most intriguing secrets of the "war on terror" have nothing to do with al-Qaeda and its fellow travelers. They're about the mammoth private spying industry that all but runs U.S. intelligence operations today. [...] Surprised? No wonder. In April, Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell was poised to publicize a year-long examination of outsourcing by U.S. intelligence agencies. But the report was inexplicably delayed — and suddenly classified a national secret. What McConnell doesn't want you to know is that the private spy industry has succeeded where no foreign government has: It has penetrated the CIA and is running the show. [...] Over the past five years (some say almost a decade), there has been a revolution in the intelligence community toward wide-scale outsourcing. Private companies now perform key intelligence-agency functions, to the tune, I'm told, of more than $42 billion a year. Intelligence professionals tell me that more than 50 percent of the National Clandestine Service (NCS) — the heart, brains and soul of the CIA — has been outsourced to private firms such as Abraxas, Booz Allen Hamilton, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon. ...

Of course, read it all, but especially:

Outsourcing has provided solutions to personnel-management problems that have always plagued the CIA's operations side. Rather

than tying agents up in the kind of office politics that government employees have to engage in to advance their careers, outsourcing permits them to focus on what they do best, which boosts morale and performance.

Under the conditions of a ruined public sphere, trends to the commercialization of government are re-routed around the back. When the time is right for the dismantling of the terminally deteriorated Cathedral Empire — a.k.a. 'the International Community' — its power structures will default to the Deep State, which is already undergoing business re-organization. Identify the private agencies who at that point will *own* the only chunks of security apparatus still working, and you know who's political ideas will matter. It follows, naturally, that it would be unrealistic to expect these *directors* to be voluble about their thinking, or anything else. They're not politicians. That's over.

The public sphere is already dead. It's time now to shift all serious attention into the dark.

(Thanks to VXXC for the WaPo link.)

May 12, 2015

NRx Disneyworld

Never underestimate the capacity of modern history's neo-

cyberpunk oddity to reach the place you thought you were heading ahead of time, and in a way that doesn't seem … quite right. Glenn Beck has set his *heart* (and checkbook) on a version of neoreactionary secessionism, based on a restoration of the House of Disney. Once you see the plan, it's immediately obvious that nothing in the reactosphere will ever be the same again:

While Independence is very much a dream at this point, the proposed city-theme park hybrid would bring several of Glenn's seemingly disconnected projects into one place. Media, live events, small business stores, educational projects, charity, entertainment, news, information, and technology R&D – all of these things would have a home in Independence. With the rest of the country and the world going away from the values of freedom, responsibility and truth, Independence would be a place built on the very foundation of those principles. A retreat from the world where entrepreneurs, artists, and creators could come to put their ideas to work. A place for families to bring their children to be inspired. […] The ambitious project, projected to cost over two billion dollars, has been heavily influenced by Walt Disney. As Glenn has been explaining throughout the week, Disneyland was originally intended to be a place where people would find happiness, inspiration, courage and hope. Over time, Walt Disney's original vision has been lost. While hundreds of thousands still flock to the town, it's become commercialized and the big dreams and the heart have been compromised. […] Glenn

believes that he can bring the heart and the spirit of Walt's early Disneyland ideas into reality. Independence, USA wouldn't be about rides and merchandise, but would be about community and freedom. The Marketplace would be a place where craftmen and artisan could open and run real small businesses and stores. The owners and tradesmen could hold apprenticeships and teach young people the skills and entrepreneurial spirit that has been lost in today's entitlement state. […] There would also be an Media Center, where Glenn's production company would film television, movies, documentaries, and more. Glenn hoped to include scripted television that would challenge viewers without resorting to a loss of human decency. He also said it would be a place where aspiring journalists would learn how to be great reporters. […] Across the lake, there would be a church modelled after The Alamo which would act as a multi-denominational mission center. The town will also have a working ranch where visitors can learn how to farm and work the land.

Gnon giveth in overwhelming abundance, and also takes away.

"Neoreaction? Wasn't that some kind of precursor to the Glenn Beck thing?"

June 16, 2015

Disney NRx

It looks as if this was a lot more flippant than it needed to be.

Via @asilentsky (via), the question: Was Walt Disney practically exploring a prototypical Neoreaction in the 1960s? Such anachronism typically merits extreme skepticism, but here are some videos to hone your doubt upon: Walt Disney's original plan for EPCOT (his Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow), parts 1, 2, and 3. Plus some select tweet support:

> In a very real sense Walt Disney is #NRx
> — Konkvistador (@asilentsky) July 20, 2015

> A for profit city that is also an industrial park for cutting edge industry, with room for future technology, designed to be updated. #NRx
> — Konkvistador (@asilentsky) July 20, 2015

> They called Lee's brilliant Singapore Disneyworld with the Death Penalty. This is closer to truth than it seems. And a deep compliment. #NRx
> — Konkvistador (@asilentsky) July 20, 2015

(That last is a Gibson quote, btw.)

From the EPCOT videos: "Whatever worked became the code …

We're ready to go right now."

There has to be a discussion about this.

July 20, 2015

SECTION B - FASCISM

CHAPTER ONE - THE BASICS

Triumph of the Will?

If it were never necessary to adapt fundamentally to reality, then fascism would be the truth. There could be no limit to the sovereignty of political will.

If — pursuing this thought further into vile absurdity — even tactical concessions were unnecessary, then nothing would obstruct a path of joyous degeneration leading all the way to consummate communism. That, however, is several steps beyond anything that has been *seriously* advocated for over half a century.

Since the 1920s, communism has been the ideal form of socio-economic impracticality, as evidenced by that fact that whenever communism becomes practical, it becomes — to exactly the same extent — fascist ('state capitalist' or 'Stalinist'). Fascism on the other hand, and as everyone knows, makes the trains run on time. It represents *practical subordination of reality to concentrated will*.

Fascism understands itself as the politics of the 'third position' — between the anti-political hyper-realism of the market on the one

(invisible) hand, and super-political communist fantasy on the (clenched-fist) other. The fascism that thrives — most exceptionally in the American tradition through Hamilton, Lincoln, and FDR — is a flexi-fascism, or pragmatic illiberalism, that marries the populist desires of coercive collectivism to a superceded, subordinated, or directed 'realism' — grasping economic dispersion as *a technocratic management problem* under centralized supervision. Insofar as this problem proves to be indeed manageable, the basic fascist intuition is vindicated. Fragmentation is mastered, in a triumph of the will (although we are more likely to call it 'hope and change' today).

That *fragmentation cannot be mastered* is the sole essentially anti-fascist proposition, and also the distinctive thesis of Austrian economics. Whilst deductively obtainable, within the axiomatic system of methodological individualism, it is a thesis that must ultimately be considered empirically sensitive. Fascism can discredit individualist assumptions simply by prolonging itself, and thus practically asserting the superior authority of the social super-organism. Reciprocally, the fragility of collective identities can only be convincingly demonstrated through historical events. It does not suffice to analytically 'disprove' the collective — it has to be effectively *broken*. Nothing less than a *totally unmanageable* economic crisis can really count against the fascist idea.

Yet, obviously and disturbingly, the predictable political response to a gathering crisis is to slide more deeply into fascism. Since

fascism, beyond all brand-complexity, sells itself as ultimate managerial authority — heroic dragon-slayer of the autonomous (or 'out-of-control') economy — there is absolutely no reason for this to surprise us. To break fascism is to break the desire for fascism, which is to break the democratic or 'popular will' itself — and only a really freed economy, which has uncaged itself, spikily and irreversibly, can do that.

The shattering of human collective self-management from the Outside, or (alternatively) triumphal fascism forever. That is the fork, dividing reaction from itself, and deciding everything for mankind. Patchwork or New Order — but when will we know?

NOTE: Among the glories of this comments thread is Vladimir's indispensable contribution to the schedule of decision: "Meanwhile, the Austro-libertarian prophets of doom are necessarily unable to give any accurate timing for these crashes and panics, even when they unfold exactly according to their theory. The reason is simple: the obvious truth of the weak efficient markets hypothesis."

ADDED: Ex-Army on why Communism ≠ Fascism: "When you're given a choice between living under a communist dictator or a fascist dictator, everything else being equal, take the fascist dictator. Interestingly, communists in general are safer under a fascist dictator than they are under a communist dictator."

March 25, 2013

AIACC

Moldbug's latest has triggered a wave of discussion by emphatically re-stating the long-standing thesis:

America is a communist country.

The supporting argument is richly multi-threaded, and I won't attempt to recapitulate it here. Its dominant flavor can be appreciated in these paragraphs:

When the story of the 20th century is told in its proper, reactionary light, international communism is anything but a grievance of which Americans may complain. Rather, it's a crime for which we have yet to repent. Since America is a communist country, the original communist country, and the most powerful and important of communist countries, the crimes of communism are our crimes. You may not personally have supported these crimes. Did you oppose them in any way?

Whereas actually, codewords like "progressive," "social justice," "change," etc, are shared across the Popular Front community for the entire 20th century. They are just as likely to be used by a Cheka cheerleader from the '20s, as a Clinton voter from the '90s.

'Progressives' aren't called out on their all-but-overt communism for 'reasons' of tact, rooted in a complex structure of intimidation, which itself attests to comprehensive Left triumph. It's rude to call a ruling communist a communist, and being rude can be highly

deleterious to life prospects (it's a communist thing, which everyone understands all too well).

Despite all this, *Outside in* probably won't be stepping up its counter-communist rhetoric in any obvious way, because there's a criticism of the AIACC analysis that remains unanswered — and which Moldbug seems averse to recognizing. *Fascism is the highest stage of communism*. Already in the 1930s — which is to say with the New Deal — even small-c 'communism' had been clearly surpassed by a more advanced model of slaving the private economy to the state.

Yes, America is a communist country, in much the same way that it is a protestant, and puritan one. The ideological lineage of its governing establishment leads through communism, in exactly the way Moldbug describes. The evolution of this lineage, however, has long passed on into *politically incorporated pseudo-capitalism*. This is a fact which can only be obscured by excessive attention to preliminary — and now entirely extinct — political forms.

There is absolutely nobody on the empowered Left seeking to dismantle the co-opted oligarchy in order to establish direct 'public' administration of the American industrial base. In this respect America is no more communist than the Third Reich (and also no less). Central planning is restricted to the monetary commanding heights, with a pragmatic apparatus of regulatory coercion enforcing political conformity among private businesses. This arrangement is accepted as far more consistent with effective direction of society

through Cathedral teleology, in which the accumulation of cultural power is acknowledged as the supreme goal. Furthermore, it enables government insiders and allies to be rewarded relatively openly, economizing on the administrative, political, and psychological costs of extensive subterfuge.

Understanding that fascism is an advanced communist ideology is at least as important as recognizing AIACC, with more significant consequences, on the 'right' as well as the Left. Progressives progress. Communism was just a stage they went through.

September 19, 2013

Quote notes (#59)

John Michael Greer on the triumph of fascism (spot on):

National socialist parties argued that business firms should be made subject to government regulation and coordination in order to keep them from acting against the interests of society as a whole, and that the working classes ought to receive a range of government benefits paid for by taxes on corporate income and the well-to-do. Those points were central to the program of the National Socialist German Workers Party from the time it got that name— it was founded as the German Workers Party, and got the rest of the moniker at the urging of a little man with a Charlie Chaplin mustache

who became the party's leader not long after its founding — and those were the policies that the same party enacted when it took power in Germany in 1933.

If those policies sound familiar, dear reader, they should. That's the other reason why next to nobody outside of specialist historical works mentions national socialism by name: the Western nations that defeated national socialism in Germany promptly adopted its core economic policies, the main source of its mass appeal, to forestall any attempt to revive it in the postwar world.

(via @PuzzlePirate)

ADDED: A point of clarification and a question:

Fascism isn't a problem because it triggers scary feelings about the Nazis. It's a problem because it's running the world.

Question: Is there anybody among the critics of this contention who seeks to defend fascism against sloppy criticism and 'spin' who doesn't also want — at least partially — to defend elements of socialist governance?

The sample size of the commentary so far is too small to tell, but it's looking as if the answer is 'no'. If so, it would suggest that Hayek and even (*gasp*) Jonah Goldberg are right in suggesting that the fundamental controversy is about *spontaneous social organization*, and not about any unambiguous argument of Left v. Right.

February 13, 2014

Fascism

The whole of Robert O. Paxton's *The Anatomy of Fascism* (2004) is available here. In the final pages (p.218), following detailed historical analysis, it cautiously advances a cultural-political definition:

Fascism may be defined as a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraint goals of internal cleansing and external expansion.

Since the topic regularly re-surfaces, it seems worth recording Paxton's formulation as a reference point, especially as its emphases differ significantly from those this blog (and its critics) have tended to stress. An important conclusion of Paxton's study is that no purely ideological account of fascism is able to capture what is an essentially historical phenomenon, which is to say a *process*, rooted in the degeneration of democracy. (Wikipedia offers some background on his work.)

June 12, 2014

CHAPTER TWO - NEOLIBERALISM: THE FASCISM THAT WON

‘Neoliberalism’

It’s absolutely obvious that any engagement with the most prominent current version of accelerationist thinking — or indeed with any left-dominated discussion today — is going to encounter the term ‘neoliberalism‘ as an omnipresent reference. Sheer irritability won’t serve as a response for long.

Why irritation at all? Most immediately, because the reference of this term is a sprawling mess. It is employed ambiguously to describe an epoch, and an ideology. The evident duplicity of this lies in the tacit assumption that the ideology defines the epoch — a vast historical and political claim, as well as an implausible one — which evades systematic interrogation through terminological sleaziness.

Worse still, the characteristics of the ‘neoliberal’ ideology are themselves pasted together, primarily by a mish-mash of theoretically-impoverished anti-capitalist polemics from around the world, with the consequence that its only consistent feature is the

mere fact of having a leftist opposition (somewhere). As the *Wikipedia* explanation (linked above) makes clear, any economic policy anywhere that is not positively hostile to the market, and which finds itself talked about antagonistically by the left, is 'neoliberal'.

When all of these compounding fuzz factors are taken into consideration, it is easy to see why the meaning of 'neoliberal' can range — at the very least — from marginally market-reformist Keynesianism (Clinton), through autocratic capitalism (Pinochet), to extreme libertarian 'hyper-capitalism' (in our dreams). Its global application, to include — for instance — the ethnic-Chinese dominated Pacific Rim (and post Reform-and-Opening Mainland China), is more carelessly gestural still. If Lenin's 1921 New Economic Policy wasn't 'neoliberal' it's hard to see why — unless the absence of a left opposition suffices as an explanation. A word this sloppy — traditionally rooted in Latin American anti-market demagoguery, but since adopted generally as the linguistic equivalent of a Che Guevara T-shirt — has no serious analytical use.

Fashion is unpredictable, but it seems very unlikely that this word is going anywhere. Its totemic meaning within tribal leftism is enough to ensure its persistence — which is to say that SWPL radical chic signalling would be significantly inconvenienced without it. Might it then be possible to rigorize it?

That would require delimitation, which is to say: specificity. Given

the political utility of the word, there are few grounds for optimism in this respect. David Harvey, for instance, who has devoted a book to the 'topic' (*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2005), produces no clear definition beyond resurgent capitalism, as it occurred with the partial recession of central planning from the late 1970s. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the more classically liberal policy becomes, the more 'neoliberal' it is too. The 'neo-', in the end, signifies no more than an infuriated "you're supposed to be dead, goddammit." Neoliberalism is then a capitalistic orientation that has outlived expectation, and since the expectation has been sunk into immovable foundations, it is the outliving that requires explicit designation.

Whatever slight (and strictly polemical) coherence might be drawn from Harvey is thrown back into chaos by Benjamin Noys' paper 'The Grammar of Neoliberalism' (2010). Far from describing the partial reversion to market-oriented economic arrangements in the wake of hegemonic Social Democratic assumptions, Noys identifies 'neoliberalism' with the state-supervised capitalism introduced in the 1920s-30s, i.e. exactly that economic order which Harvey's 'neoliberalism' overthrows.

Taken in its own terms — rather than as a defense of an intrinsically misleading word — Noys' argument is highly interesting. Its general direction is captured in the following passage [citation marks subtracted]:

What is the precise nature, then, of neo-liberalism? Of course, the obvious objection to the 'anti-state' vision of neo-liberalism is that neo-liberalism itself is a continual form of state intervention, usually summarised in the phrase 'socialism for the rich, capitalism for the poor'. Foucault notes that neo-liberalism concedes this: 'neo-liberal government intervention is no less dense, frequent, active, and continuous than in any other system.' The difference, however, is the **point** *of application. It intervenes on society 'so that competitive mechanisms can play a regulatory role at every moment and every point in society and by intervening in this way its objective will become possible, that is to say, a general regulation of society by the market.' Therefore, we miss the point if we simply leave a critique of neo-liberalism at the point of saying 'neo-liberalism is as statist as other governmental forms'. Instead, the necessity is to analyse how neo-liberalism creates a new form of governmentality in which the state performs a different function: permeating society to subject it to the economic.*

Setting aside the question of this argument's persuasiveness (for another time), the essential thing to note is that it represents a *contest* over the mindlessly shambling term 'neoliberalism' which Noys has little realistic chance of winning — 'winning', that is, with sufficient comprehensiveness to salvage the word. If 'neoliberalism' *generally* meant a highly statist variant of 'capitalist' organization, first originating in the era of high-modernism, in which — in contrast

to the statism of the left — the role of the state was specifically directed to imposing an administrative simulacrum of catallactic social order, it would become a valuable, theoretically-functional word. This would be so even if the theory itself were criticized, amended, or rejected — and in fact the very possibility of such engagement presupposes that 'neoliberalism' becomes a *locally intelligible concept* (local, that is, to Noys' argument and whatever halo it has managed to extend beyond itself).

Even here on the Outer Right, almost all terminological irritability would immediately subside if the expression repeatedly encountered was — even implicitly — *Neoliberalism in the Noysean sense*. It would then be a term with relatively precise limits, clarifying more than it obscured. Consequently, it would mark a limit on the right as well as the left, distinguishing anti-statist or *laissez-faire* capitalism — with its model in Hong Kong — from the dominant political-economic formation of our age. For that reason alone, it can be confidently anticipated that 'neoliberalism' will not be permitted to mean any such thing.

ADDED: Complete PDF of David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

February 21, 2014

‘Neoliberalism’ II

Paul Mason thinks he’s being helpful:

There’s a meme that keeps resurfacing in the genteel world of rightwing financial thought: that the term “neoliberalism” is in some way just a term of abuse, or a catch-all phrase invented by the left. […] Well, as the UK steel industry faces instant closure—and let’s be clear that’s what Tata would do if it had to—we about to get a textbook lesson in what neoliberalism actually means. It means, when market logic clashes with human logic, the market must prevail and you must not give a shit about the social consequences.

Ummm … you know that was just straight-up liberalism, before they wrecked the word. (Socialism is the other thing.)

ADDED: Some precious lucidity here.

April 21, 2016

The Fascism that Won

Calling somebody a *fascist* tends to be a great way to end a conversation. First on the Left, and more recently on the Right, the abuse value of this term has been eagerly seized upon. Insofar as such usage merits the attribution of a ‘logic’ it is that of *reductio ad absurdum* — an argument or position that can be identified as fascist

by implication is *thereby* immediately dismissed. Fascism is analyzed only as far as required to stick the label on the other guy.

Among the reasons to regret this situation is the veil it casts over the triumph of fascism as the decisive historical fact of the 20th century. While the defeat of the core 'fascist' axis in the Second World War left the ideology bereft of confident defenders, reducing it to its merely abusive meaning, it also fostered the illusion that the victorious powers were essentially 'anti-fascist' — to the point of extreme military exertion. The historical reality, in contrast, is described far more accurately by dramatic convergence upon fascist ideas, from both Left and Right, as exemplified by the ascendency of pragmatic nationalism over radical collectivism in the communist world, and by social-democratic state-managerialism over *laissez-faire* 'classical liberalism' in the West. With calm discussion of this 'third-position' formation rendered next to impossible, the crucial attempt to understand its socio-historical specificity is diverted into sterile polemics.

American Arch-Druid John Michael Greer is perhaps sufficiently distanced from predictable Left-Right controversy to make a difference with his three part series of blog posts on the historical reality of fascism. Rather than attack fascism (from the Left) for its residual capitalism, or (from the Right) for its innovative anti-capitalism, Greer prioritizes the philosophical task of a rectification of words:

> When George Orwell wrote his tremendous satire on totalitarian politics, 1984, one of the core themes he explored was the debasement of language for political advantage. That habit found its lasting emblem in Orwell's invented language Newspeak, which was deliberately designed to get in the way of clear thinking. Newspeak remains fictional—well, more or less—but the entire subject of fascism, and indeed the word itself, has gotten tangled up in a net of debased language and incoherent thinking as extreme as anything Orwell put in his novel.
>
> These days, to be more precise, the word "fascism" mostly functions as what S.I. Hayakawa used to call a snarl word — a content-free verbal noise that expresses angry emotions and nothing else. … To get past such stupidities, it's going to be necessary to take the time to rise up out of the swamp of Newspeak that surrounds the subject of fascism — to reconnect words with their meanings, and political movements with their historical contexts.

Greer's discussion is so eloquent and penetrating that it would be redundant to repeat it here. It deserves the widest possible careful reading, and subsequent reflection. (*Urban Future* endorses the entire argument, with only the most marginal reservations on comparatively insignificant points.)

Instead of pointless repetition, a question. Given that history has conspired to make the word ‘fascism’ illegible, and has thus not only obscured the dominant trend in social organization worldwide, but also stripped away all effective antibodies to resurgent movements of classical fascist type, is there any realistic path to a restoration of political lucidity? Is the world doomed to persistent blindness about what it is, and what it might still more dismally become? If there are any grounds for encouragement in this regard, the evidence for them is thin.

Greer’s conclusion seems no less bleak. Approaching it, he comments:

> The fascist movements of the 1920s and 1930s were … closely attuned to the hopes and fears of the masses, far more so than either the mainstream parties or the established radical groups of their respective countries. Unlike the imagined “fascism” of modern radical rhetoric, they were an alternative to business as usual, an alternative that positioned itself squarely in the abandoned center of the political discourse of their eras. … Antisemitism and overt militarism were socially acceptable in Germany between the wars; they aren’t socially acceptable in today’s United States, and so they won’t play a role in a neofascist movement of any importance in the American future. What will play such

> roles, of course, are the tropes and buzzwords that appeal to Americans today, and those may very well include the tropes and buzzwords that appeal most to you.

ADDED: (For the Fregeans out there) Different *Sinn*, same *Bedeutung*: 'morning star' and 'evening star'; *'Neoliberalism'* and *The Fascism that Won*.

March 3, 2014

The Fascism that's Winning

John Michael Greer's grasp of the fascist phenomenon is much stronger than Samir Amin's. As might be expected from a voice so unambiguously aligned with the Left, Amin is entirely indifferent to the essentially populist nature of fascism and its erosion of property rights.

Property has no meaning apart from free disposal, equivalent to an Exit option on a particular instantiation of wealth. Fascism's statist subordination of the independent 'plutocracy' — realized through more-or-less severe restrictions on the free disposal of assets, both formal and informal — is therefore inconsistent with the protection of private property, which is rather eroded from its foundations. (Where communism expropriates, fascism — more

efficiently — attenuates.)

Amin is therefore writing from a position of structurally-unobservant Marxist dogma when he remarks of "fascist regimes" in general:

… they were all willing to manage the government and society in such a way as not to call the fundamental principles of capitalism into question, specifically private capitalist property, including that of modern monopoly capitalism. That is why I call these different forms of fascism particular ways of managing capitalism and not political forms that challenge the latter's legitimacy, even if "capitalism" or "plutocracies" were subject to long diatribes in the rhetoric of fascist speeches. The lie that hides the true nature of these speeches appears as soon as one examines the "alternative" proposed by these various forms of fascism, which are always silent concerning the main point — private capitalist property.

On the contrary — every fascist regime qualifies the liberal right to free disposal of 'strategic' economic assets, and thus subverts "private capitalist property" at the root. Indeed, the forms of property most radically affected by fascist governance are precisely those identifiable with a capitalistic (i.e. productive) character. In the case of large-scale capital assets determined as the 'commanding heights' of a modern industrial economy, especially those of clear military significance, utilization is directed as stringently under fascist conditions as communistic ones (although typically with

considerably greater administrative competence and pragmatic flexibility). When socialism emphasizes practicality, it tends to adopt fascistic traits — such as nationalism and state-supervised bourgeois management — automatically.

Amin's essay, however, is far from uninteresting. It's most striking analysis, which also seems to have been its motivating topic, concerns political Islam. Amin's disdain for this rising ideology is classically Marxist, and entirely untainted by New Left opportunism. In consequence, he is positioned as a voice in the wilderness, addressing a sympathetic audience that has been marginalized to the edge of disappearance.

After formulating a four-fold typology of fascist regimes, Amin resolutely folds Islamism into it, stating:

… the Western powers (the United States and its subaltern European allies) … have given preferential support to the Muslim Brotherhood and/or other "Salafist" organizations of political Islam. The reason for that is simple and obvious: these reactionary political forces accept exercising their power within globalized neoliberalism (and thus abandoning any prospect for social justice and national independence). That is the sole objective pursued by the imperialist powers.

Consequently, political Islam's program belongs to the type of fascism found in dependent societies. In fact, it shares with all forms of fascism two fundamental characteristics: (1) the absence of a

challenge to the essential aspects of the capitalist order (and in this context this amounts to not challenging the model of lumpen development connected to the spread of globalized neoliberal capitalism); and (2) the choice of anti-democratic, police-state forms of political management (such as the prohibition of parties and organizations, and forced Islamization of morals).

The anti-democratic option of the imperialist powers (which gives the lie to the pro-democratic rhetoric found in the flood of propaganda to which we are subjected), then, accepts the possible "excesses" of the Islamic regimes in question. Like other types of fascism and for the same reasons, these excesses are inscribed in the "genes" of their modes of thought: unquestioned submission to leaders, fanatic valorization of adherence to the state religion, and the formation of shock forces used to impose submission. In fact, and this can be seen already, the "Islamist" program makes progress only in the context of a civil war (between, among others, Sunnis and Shias) and results in nothing other than permanent chaos. This type of Islamist power is, then, the guarantee that the societies in question will remain absolutely incapable of asserting themselves on the world scene. It is clear that a declining United States has given up on getting something better — a stable and submissive local government — in favor of this "second best."

Beyond an appeal for "vigilance", Amin has little to propose in practical response to this predicament. Given the near-total

evaporation of secular-leftist constituencies in the Muslim world, accompanied by the disappearance of a confident anti-Islamist Left outside it, this absence of practical direction is scarcely surprising.

September 2, 2014

Capitalism Today

… the American version, at least, which is probably why it's going to die. Apple's Tim Cook opines:

America's business community recognized a long time ago that discrimination, in all its forms, is bad for business.

Charitably, I'm going to assume this isn't a direct quote from *Stormfront*. It's a mess, but not an unanticipated one.

ADDED: Any connoisseur of tangled irony knots has to appreciate this:

> Can we admit it's KIND OF funny ppl are boycotting Indiana for the immoral act of allowing people to boycott those they think act immorally?
>
> — Scott Alexander (@slatestarcodex) March 31, 2015

March 30, 2015

Man in the High Castle

The TV series trailer.

Could it be that people are beginning to understand that fascism won the 20th century? (With no sign of a major reverse so far in the 21st.)

Since 'fascism' tweaks people's Godwin nerves, it might be better to talk about 'pragmatic populism' — so long as it is initially understood that no substantial semantic revision is thereby taking place. Whatever we call it, it's what has ruled the earth for close to a century, as the culmination of democracy, and the way classical liberalism is actually destroyed. It plays on basic human traits in a way that leaves every other ideology in the dust — tribalism, resentment, vicarious identification with authority, extreme susceptibility to simple propaganda, and all of the remaining highly-predictable, easily manipulable, aspects of hominid social emotion. Ultimately, it's what humanity deserves, strictly speaking, since it is nothing other than the cynical exploitation of what people are like. The fact that the most insultingly trivial redecorations of this mode of social organization suffice to convince even articulate intellectuals that something else is taking place serves as an ample demonstration of its tidal historic momentum. ~~Fascists~~ Pragmatic populists think that people, as a general political phenomenon, are irredeemably moronic tools, and they're right.

The more politics we get, the deeper pragmatic populism digs in.

ADDED: Background to the Times Square shot. “The more familiar it is, the more terrifying it is.” (Quite.)

September 25, 2015

Twitter cuts (#124)

> So, I have been mulling Marx's prediction of the ultimate result of capitalist development with increasing confusion.
>
> — Jehu (@Damn_Jehu) July 14, 2016

(Massive tweet-storm follows that is too long to reproduce, but well worth your time.)

The “national capitalist” is a concept that arises in the Marxian tradition, but has also (recently) acquired a very different valency elsewhere. Countries come to appear as estates.

July 14, 2016

The ‘F’ Word

Fascism is back, apparently. At the very least, it might be getting more interesting to talk about.

In the period immediately following World War II, both of the triumphant blocs moved rapidly to define the word 'fascism' expediently. The critical objective, on each side, was to emphasize those features comparatively understated in its own domestic version of the phenomenon, in order to underscore the impression that they had unambiguously sided against it. 'Fascism' was, definitively, that thing recently and at an enormous cost defeated. The immense sacrifices – and, in fact, *progressive fascist reconstruction of society that had been accelerated during the war years* – was justified by the crushing defeat of an absolute evil. Distinction was imperative. Thus, the Soviets drew particular attention to the comparatively muted anti-capitalism of the Axis powers, while the Atlantic allies concentrated upon the exotic trappings of German anti-semitic Aryanism. It is particularly notable that the predominant Western definition of fascism is remarkably maladapted to even the most basic comprehension of the Italian original, and that both Western and Soviet anti-fascist narratives are compelled to downplay the revolutionary socialism of its roots, in both its Italian and its German variants.

This is all understandable enough, but it grotesquely mystifies the reality of fascism, which was epitomized – universally – by the 20th-century war economy. Every major contestant of WWII – including the great Asian powers Japan and China – developed fascist governance to an advanced state. The essential feature was

state seizure of the economy's 'commanding heights' in the delegated (and integrated) 'popular interest'. During war time such *interest* is peeled back to sheer survival, and thus publicized with dramatic intensity, which is also to say with an unusual absence of skepticism. Fascism is therefore broadly identical with *a normalization of war-powers* in a modern state, that is: *sustained social mobilization under central direction*. Consequently, it involves, beside the centralization of political authority in a permanent war council, a tribal hystericization of social identity, and a considerable measure of economic pragmatism. Fascism is *practical* socialism, distinguished from its dim cousin by its far more sophisticated grasp of incentives, or of human nature in its motivated individual and tribal particularity. When compared to universalistic communism, fascism's practical advantages are such that 'actually existing socialism' *always* soon turns into it. *National socialism* and *socialism in one country* are not sanely separable things. Everyone knows that the literal meaning of 'fascism' is *bundling*.

Like its Continental European and Soviet competitors, American fascism had been fully consolidated by the beginning of the war. The New Deal cemented its structural pillars into place. Socialization of the economy through central banking, the transformation of the Supreme Court into a facilitator of systematic executive over-reach, and a transformation of mass-politics through broadcast media technologies had composed a new, post-constitutional political

order. It is this formation that is so flagrantly entering its phase of terminal dementia today.

Since the fascist state justifies itself through perpetual war, it naturally likes wars that cannot end. The Cold War looked like one, but wasn't quite. The War on Terror is a better bet. In regards to their interminability, if not their moral intensity, 'wars' on poverty, drugs, and other resilient social conditions are more attractive still. Waging modern wars, and their metaphorical side-products, is what the fascist state is for. Winning them on occasion, and by accident, is only ever a misfortune. That lesson seems to have been thoroughly learned.

The recent adaptation to television of Philip K. Dick's prophetic *The Man in the High Castle* is one suggestive indication of a general ideological awakening. In dramatic contrast to the prevailing historical myth, *fascism won WWII* so decisively that its opponents were driven to the political fringes of paleo-conservatism (once mainstream conservatism), libertarianism (once mainstream liberalism), and Trotskyism (once simply 'communism'). The victory was so complete that even policy objectives as blatantly fascistic as *nationalization* could be considered wholly innocent of fascist taint. It wasn't even necessary to say: "Nationalization, but, you know, not in a fascist way." It would be amusing if it hadn't ruined everything. Perhaps it still is amusing. It's notable that humor has become quite a lot rougher recently.

Since fascism had entirely filled the Overton Window, it lost contour, and became invisible. The word persisted in public conversation only as an empty slur. Under this cover, and the absurdly misleading branding associated with it, American fascism ascended to a state of global hegemonic dominance. Since 1989, it has been essentially unchallenged, except by the geopolitical temper-tantrum that is radical Islam. Yet suddenly, from left field, the Trump candidacy has thrown it into crisis.

The flamboyant fascist features of the Trump campaign – and still more of his excited Alt-Right supporters – are deniable only by fools. The prior escalation of overt fascist imagery by the first Obama campaign and subsequent administration was no less remarkable. The established convention in polite society that *all conservative presidential candidates are Hitler* obscured the trend before this year, on both sides. Much of this might be reminiscent of the Jonah Goldberg thesis that *we are all fascists now*, which was near-universally dismissed out of hand, for reasons that have been – until recently – under no socio-political pressure whatsoever to defend themselves. *It's obvious nonsense*, the mind-control class had decided, and that should have been enough for everyone. Those days are unmistakably ending.

The general insight that remains incompletely crystallized is this: *Democracy tends to fascism*, due to its fundamental affinity with tribal mobilization (i.e. its essential illiberalism). The multi-century

ratchet of Western democratization has led, exactly, and inexorably, *to this*. If the worst hasn't come yet, it will come soon. We are all close to seeing that now.

An especially obvious catalyst for political radicalization has been the embrace of demographic engineering as an explicit policy objective, of deliberate partisan asymmetry, attended by a rolling thunder of cultural-elite approved rhetoric that has not only been indiscreet, but blatantly triumphalistic. When dismissing fears of 'white genocide' as malignant, and over-wrought, it is not helpful to laugh in public about the steady progress of population replacement (in the fashion of John Judis and Ruy Teixeira, most obviously). At some point, Bertholt Brecht's most celebrated example of devil's advocacy – "Would it not be easier … for the government to dissolve the people and elect another?" – switched ideological polarity, to become a bitter Alt-Right joke. *The new American demography is really going to screw you guys over* is funny as hell, until – suddenly – it isn't.

There's been a lot of laughter in 2016, but not much smiling. Perhaps it won't be so long before people realize what they've done.

October 17, 2016

Horseshoe Quiz

Nazism is the only political form that corresponds to the soul of the European people.

— Without peeking, see if you can guess which 'end of the political spectrum' this comes from.

ADDED: Relevant —

> Anti-Fascist, Trump protesters applaud speech comprised entirely of Hitler quotes.
>
> This is the best thing on the internet today😂 pic.twitter.com/HD2CPusckI
>
> — Tennessee (@TEN_GOP) July 8, 2017

July 9, 2017

CHAPTER THREE - EURASIANISM, THE ALT-RIGHT AND CURRENT EVENTS

The Eurasian Question

Within the great spans of history, domestic ideological controversy is something close to a luxury good. Whenever it isn't to same extent 'on hold' the global environment is untypically benign. Under more normal — which is to say *stressed* — conditions, it either folds down into pragmatism, or explodes into cosmic, eschatological drama. In today's unmistakably stressed world, Alexander Dugin's 'Eurasianism' exemplifies the latter eventuality.



As with Jacobinism and Bolshevism before it, Eurasianism

matters to you whether you want it to or not. The grandeur of its scope is undeniable. It is concerned with nothing less than the fate of the the earth. In this sense, nothing that anyone cares about falls outside it. (People are beginning to get scared.)

Shelving moral and partisan responses, it is merely realistic to acknowledge that Dugin is an ideological genius of the first order. Synthesizing Russia's native Eurasianist traditions with geopolitcal theory and deep currents of occult mythology, he has restructured the political imagination of his homeland, whose leader is paying obvious attention. When history is integrated with myth, things can easily begin to get exciting.

The fact that Atlantis is unmistakably sinking makes the rising wolf-howls of Eurasianism all the more penetrating. Decadence is a dilemma or a delight for those involved in it. For those looking on, it is food. Eurasianism has the initiative, while the West reacts.

The Eurasian Question, then, is not whether this ideology will shake the world. That is already baked into the cake. The open question concerns China. In a re-ignited Hyperborean / Atlantean forever war, which way does China tilt?

For China, the ideological and geostrategic landscape opened by the Eurasian challenge to the present global order offers extraordinary leverage. A civilization that has long understood triangular diplomacy as the optimal context for the exercise of strategic intelligence can scarcely fail to find encouragement in this

complex pattern of widening fractures. In comparison to the cramped and dangerous position of a world geostrategic challenger, that of a triangular balancer presents advantages that are difficult to over-estimate.

China cannot plausibly be described as an 'Atlantean' power (despite the great historical importance of its 'Singlosphere'). Yet, neither is it 'Hyperborean' in any persuasive sense. These options both belong to a dirempted Occident — understood according to an expansive, rather than Eurasian definition, attentive to common classical and Christian roots. The Eurasian mythos is not inherently Sino-sensitive. China's moves will be made upon a still greater gaming table.

Both a (geographically) Eurasian and a Pacific-maritime power — already, perhaps, a super-power — China has free options within the conflicted global space that Dugin's ideology so convincingly, or at least compellingly, portrays. The next stage of Chinese geopolitical evolution will occur within an environment of dynamic, triangular tensions. The course of the world depends upon how this opportunity is played.

August 7, 2014

Mash

Among the very many reasons to revere Jim is that he doesn't mess about.

There's a sizable constituency on the 'alt right' whose self-understood differentiation from the Marxist left is entirely reducible to its own heightened appreciation for authoritarian hierarchy and racial solidarity. Since actually existing Marxist-Leninist regimes have been, uniformly, authoritarian-hierarchical ethno-nationalists, this isn't in fact the basis for any real difference at all.

ADDED: What I'm seeing —

> Rx: "Capitalism has to be crushed beneath the boots of the state." NRx: "That sounds like communism." Rx: "HAVE YOU EVEN READ EVOLA!?"
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) June 28, 2014

June 28, 2014

White Dindus

"Our entire history is something that's been done to us by tricky outsiders — especially the bad stuff!"

When anybody else sounds like this, it's rightfully categorized as

pathetic whining.

ADDED: “Can we criticize (the extraordinarily large number of) Jewish Leftist freaks without going completely insane about it?”
“No! Go completely insane about it!”

October 8, 2015

What is the Alt-Right?

Topic of the week, it seems. XS will carve out a Chaos Patch space for targeted links on Sunday, but for impatient types, here’s a taster (1, 2, 3, 4).

This blog, I’m guessing predictably, takes *a count me out* position. Neoreaction, as I understand it, predicted the emergence of the Alt-Right as an inevitable outcome of Cathedral over-reach, and didn’t remotely like what it saw. Kick a dog enough and you end up with a bad-tempered dog. Acknowledging the fact doesn’t mean you support kicking dogs — or bad-tempered dogs. Maybe you’d be happy to see the dog-kicker get bitten (me too). That, however, is as far as it goes.

A short definition, that seems to me uncontroversial: *The Alt-Right is the populist dissident right*. Set theoretically, NRx is therefore grouped with it, but as a quite different thing. Another obvious conclusion from the definition: the Alt-Right is almost

inevitably going to be far larger than NRx is, or should ever aim to be. If you think people power is basically great, but the Left have just been doing it wrong, the Alt-Right is most probably what you're looking for (and NRx definitely isn't).

For the Alt-Right, generally speaking, fascism is (1) basically a great idea, and (2) a meaningless slur concocted by (((Cultural Marxists))) to be laughed at. For NRx (XS version) fascism is a late-stage leftist aberration made peculiarly toxic by its comparative practicality. There's no real room for a meeting of minds on this point.

As a consequence of its essential populism, the Alt-Right is inclined to anti-capitalism, ethno-socialism, grievance politics, and progressive statism. Its interest in geopolitical fragmentation (or Patchwork production) is somewhere between hopelessly distracted and positively hostile. Beside its — admittedly highly entertaining — potential for collapse catalysis, there's no reason at all for the techno-commercial wing of NRx to have the slightest sympathy for it. Space for tactical cooperation, within the strategic framework of pan-secessionism, certainly exists, but that could equally be said of full-on Maoists with a willingness to break things up.

None of this should be taken as a competition for recruits. The Alt-Right will get almost all of them — it's bound to be huge. From the NRx perspective, the Alt-Right is to be appreciated for helping to clean us up. They're most welcome to take whoever they can, especially if they shut the door on the way out.

ADDED: Preserving this just to thrash myself senseless:

> When Gnon is not your friend. — Finish my mandatory "WTF is the Alt-Right?" post (https://t.co/Q6LQYkg9pH), housekeeping — "views 1,488"
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) January 22, 2016

If you think God coming out as an Anime Nazi is going to stop me being obstreperous, you've no idea what you're dealing with.

January 22, 2016

What is the Alt-Right? II

There's a Wikipedia answer to the question now. It doesn't strike me as obviously dishonest, or any more inchoate than the phenomenon itself. Building Trump-adoration into the definition will ensure that it dates fast — but it's not hard to see why that seems necessary.

There's a lot of *Wikipedia* disdain around, in our neck of the woods, but I'm usually hard-pressed to find serious cause for complaint. After taking a look at RationalWIki — which folds the Alt-Right into its "Neoreactionary movement" rant presently — returning to Wikipedia is like taking a bath.

(Alt-Right at XS, for future reference.)

March 5, 2016

Quote note (#286)

The Guardian goes Alt-Right:

Those still in work might be less grumpy about funding a more generous welfare state if beneficiaries are deemed to be enough like them: fellow tribesmen, people of similar background and therefore felt to be deserving of charity.

It's the Sweden attractor at work. ("Sure, fascism isn't great, but if that's what's needed to protect the welfare state …")

September 27, 2016

The Alt-Right is Dead

It might stagger on for a bit longer, but it has nothing left to do. Annoying the (impending) Trump Regime at this point would be pointless, so that prospect isn't any source of leverage. The 1488 nut cases, due to their marriage of convenience with the legacy media, have the ability to define it in the public mind, so those supporters without a Nazi-fetish will gradually drift away. It's done.

Fascism isn't cool, and Anglosphere cultures will never find it so. In Continental Europe it's different, but that's a whole other topic. We're not them, which is one of the crucial things the Alt-Right ultras won't ever get. We're Atlanteans. There's expanded space for a right-populist American nationalist movement, but it won't call itself the Alt-Right, and if it's remotely sensible it will be pre-emptively immunized against ruinous European ideas. It will probably be far more Tea-Party flavored, though a lot tougher. (This blog will still find its populism unappetizing.)

That's the XS prediction. (RamZPaul, who liked the Alt-Right much more than I did, agrees with the central point.)

Jim has a very different take. (As does *Amerika*.)

Here's someone who's building something more solid.

November 24, 2016

What is the Alt-Right? III

Late to this, which is what the comparatively honest faction of the Cathedral is seeing.

Main XS-specific quibbles:

(1) No, I didn't have anything to do with The Dark Enlightenment blog. Nor, I'm *highly* confident, did Curtis Yarvin. I'm especially confident that the Open Letter was not written as an introduction to

the DE.
ADDED: See this TDE statement.

(2) I have no social connections *at all* with the Lesser God-tier of SV. (If I did, I'd brag about it all the time.)

(3) Anyone who thinks this usage of echoes is non-ironic needs a Kek-check.

(4) The RamZPaul link is complete black-thread and duct tape conspiracism. (C'mon, seriously, that's obvious, isn't it?) A little reciprocal linkage isn't a social relationship. We both merely acknowledge that the other guy exists.

Induction would suggest there are some other howlers beyond my epistemological horizon. Frankly, though, I don't see much deliberate malevolence here. Cramer seems to be doing his best to understand what's going on, and to remain as calm as possible about it. If he's primarily interested in the Alt-Right, I'd recommend much more attention to Richard Spencer, and much less to Neoreaction. My recommendation to NRx, naturally, is to vindicate that suggestion.

March 3, 2017

Hoppe on the Alt-Right

Speech delivered at PFS 2017. Consistently sound, naturally.

October 16, 2017

The Fear



Ryan Cooper:

I made the case just a couple months back that Republican

presidential frontrunner Donald Trump is a sort of fledgling Mussolini, nurturing an incipient fascist movement. As the first primaries approach, and Trump's lead in the polls is actually widening, his development toward outright fascism is progressing faster than I feared. [...] As of August, Trump had most of the ingredients for a fascist movement: the victim complex, the fervent nationalism, the obsession with national purity and cleansing purges, and the cult of personality. He was missing the organized violence, a left-wing challenge strong enough to push traditional conservative elites into his camp, support for wars of aggression, and a full-bore attack on democracy itself. He's made much progress on all but the last one.

The last one is the only point of NRx intersection, but if he takes The White House, there's going to be plenty of deranged: "See, this is what the Dark Enlightenment leads to!" analysis (among the upper echelons of the leftist commentariat). No, this is what democracy leads to. It's called *radical populism*. (Unfortunately, that's a message that isn't going to be heard.)

The Left would rather hand lurid fascism the keys than stop what they're doing (they're already doing the non-lurid version). That would count as a perverse moral vindication — cooking up the enemy they always said they wanted to stop. Eventually, they'll manage it. The Ancients already knew that's how this thing ends.

It goes without saying that NRx should back away as far as

possible, while scattering signs of protection (not that it will do any good).

ADDED: Trump speaks.

November 25, 2015

Merkel's Mess

Damon Linker paints the gruesome picture almost perfectly. (Read the whole thing — it's not long.)

In the course of a few months, Angela Merkel was transmogrified from a moderately talented German politician, into one of the most destructive leaders in world history. If that sounds like an exaggeration, it's only because her responsibility for dragging the European continent back into a new 1930s still awaits the unfolding of events. Even without complete relapse into a dark age of authoritarian anti-capitalism, the wave of rape, pillage, and terror she has unleashed will now — inevitably — devastate millions of lives, and structurally degrade the quality of life for tens of millions more as they seek to protect themselves in markedly more adverse social circumstances. It will all get extremely ugly. As Linker dryly remarks, "let's just say it's unlikely to end well. … And the storm has only just begun to gather."

What was she thinking? Assuming — as seems fair — that she

doesn't positively want to usher in Hitler 2.0, her catastrophic policy decisions have to be *misguided*. It's probably no easier for the readers of this blog than it is for me to cognitively sympathize with the deranged path she has taken. One can only infer that she genuinely believed a vast flood of predominantly young, male, Islamic, tribalistic, and historically-traumatized incomers, with a hallucinatory sense of (unrealizable) cultural and material entitlement, would immediately transmute into fungible production units and contribute to European pensions financing. *The Economist* pretends to believe the same thing. I'm forced to accept it's possible to believe it, despite finding the flying spaghetti monster significantly more plausible. If this depth of delusion really has a grip on the minds of Western elites, any outcome other than utter disaster is most probably unobtainable. A cynical lie would be far less dangerous.

In a single stroke, Merkel has converted the Raspail and Houellebecq scenarios into vivid contemporary predicaments. European collapse has been radically accelerated. For that, a certain dark gratitude is due.

August 6, 2016

Post-Democratic Politics

Apparently we're already in the next phase:

To call Trumpism fascist is to suggest that it demands from us a unique response. We **can** *deploy the "fascism" moniker to Trump's ascendance by recognizing features like selective populism, nationalism, racism, traditionalism, the deployment of Newspeak and disregard for reasoned debate. The reason we* **should** *use the term is because, taken together, these aspects of Trumpism are not well combated or contained by standard liberal appeals to reason. It is constitutive of its fascism that it demands a different sort of opposition.*

I doubt whether they've thought this through, but don't let that get in the way of progress.

January 22, 2017

SECTION C - STRATEGICS

CHAPTER ONE - ROUGH TRIANGLES

The Unspeakable

To prepare for an excursion into the real-world workings of strategic triangles, this harshly illuminating conversation between David P. Goldman ('Spengler') and the ghost of Cardinal Richelieu is worth recalling:

"We are a bit confused about Syria," I began. "Its leader, Bashar al-Assad, is slaughtering his own people to suppress an uprising. And he is allied to Iran, which wants to acquire nuclear weapons and dominate the region. If we overthrow Assad, Sunni radicals will replace him, and take revenge on the Syrian minorities. And a radical Sunni government in Syria would ally itself with the Sunni minority next door in Iraq and make civil war more likely."

"I don't understand the question," Richelieu replied.

"Everyone is killing each other in Syria and some other places in the region, and the conflict might spread. What should we do about it?"

"How much does this cost you?"

"Nothing at all," I answered.

"Then let them kill each other as long as possible, which is to say for 30 years or so. Do you know," the ghastly Cardinal continued, "why really interesting wars last for 30 years? That has been true from the Peloponnesian War to my own century. First you kill the fathers, then you kill their sons. There aren't usually enough men left for a third iteration."
"We can't go around saying that," I remonstrated.

ADDED: DrewM at *AoS* channels Richelieu from the id: "Personally, I'm happy to let [the Syrians] fight it out amongst themselves for a good long time. Hell, let's arm both sides."

March 21, 2013

Rough Triangles

The elementary model of robust plural order is the tripod. Whether taken as a schema for constitutional separation of powers, a deeper cultural matrix supporting decentralized societies, or a pattern of ultimate cosmic equilibrium, triangular fragmentation provides the archetype of quasi-stable disunity. By dynamically preempting the emergence of a dominant instance, the triangle describes an automatic power-suppression mechanism.

From the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* to *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, triangular fragmentation has been seen to present an

important and distinctive strategic quandary. In power balances of the Mexican Standoff type, initiation of force is inhibited by the triangular structure, in which the third, *reserved* party profits from hostilities between the other two.

The Cold War, schematized to its basics, is the single most telling example. Rather than a binary conflict between East and West, the deep structure of the Cold War was triangular, making it intractable to two-player game-theoretic calculations. Catastrophic damage that might be rationally acceptable within a binary conflict, as the price for total elimination of one's foe, becomes suicidal in a three-player game, where it ensures the victory of the third party. MAD-reason is no longer readily applied, once 'mutual' is more than two.

Even brilliant chess players lose their way in the triangle, where the economy of sacrifice has to be radically reconsidered. Among the Cold War's Three Kingdoms, it was the chess masters who 'won' the race to defeat.

The lessons of the Cold War are no less relevant to its successor, which also fostered binary illusions in its early stages. America's chess match with militant Islam resulted in a stalemate, at best.

Increasingly fierce Sunni-Shia rivalry recasts the current war as a rough triangle, captured in its strategic essentials by the colloquialism *Let's you and him fight*. This was Cardinal Richelieu's way with triangles, as 'Spengler' reminds us:

The classic example is the great German civil war, namely the 30 Years' War of 1618-48. The Catholic and Protestant Germans, with roughly equal strength, battered each other through two generations because France sneakily shifted resources to whichever side seemed likely to fold. I have contended for years that the United States ultimately will adopt the perpetual-warfare doctrine that so well served Cardinal Richelieu and made France the master of Europe for a century (see How I learned to stop worrying and love chaos, March 14)

To imagine this policy being pursued with cold deliberation is the stuff of conspiracy theory. Nevertheless, regardless of whether anybody is yet playing this game, this is the game.

ADDED: A Couple of rough triangles links; George Kerevan at *The Scotsman*; and Clifford May at *The National Post* (who recalls Kissingers classic rough triangles comment — on the Iran-Iraq War — "It's a shame they can't both lose.")

ADDED: Daniel Pipes is totally there: "Western powers should guide enemies to stalemate by helping whichever side is losing, so as to prolong the conflict."

ADDED: "With Western policy being so confused, ineffective, and ignorant, the divisions among enemies may be the best thing going."

March 27, 2013

Rough Triangles II

On learning that Hamas and Hizbollah are now fighting each other in Syria, Peter Ingemi writes:

This sets up the possibility that the greatest threats to Israel and the US will be clashing in Syria & Lebanon, in a long and bitter struggle and moreover as Iran doesn't want to lose their clients and the Saudis and others want to bleed Iran this has the potential to become a mass killing ground for the most vile and despicable enemies the western world has faced.
And all of it happening without us, or Israel lifting a finger.
For a foe of radical Islam it's practically a wet dream, we just have to sit back and let them slaughter each other and if one side starts to lose, we aid third parties to reenforce [Sic] *them enough to keep the fight going until the cream of the jihadist crop finds themselves, shot, gassed or blown up.*
And at this point where you contemplate the solution to so many problems that pesky Christian belief comes in. … That's when you look at your glee at the death of your enemies and feel ashamed.

The Christianity angle isn't basic to the *Outside in* analysis of rough triangles, but since it's important to Ingemi, and Ingemi sees the pattern so clearly, we'll do our best to remain sub-orgasmic about the situation (even if it escalates into a regional humanitarian calamity of apocalyptic scale). Gnon is considerably less demanding

than Jesus in this regard, but it still tilts against indecorous exultation in mass slaughter. The view from the side-lines calls for detachment, and the side-lines are the center here.

In a rough triangle, the side-lines are decidedly the place to be. That should be obvious, and if judged by the serial anecdotes of blog commentary, it is indeed self-evident to the widely-disparaged 'proles' of the right — among whom "please let them kill each other" amounts to common wisdom. Adam Garfinkle, who doesn't seem to approve, nevertheless provides a convincing political back-story to this state of mind. There's a lack of "affinity", a loss of media purchase (i.e. live video), and too many unhealed burns. Less than a quarter of Americans are buying what John McCain is selling (which shows that you can get almost a quarter of Americans to buy anything).

The Syrian quagmire models a rough triangle with such extraordinary exactness that it tempts us into Platonism. It could have been extracted, essentially unmodified, from the notebooks of Cardinal Richelieu. It's not difficult to find these developments, as they unfold symmetrically in Syria and Iraq, provocatively weird. If a strategic genius had deliberately steered the 'war on terror' to this eventuality, his world-historic stature would have been guaranteed. It is worth recalling that when the Bush WoT went pear-shaped, John Derbyshire coined the phrase "to-hell-with-them hawks" to describe dissent from the right, in distinction from overseas state-building neoconservatism. To Hell they now go.

Improbable conspiracy aside, none of this was planned, and that's where the most important lesson lies. The "to-hell-with-them hawks" had no strategy to send America's enemies to hell, but only inchoate grumbles about the progressive welfarization of US military activity. For the harsh right, the message of the early 21st century was that American military power was no longer politically usable. It was time to clamber out of the sandbox, because the Cathedral had filled it with huggy dolls. Doing nothing was the only option left. (Fernandez, uncharacteristically, is embarrassingly slow to grasp this point.)

In the field of right-populist international relations thinking, therefore, there is already broad — if only partially articulate — support for the neoreactionary stance, explored most lucidly by Foseti, which might be characterized as *de-activism*. What we're not on board for is the primary consideration.

Under Cathedralized conditions, suspension of the act can be the only way to let things happen. Just stop, and let 'providence' take over. Perhaps inaction will even simulate strategic genius. We've seen that it can.

ADDED: Jihad (against Shi'ites) … and more Jihad (against Sunnis)

June 2, 2013

Rough Triangles III

Déjà vu time at XS, courtesy of the Mesopotamian death spiral, and Fernandez's strategic framing. The background is important, and relates the topic to a wider question of conservation laws.

The collapse in the Middle East feels like Black April, 1975, the month South Vietnam fell [*]. And it should, because just as the collapse of Saigon did not happen in Black April, but in a political American decision to allow South Vietnam to fall after a "decent interval", so also is the ongoing collapse rooted, not in the recent tactical mistakes of the White House, but in the grand strategic decision president Obama made when he assumed office. […] This ***is the plan****. It would be crazy not to acknowledge it.*

A humanitarian foreign policy is as much a hostage to dark humor as any other affront to Gnon. Hell doesn't go away just because you don't like it. So instead it slides diagonally in the only direction left open, from bloody (and incompetent) hegemonism into radically cynical catastrophe tweaking:

Deep in their hearts the Washington Post and the New York Times must realize they endorsed Obama precisely because they knew that when this moment came he would harden his heart and refuse to re-engage, except for show. Since this is the plan, the only effective strategy, the only sane thing to do is to accept the liberal gambit and continue it. […] The obvious continuation is not to

dampen the sectarian conflict, but to exacerbate it to the greatest degree possible. America, like Britain in the Napoleonic age, should adopt the policy of supporting first one side then the other, or preferably both at once, so that the combatants inflict the maximum degree of damage on each other. […] … To a cynic, what follows next is quite simple: to be the winner stand back and watch while the Arabian peninsula, Levant and North Africa destroys itself. Take every opportunity to make it worse. Clearly a humanitarian catastrophe of unprecedented scale will result. Hundreds of thousands are already dead and millions of displaced persons are on the road. That will only grow in scale and number to millions of dead and tens of millions of refugees. Therefore steps like preparing to sink the people smuggling boats, as the EU is doing, are in order. […] If you can stomach it, it can work like a charm. […] The main problem with this strategy is that Obama may not be able to contain its effects. …

(For the Rough Triangles XS log, see 1, 2, 3.)

* Cited over-excitedly here, with walk-back here.

May 19, 2015

Natural Law

"Some critics of Morsi argue that the U.S. should let him fail," reports

David Ignatius, as Egypt spirals down the drain.

Let X fail is the cosmic formula for getting policy right.

March 7, 2013

Let It Burn …

… (the Middle East version):

Why can't America be more like China?

(a) Stay out

(b) If you have to interfere, help whoever's losing (but not too much)

(c) Recognize there's an intricate theological argument going on that we can't hope to understand:

> Let's keep it civil guys. pic.twitter.com/bjqmbY4Sxk
>
> — CB Langille (@CBLangille) June 20, 2014

ADDED:

> Good search terms if you want to go down a rabbit hole of sectarian youtube videos: 'rafidah', 'takfiri'
>
> — CB Langille (@CBLangille) June 20, 2014

June 20, 2014

Savagery Management

The Left-Salafist alliance:

… the cause of Salafist Islam has come to dominate the field of armed struggle since 2001 and to be the most attractive option for people inclined to practice insurgency. Salafist Islam also melds well with the lessons in insurgency and terrorism previously taught by Marxist theoreticians such as Carlos Marighella, especially when one factors in the ideas and strategy of modern Islamist theorists such as Sayyid Qutb and Abu Bakr al Naji, author of The Management of Savagery. These concepts have also been quite attractive for many on the radical left in the West, who may go so far as to be motivated by the melding of a theory of armed revolution with an intact religious tradition, thereby even converting to Islam. It may also mean that support for jihad, particularly in Europe, may go well beyond Muslim enclaves.

This process of amalgamation between the camps of the enemy is of the very greatest advantage to the Outer Right. The model of domestic progressive 'evolution' is switched to one of stark foreign aggression. It thus terminates all prospect of political compromise, and integrates a single military security problem.

If the Right is incapable of recognizing what it is, it can at least consolidate against what it has to stop. It is in the ashes of this conflict that the toxic dream of political universality will have died.

The shattering of the Overton Window and the elimination of the Grayzone is the same thing.

April 16, 2016

Sentences (#81)

Harsanyi:

... institutional media and white nationalists have formed a politically convenient symbiotic relationship.

Is this seriously deniable?

There's a lot of conspiracy-theorizing underway right now, but it seems implausible, and superfluous. A spontaneous convergence of (perceived) interests is capable of explaining everything. In the end, though, someone is being played. In fact, it's not only possible, but probable, that both sides of this particular arrangement are being played, and not primarily by each other.

November 23, 2016

CHAPTER TWO - INCENTIVES

Game Theory

Attempting to hold rationality and humanity together is an unenviable task, if not simply an impossible one:

*In a series of interventions, Adil Ahmad Haque and Charlie Dunlap have debated the Defense Department **Law of War Manual**'s position on human shields (here, here, and here). Claiming that the manual does not draw a distinction between voluntary and involuntary human shields, Haque maintains that it ignores the principle of proportionality, thus permitting the killing of defenseless civilians who are used as involuntary shields. Dunlap, however, insists that the manual includes all the necessary precautions for protecting civilians used as shields by enemy combatants, and argues that the adoption of Haque's approach would actually encourage the enemy to increase the deployment of involuntary human shields. …*

Sensitivity to the plight of 'human shields' directly increases their tactical value. That is the ultimate 'proportionality' involved in the discussion. Disciplined attention to incentives under conditions of unbounded competition reliably heads into dark places.

October 26, 2015

Twitter cuts (#41)

> Why does government spending grow faster than GDP? Shouldn't increasing tech and GDP actually make government cheaper?
>
> — Warg Franklin (@wargfranklin) January 4, 2016

> @wargfranklin it's almost like the prices a protection racket charges have nothing to do with the cost of providing 'protection'
>
> — The Duck (@jokeocracy) January 4, 2016

> @jokeocracy A bunch of warlords extracting protection money from us and spending it on bling would be an improvement.
>
> — Warg Franklin (@wargfranklin) January 4, 2016

The disastrous incentive-effects would certainly be moderated.

(That's why military-industrial pork waste is actually the least harmful element of government spending — at least, for everything except defense capability and industrial competence.)

January 5, 2016

Quotable (#134)

In *The New Yorker*, John Cassidy lucidly rehearses the core game theoretic model of economic crisis:

… deciding whether to invest in financial assets or any other form of capital can be viewed as a huge n-person game (one involving more than two participants), in which there are two options: trust in a good outcome, which will lead you to make the investment, or defect from the game and sit on your money. If you don't have a firm idea about what is going to happen and the payoffs are extremely uncertain, the optimal strategy may well be to defect rather than to trust. And if everybody defects, bad things result.

Does anybody seriously expect honesty from the *status quo* within this context? 'Optimism' is a fundamental building-block of regime stability. Expect it to be very carefully nurtured, with whatever epistemological flexibility is found helpful.

(Stay to the end of the article for the ominous nonlinear dynamics that correspond to narrative dike-breaking.)

January 21, 2016

Quotable (#191)

Nagel on (Gottlieb on) Hobbes, getting the critical point:

What was distinctive about Hobbes's theory, and what led to his being attacked as a moral nihilist, was his refusal to appeal to any concern for the good of others or the collective good as a basis for moral motivation. He demonstrated that the familiar rules of morality, which he called the laws of nature, are principles of conduct such that if everyone follows them, everyone will be better off. But the fact that everyone will be better off if everyone follows them gives no individual a reason to follow them himself. He can have a reason to follow them only if that will make him individually better off. And there is no natural guarantee that individual self-interest and the collective interest will coincide in this way. […] Hobbes concluded that although we all have a reason to want to live in a community governed by the moral rules, we cannot achieve this unless we bring it about that it is in each person's individual interest to abide by those rules. And the method of doing that is to agree with one another to support a powerful sovereign with a monopoly on the use of force, who will use it to punish violators. Only then can each individual be confident that if he obeys the rules, he will

not be laying himself open to assault and dispossession by others. Without the trust engendered by the knowledge that violators will be punished, civilization is impossible and individual self-interest — the same rational motive that supports morality — leads to perpetual conflict and constant insecurity. This is the famous Hobbesian state of nature, and Hobbes was most notorious for saying that in this condition, we are almost never obligated to obey the moral rules, because it is not safe to do so.

The identification of a collective optimum does no *realistic* theoretical work. Irrespective of the status of his concrete conclusion, Hobbes' methodical principle is impeccable.

September 22, 2016

CHAPTER THREE - MUTUAL INTENSIFICATION

Twitter cuts (#8)

> Bahrain government unfairly spying on man who has dedicated his life to overthrowing it. http://t.co/gKRdZFrOwW
>
> — anomalyuk (@anomalyuk) January 23, 2015

(There's a perfect sanity to this tweet, sarcasm of course included, that would be hard to top. That is equally to say there is a perfect exposure of our reigning moral-political insanity. The "*C'est un chien sauvage* …" quote that should accompany it is escaping me for now … Something like: "It is a fierce beast. When it is attacked, it bites." No doubt one of my cultivated readers can help.)

This elusive aphorism is driving me slowly insane. The closest I can get right now: "A French philosopher once said that a dog is the most dangerous animal in the world because when it is attacked it bites."

(Voltaire?)

ADDED: Thanks to Harold (in the comments) for hunting this down:

Cet animal est tres méchant;
Quand on l'attaque il se défend.

January 23, 2015

Cui bono?

Terrorism is notoriously resistant to strict definition, and the most obvious reason for this is generally understood. Unlike (for instance) guerrilla warfare, 'terrorism' is not merely a tactic, but an intrinsically abominated tactic. Whatever the technical usage of the word, it adheres to the register of propaganda, as a partisan denunciation. It is what the other side does.

This partisan skew is reinforced by technical considerations. Even more than guerrilla warfare, terrorism is a tactic suited to relatively disorganized non-state actors. When even guerrilla warfare is impractical, terrorism is the mode of violent 'resistance' that remains. In the sentimental language of the Left, it is the *warfare of the weak*.

If these factors are recognized, a realistic definition of terrorism can

be constructed that coldly acknowledges both aspects of its positioning, as an ideologically motivated atrocity without state legitimation. *Terrorism is violent partisan criminality*. It is aggressive violation of the law in the service of a political cause.

In a post written prior to the identification of the Boston Marathon bombers, Richard Fernandez makes a point that is far from original, but all the more important for being clearly true, and widely accepted as being true:

The ascription of guilt in public attacks has become highly politicized. Each ideological side is rooting for its own set of villains to be identified as guilty. The Left desperately want the perpetrators to come [from] the Tea Party, White Supremacist Groups or at least Christians while the conservatives want the perps to be Muslims or drug addled lions of the Left.

Acts of terror taint a cause, its supporters, and its demographic base with *violent partisan criminality*. Who benefits? In the case of American domestic terrorism, at least, the answer is almost insultingly obvious. Those identified with *the target of terror* are strengthened by it, those pre-positioned as enemies of the terrorists even more so. After the atrocity occurs, the cry immediately arises: please let it not be *ours*.

This is distinctly *odd*. An act that is inherently political has a valency that directly and explicitly contradicts its superficial partisan motivation. Terrorism is not only something *the other side does*, it is

something that — when reptilian partisan considerations are all that count — one *wants the other side to do*. How utterly delightful (if unavowable) to be blessed with spectacular public confirmation that one's enemies are violent partisan criminals.

An inevitable consequence of this oddity is the proliferation of conspiracy theories. If the guiding question is *cui bono?*, the inescapable implication is that the target — ultimately, the State — is the only agent with a rational interest in terror taking place. 'False flags' make much more sense than raw terror ever could. This way lies madness, and perhaps an ineluctable mass insanity.

The alternative to conspiracy theory can only be common sense, but it finds itself surprisingly stressed. Is terror rationally explicable at all? Are its proponents simply deranged? Or do they perceive subtle advantage in sheer escalation — feeding their enemies, as a way to feed the war? With the world becoming ever more Black Swan-compatible, this is a story that has scarcely begun.

ADDED: Driven to kill by brutalist architecture.

ADDED: 'George Washington' on False Flag Terror.

April 23, 2013

Assassination Markets

Just in case there could be any doubt about it, the primary point

of this post is to insist that this is a *really bad idea*. It's certainly ingenious, and highly topical, but considered solely from a perspective of sub-reptilian amorality, it's still a really bad idea.

For one thing, it's massively asymmetric, in the wrong way. Assassinate a McKinley, and it pushes things hard to the left. Assassinate a Kennedy, and it pushes things hard to the left. Assassinate pretty much anybody of any public significance, and the result is the same. Leftists are simply better at fantasy counter-factuals and martyrology, so the assassination of a leftist produces an imaginary ultra-leftist of even greater ideological purity (whilst killing a conservative works, or even turns them into a post-mortuary leftist). We all know that if JFK hadn't been murdered by Texan capitalism we'd be basking in a socialist utopia by now. (There's a reason why assassination is the preferred tactic of left-wing anarchists and communists, beside the fact these people are demented criminals.)

The reciprocal is even more compelling. Anything that spares leftists from the consequences of participating in reality aids their cause. To consider only the most prominent potential target, Barack Obama alive and in power is the greatest single asset the Outer Right has ever known. Felled by an assassin, he would become the capstone of progressive mythology, and everything he's aiming to achieve *would have turned out absolutely perfectly*. If there's a black counter-assassination market, surreptitiously protecting key agents

of the Cathedral from acts of violence, it would be infinitely more effective to invest in that.

November 20, 2013

Chicken

When political polarization is modeled as a game the result is Chicken. The technical basics are not very complicated.

Reiterated Prisoner's Dilemma (RPD) is socially integrative. An equilibrium, conforming to maximal aggregate utility, arises through reciprocal convergence upon an optimum strategy: defaulting to trust, punishing defections, and rapidly forgiving corrected behavior. Any society adopting these rule-of-thumb principles consolidates. When everyone norms on this strategy, individual and collective interests are harmonized. Things work.

Chicken is very different. Someone blinks first, so the trust-trust mutual optimum of RPD is subtracted in advance. Rather than the four possible outcomes of a single PD round (A and B do OK, A wins B loses, B wins A loses, A and B both lose) there are just three possible outcomes (A wins B loses, B wins A loses, A and B both lose extremely). In Chicken, it is the avoidance of outcome three, rather than the non-existent chance of PD outcome one, that moderates behavior, and then asymmetrically (someone always blinks first).

No less importantly, the time structure of Chicken is inverted. In RPD, the agents learn from successive decisions, and from their mere prospect. Each decision is punctual, Boolean, and communicatively isolated. In Chicken, the decision is mutual, quantitative, and anticipated by a strategically-dynamic introduction — an interactive process, in advance of the decision, that is richly communicative, complex, and even educational. In addition, when compared to PD, Chicken reiteration is remarkably complicated (more on that in a moment).

Consider the classic Chicken game. Two drivers accelerate towards each other, and the one who swerves ('blinks') loses. If neither swerves, both lose (worse). The lead up is everything, and the decision itself is a matter of speed and timing (a non-Boolean 'when' rather than a Boolean 'which'). The question is not "will the other player defect?" but rather "how far will they go?"

Thomas Schelling made an intellectual specialism out of Chicken, and his understanding of the classical version was sharpened by the concept of "credible commitment" ("how far will they go?"). How could a player ensure that his opponent does not win? The solution to this problem, if produced in advance, has the strategic value of also maximizing the chance that the opponent blinks first (thus avoiding the pessimal lose-lose outcome, and generating a win).

Producing credible commitment looks like this. Upon climbing into your car, conspicuously consume a bottle of vodka, thus

communicating the fact that your ability to enact a successful last second swerve is very seriously impaired. Your opponent now knows that even were you inclined to avoid mutual destruction at the brink, you might not be able to do so. Then — once both cars have accelerated to a high speed — rip out your steering wheel and throw it out of the window. (It is extremely important that you do this before your opponent is able to — that's what the vodka was for.) Your communicated commitment is now absolute. Your opponent alone can swerve. It's death or glory.

The 'mainstream' neoreactionary account of American political history is that of reiterated Chicken games between progressives and conservatives, in which *conservatives always swerve*. This analytical framework, despite its crudity, explains why conservatives consider their opponents to be intoxicated lunatics (i.e. winners) whilst they are sober and responsible (i.e. losers). As traditionally positioned, conservatives are the principal social stake-holders, and thus primarily obligated to avoid mutual destruction. It is *essential* to conservatism that it cannot take things (domestically) to the brink. Its incompetence at Chicken is thus constitutional.

When the *Zeitgeist* starts clucking, it can only be a sign that conservatism is coming to an end. The Tea Party is not informatively described as a conservative political movement, because its signal influence is the insistence that the Right stop losing Chicken games. It demands "credible commitment" through the minimization of

discretion on the part of its political representatives, along with whatever insanity is needed *not to fricking swerve*. This is of course highly — even totally — antagonistic. It is why the Left media now sound like this. Before all significance is consumed in partisan rhetoric, it is important to note that the loser in a Chicken game — even the merely probabilistic virtual loser — *necessarily thinks that its opponent is insane*. Any more moderate response would be the infallible sign that losing was inevitable (once again).

It isn't hard to understand why this might be happening. In reiterated Chicken, the loser no doubt acquires a predisposition to submissiveness ("it's hopeless, those lunatics always win"), but the objective undercurrent of repeated defeat is a contraction of the distance between relative (asymmetric) and absolute (mutual) defeat. Eventually, the difference isn't worth surrendering — or swerving –over. "If they keep on winning, there will be nothing left anyway, so we might as well finish it now."

Reciprocally, incessant victory threatens to dull revolutionary fervor into conservatism. Progressives now have many generations of substantial victory to defend, so taking things to the edge has begun to seem concerning. When the government shuts down, what does the Right really lose? At the very least, it's beginning to wonder, and by doing so, upping its Chicken game (AKA "going insane"). Progressives don't have to wonder. They lose the government.

ADDED: Buchanan argues that surrender seldom works. At the

NYT, Michael P. Lynch: “It is tempting to call this “crazy talk” and unserious bluster. But it *is* serious, and it shows that some people are thinking about what happens next. It is a plan that represents the logical limit of the views now being entertained on the radical right, not just in the dark corners of the Internet, but in the sunlight of mainstream forums. After all, if the government is the problem, shutting it down is a logical solution.”

ADDED: Jim expects a swerve.

ADDED: The swerve.

October 15, 2013

Political Chicken

As a preliminary, a little XS background, which I’ll aim not to repeat.

The take on Trump’s advantage that seems under-emphasized: *He credibly signals a refusal to swerve*. I’m not arguing here that it’s realistic to trust that. The point is only, the Trump candidacy looks to a substantial swathe of the electorate — at least comparatively — like the strategic choice for not losing at chicken games. As noted in the linked post, when democratic party politics becomes highly polarized, that’s the game being played.

Anyone playing chicken through an agent prioritizes certain definite virtues. Trump’s rhetoric reflects these uncannily. “Winning”

— for instance — is a word to watch.

To see what it is to be a chicken game loser, there's no better model than recent GOP presidential candidates. John McCain appeared to positively delight in the honor of being defeated by Barack Obama in 2008, and Mitt Romney followed quite faithfully in his footsteps. In both cases, which can be extended to the GOP establishment generally, respectability is defined by the sentiment: "Sure, winning would be nice, but we're not going to be crazy about it." If there's a single key to winning at chicken, however, 'crazy' is it.

The greater the media onslaught against Trump, given only *that he doesn't flinch*, the stronger the signal that he's not a swerve kind of guy. In this respect, the specific content of the attacks is almost irrelevant. The nastier the better. Best of all, if the message gets communicated that *this maniac would take us over the cliff*, he's already won. From the perspective of this analysis, there's simply nothing else he has to get across. It translates to: *With Trump we either win, or at least don't lose*. (Objection: "But 'everyone dies' is losing isn't it?" — Thanks GOPe, but you're not getting this at all.)

Cruz and (to a parodic extent) Rubio look *flexible* next to Trump. It's not that people think they might swerve — it's what they firmly expect. They seem bendy, and specifically prone to compromise, concessions to media-fabricated realities, back-downs, apologies, and pre-emptive cringe.

Never, ever, even for a moment back-down, laugh at demands for

'disavowal', double-down on offense, concede nothing, and *never swerve*. Regardless of what one thinks about this orientation, it's the one hungered for by the Trump constituency right now. Trump's instincts, if not perfect in this regard, are impressively sound. We'll know within 24-hours or so how it's working out.

ADDED: It's chicken all the way down.

ADDED: Trump poker.

March 1, 2016

CHAPTER FOUR - SUBVERSION AND CAMOUFLAGE

Subversion

Nyan Sandwich has a cunning plan:

> Proposal: a secretly NR-run hatefact-respinning and overton-window-lefting blog.
>
> — Nyan Sandwich (@WolfTivy) March 13, 2014

Sister Sarah (@sarahdoingthing) suggests the "hard part is to be somehow different from actual real leftist sites …"

> @sarahdoingthing No. Point is to be a perfectly normal leftist site, but secretly an experimental apparatus for Cthulology
>
> — Nyan Sandwich (@WolfTivy) March 13, 2014

Partly because there can simply never be enough of this, but also for other reasons, this idea is perfectly delicious. It would be like a Sokal tar-baby, spreading sticky black paranoid confusion

throughout the redoubts of the enemy. To make this work, however, would require a very exceptional type of genius (of exactly the kind demonstrated in the Shea case). Judging the precise extent and flavors of absurdity that the left will endorse — or at least find credibly non-parodic — is a rare and delicate art, especially since they have to be taken to the very edge, teetering prominently into gulfs of roaring madness. In addition, since effectiveness would correspond closely with persistence, the work involved would be immense.

If anyone is embarking on this, I do not (of course) want to know — Omertà.

(Before anyone else brings it up (here) I should perhaps also mention this.)

Modeling strategy on espionage and the double-agent, rather than military confrontation and the hero-warrior, would do much to burn-off ludicrous romanticism, replacing theatrical attitude with realist cunning. As with anything that involves demonstrated performance of a complex feat, rather than grandiose proclamations of antagonism, it would require actual cognitive achievement. Given basic facts about numbers and capabilities, infiltration is almost certainly something that will eventually need to be done.

Such subversion would also be an experiment in practical metaphysics. How are identities assembled? What are agents? How do expressed values coordinate with effective activity? These questions are destined to explosive complication in the ragged,

techno-psychological world to come, so it is worth tangling with them early, and intricately. Making biorealism an excuse to regress into paleolithic brotherhoods is a temptation to be torched-out ruthlessly by Internet machinations. Turn social Cyberspace into a jungle, where camouflage and complexity rule.

March 13, 2014

Poe's Law

Only a few months ago, I had never heard of Poe's Law. Now it's a rare day in which it doesn't crop up several times. Invocations of the *Zeitgeist* are inherently improbable, but if there were to be a persuasive illustration of the phenomenon, it would be something like this.

According to the succinct Wikipedia entry (already linked), Poe's Law is less than a decade old. Among it's precursors, also relatively recent, a 2001 Usenet comment by Alan Morgan most closely anticipates it: "Any sufficiently advanced troll is indistinguishable from a genuine kook." In other words, between a sincere intellectual position and its satirization, no secure distinction can be made. (There is nothing about this thesis that restricts it to 'extreme' opinion, although that is how it is usually understood.)

The latest opportunity for raising this topic is, of course,

@Salondotcom. (There's an entertaining interview with the pranksters behind it here.) The offense of this account, which led to it being suspended by Twitter last week, was clear beyond any reasonable doubt. Quite simply, it was nearly indistinguishable from the original, a fact that has itself been explicitly noted (and tweeted about) innumerable times. Parody *Salon* slugs, so ludicrously over-the-top that they had @Salondotcom readers in stitches, were funny precisely because they were such plausible mimics of *Salon*'s own. Readers were laughing *through* @Salondotcom, at *Salon*. This is almost certainly why the account was suspended.

Without wandering too deeply into the realm of speculation, it's worth noting this:

> "Twitter's policies require that impersonation reports come from the individual being impersonated" https://t.co/wSo7YkwZOo hmm
>
> — J. Arthur Bloom (@j_arthur_bloom) July 17, 2014

Poe's Law is ultimately indistinguishable from another recent, rapidly popularized rhetorical concept: the Ideological Turing Test. An intellectual criticism can be said to understand its foe if it is able to reproduce it with adequate fidelity. The ITT is therefore a cultural procedure for winnowing-out straw-man arguments and other misrepresentations. If you cannot imitate the enemy case, you

cannot be considered to have engaged it seriously.

Evidently, Poe's Law can be construed as a filter of the same kind. Satire is effective to exactly the extent it can be confused with the satirized. (This can be taken in comparatively serious directions.)

What Poe's Law tells us, is that antagonism is irreducible to argumentation. It is thus inherently anti-dialectical (and thus tacitly secessionist). There can be *perfect understanding* of what the enemy is saying, without even the slightest degree of approach to consensus. In other words, there are discrepancies entirely indissoluble in discussion.

Cutting satire does not reconstruct a cognitive position in order to make it laughable. Instead, it re-states such a position, as faithfully as possible, within the register of laughter — which is to say: *hostility*. It asserts a dissensus that no process of reconciliation can ameliorate. Our 'disagreement' is not the sign of a missing conversation. It is the call for a coming split.

ADDED: Even *Newsweek* notices "… there was a problem: Few could tell the difference between @SalonDotCom and the real thing."

ADDED: So two Edgar Allan Poe twitterbots started following me …

ADDED: Agree, Amplify, and Accelerate

July 18, 2014

AAA …

… stands for *agree, amplify, and accelerate*. Initiated here, and escalated here, it opens an unexplored horizon for strategic discussion within NRx. No analysis of cultural conflict on the Internet can bypass a reference to trolling, and no understanding of trolling is any longer complete without reference to AAA. It raises the discussion of parody to a new level. (If it isn't already obvious, this blog is seriously impressed.)

AAA works if strategic complication has favorable consequences. Whichever cultural faction has the greater capacity for the tolerance of difficulty, identity confusion, irony, and humor, will tend to find advantage in it. I think that's us. It's inherently toxic to zealotry.

As a sub-theme — but one keenly appreciated here — it marks a critical evolution in the Cthulhu Wars. (Check out the graphics on the TNIO post for recognition of that.) Rather than arguing over whether "Cthulhu swims left" AAA proposes amphetaminizing the monster regardless. *If a "holocaust of freedom" is what you want, let's go there*. Take this operation to the end of the river … and see what we find.

ADDED: Slate Star Scratchpad comments.

July 22, 2014

#AAA UK-Style

The profound, utterly cynical contempt for the basic principles, procedures, and personalities of democracy™ exhibited by this phenomenon is highly encouraging.

(#AAA)

With added meta-amusement:

> Don't be fooled! #ToriesForCorbyn is actually a double bluff as he is the candidate that they are most scared of.
>
> — Benjamin Barton (@ThisWeekInBen) June 17, 2015

June 17, 2015

AAA … II

There follows an XS-endorsed message from Henry Dampier:

… we can't make the omelet of perfect, universal justice without breaking some eggs. […] The presence of White men in any classroom, owing to their historical record, can be profoundly triggering to women and people of color. To protect their historic victims – to give them mental and physical space for them to flourish – we must keep White men away from the university, and by blocking them from those institutions, we must keep them far away from

political power, also. […] We have tried reform. We have tried patient education. It has not worked. Harsher measures will be required. The world can't wait.

(For reference, AAA …)

September 11, 2015

Quote note (#218)

Libertarian in genesis, but strategically sound:

"… those who consider themselves modern American revolutionaries often envision manning barricades and mass revolt as the undoing of the government. That attacks the government at its greatest strength — its capacity to use force and violence. The US government has at its disposal the most potent military and surveillance capabilities ever assembled. … […] The idea that some sort of mass movement will rise and by force of its inferior arms throw off the yoke of oppression is the stuff of weak novels, not a real life strategy that has a chance of success. Those who buy into it and attempt implementation commit the biggest strategic failure: they have fooled themselves. Consequently, their enemy — the government — profits. It uses their failure to justify further tyranny and repression.

There is surprisingly little written about attacking the government

at its weakest point: its financial dependence … An offensive would require a mass movement far less massive than that required for armed revolt, and its tactics would be legal. A few million simultaneous phone calls and requests via websites for the withdrawal of balances from banks, money market funds, and stock and bond mutual funds would precipitate a financial panic. None of those institutions keep enough cash on hand to meet a tsunami of redemption and withdrawal requests. They'd have to sell their assets to raise cash. The prices of those assets would drop, begetting further selling; negative crowd psychology and wealth effects would kick in as markets crash, and debt and economic activity would contract.

The biggest loser in all this would be the government. As prices for bonds drop, interest rates rise, increasing its debt service. As economic activity contracts, tax receipts drop, safety net spending rise, crony capitalists must be bailed out, and deficits expand. Except for interest on government debt rising (it was perceived as a safe haven) all of this happened during the last financial crises. A massive increase in government debt and central bank debt monetization forestalled complete disaster last time. Even some of their proponents admit that those palliatives are now exhausted. During the next crisis, interest rates will rise on government debt to reflect its increasing credit risk. […] Which will leave the government confronting, and being defeated by, one of its biggest whoppers: that

the pieces of paper and computer notations its Treasury and central bank generate ultimately have value after decades of determined efforts to depreciate them. They're simply pieces of paper and computer entries, and eventually they're not going to buy any groceries for all those warriors and police the government's counting on, or for anyone else. Currencies collapse just before governments do; witness Venezuela, with its Bolivar and its government in extremis.
This outcome does not require a plan; it's going to happen. Indeed, it's already happening.

When something is falling, push — but push intelligently. The fetish for popular violence among certain factions of the Alt-Right is simple idiocy. If a populace is still docile enough to support government deficit spending, it's not going to be waging a guerrilla war anytime soon.

February 9, 2016

CHAPTER FIVE - HEGEMONIC HEADEACHES

Peace Dividend

Glenn Reynolds notices an emerging interpretation of PRISM as a phenomenon internally connected to geopolitical pacifism. Making unilateral peace requires infinite vigilance.

First Steyn:

The same bureaucracy that takes the terror threat so seriously that it needs the phone and Internet records of hundreds of millions of law-abiding persons would never dream of doing a little more pre-screening in its immigration system … Because the formal, visible state has been neutered by political correctness, the dark, furtive shadow state has to expand massively to make, in secret, the judgment calls that can no longer be made in public.

Then WRM:

PRISM and similar programs aren't a ghastly misstep or an avoidable accident. They are the essence of Obama's grand strategy: public peace and secret war. To cool down the public face of the war,

he must intensify the secret struggle.

Richard Fernandez comments.

There's some kind of conservation law at work there, and they always have the potential to trip people up. *Bad outcomes are conserved* might be too harsh, but it gets close to something.

June 8, 2013

Broken Pottery

An irritated Pottery Barn disowned the Pottery Barn Rule — "you break it, you own it." Colin Powell sought to create some distance, too:

It is said that I used the "Pottery Barn rule." I never did it; [Thomas] Friedman did it … But what I did say … [is that] once you break it, you are going to own it, and we're going to be responsible for 26 million people standing there looking at us. And it's going to suck up a good 40 to 50 percent of the Army for years.

Wikipedia concurs with Powell, in attributing the phrase to Thomas L. Friedman (in a February 2003 column for the *New York Times*). Those with a diligent sense for historical detail might be able to accurately trace its spread amongst journalists and foreign policy officials, including Bob Woodward, Richard Armitage, and John Kerry. Regardless of such specifics, it captures the spirit of grand

strategy during the Nullities, and explains why the US military is no longer of use for anything.

In its rational usage, the military is a machine for the production of negative incentives. It is designed to hurt people and break things, with the understanding that in its optimal — deterrent and intimidatory — function, the actual exercise of these capabilities will not be necessary. When considered from a Clausewitzean perspective, as a policy instrument, usable military power is directly proportional to a credible threat of punishment. It sets boundaries to the behavior of (rational) potential antagonists, by projecting the probability of extreme negative outcomes if diplomatically-determined triggers are activated — or 'red lines' crossed.

Frederick the Great said "Diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments" because there can be no discussion of political limits among sovereigns unless menace gives them meaning. "I'd really rather you didn't do that" has no 'really' about it, unless a threat lurks at the edge of the stage (visible, but reserved). It's a polite belch, at best. Positive incentives presuppose the boundaries set by negative incentives — there can be no bargaining over that which can be demanded without cost. Thus the words of the diplomat are refinements of a message that military capability crafts in its essentials, either in the first derivative (balance of power between armed alliances), or the second (the 'internal' security economy of coalitions). The rest is empty ceremony.

Imperialism tends to the radical degeneration of diplomatic reason, because it dissolves borders, systematically effacing the 'foreign' sphere. When this process has developed to the point that foreign and domestic policy are no longer distinguishable, the Pottery Barn Rule takes over. 'Mission creep' is the operational symptom of something deeper: the geostrategic abolition of proprietary boundaries, of a kind that allow for the possibility of restricted sympathies, or the recognition of *alien interests*. The mature empire cannot threaten anything or anybody without immediately threatening itself. Hence its profound alignment with universal moral ideologies, whose particular selves gush unimpeded into the world soul.

When, in the early years of the new millennium, President 'Godzilla' Dubya Bush unleashed Operation Pottery Barnstorm on various societies loosely associated with the wreckage of the New York skyline, it was understood from the beginning that the populations on the receiving end were already honorary New Yorkers, absent from the Twin Towers on the morning of September 11, 2001 only by insignificant sociological coincidence. This 'fact' was an explicit justification for the US response, which expressed outrage at the victimization of a random sample of the world's population by 'criminals' so backward they didn't realize they were only hurting themselves. America's ruling elite, in contrast, had attained this realization definitively enough to articulate it, for domestic =

international consumption, as the Pottery Barn Rule.

Once the Pottery Barn Rule becomes authoritative, the military is rationally unusable. It's obvious why. Imagine a night-club bouncer saying, "Clear out of here, or I'm going to thrash you within an inch of your life – of course, I promise to take full responsibility for all the damage you incur from this righteous beating, covering all medical expenses, compensating you for loss of earnings, and negotiating in good faith to make reparation for all reasonable claims of emotional distress …" *This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you*. For the global administrative class, this is a truly beautiful illustration of evolved consciousness. Ordinary Americans, including the military, are less spiritually captivated by the development.


This hurts me more than it hurts you.

In the Pottery Break Age, there are no threats that do not revert to masochistic acts of solidarity. A decision to bomb or invade X now means *It's time for us to share X's pain*. Unsurprisingly — except

amongst a weird sub-species of radically bellicose goofy idealist — this type of imperial-altruistic enterprise is proving a tough sell.

Let's take on the role of insurer for the Pottery Barn, and then trash the place hard (for the common good).

If Congress signs on for this, it will be one more sign that America's political class has wandered off into another world — or perhaps just **The World®** — leaving the country's once-distinguishable neo-native population behind.

ADDED: Angelo M. Codevilla: "Some three fourths of Americans oppose making war on Syria. Hence the Republican leadership class' reflexive advocacy of entry into Syria's civil war is cutting one of the few remaining ties that bind it to ordinary Americans." (via)

ADDED: James Taranto: "As Congress returns and prepares to take up President Obama's request for an authorization to use military force in Syria, William Kristol, editor of The Weekly Standard, tries to reassure queasy Republicans that "yes" is not only the right vote but the expedient one … This seems to us a very bad misreading of the political environment." (Even Kristol starts to lose it after Kerry makes the "unbelievably small" promise.)

September 9, 2013

Stalin's Great Game

Either Stalin played the Anglosphere like a cheap piano in World War Two, or something altogether more sinister was going on. Foseti clarifies the conundrum beautifully:

When the US finally joins the war, it does so with – as best as one can decipher – only a few clear war aims: 1) demanding unconditional surrender (of Germany and Japan – aka the only bulwarks against Soviet domination of post-war Europe and Asia); 2) establishing the United Nations; and 3) ending European (excluding Soviet) colonialism.

If you, gentle reader, can come up with a list of war aims that would be more destructive to mankind at the time than those, the next round is on me. Perhaps entirely coincidentally (or perhaps not) these aims would seem to all work towards the direct benefit of the Soviets. It's almost like Soviets were making US foreign policy.

October 2, 2013

"Which Falls First?" …

… William S. Lind asks in this recent panel discussion (third speaker, just after 43 minutes in). "The foreign policy establishment, or the country?" The relevant thread of his argument: The aggressive

foreign policy posture of the United States is counter-productively promoting global disorder, which eventually threatens domestic calamity. When the US fights a foreign state, Lind argues, it advances the chaotic "forces of the fourth generation" — a more formidable opponent than even the most obdurately non-compliant state is able to be. America's "offensive grand strategy" — tied to a high-level of concern for the internal political arrangements of foreign countries — is sowing dragon's teeth.

TNIO has been coaxing NRx onto a path of broadened geopolitical scope. There is an unavoidable irony here. The Old Right tends naturally to a preoccupation with hearth-and-home, so that its preferred policy posture (non-interventionism) is often accompanied by — or even buried within — a retraction of mental energy from distant questions. The Neoconservative synthesis of foreign policy activism and cosmopolitan fascination with foreign affairs is far more psychologically consistent, regardless of its errors. For anti-globalists to sustain a panoramic perspective takes work.

This work is important, if realistic analysis is the goal, because distant eventualities hugely impinge. The existence and fate of Neoreaction depends far more upon the great churning machinery of world history than upon the local decisions of its favored 'little platoons'. To misquote Lenin: Even if you are not interested in the system of the world, it is interested in you.

The fall of any empire involves an interplay of internal and

external factors, knitted together in a relation of reciprocal amplification. The whole picture can never be solely a domestic one. By the time imperial destiny is a political question, it is already historical fact. It is too late, then, for simple denial. The thing is in motion. It cannot be asked not to have begun.

Consider only the most basic geopolitical structure of modernity — an 'Atlantean' world order consolidated, in succession, by the hegemonic maritime-commercial republics of the United Provinces, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Even from this core narrative, much is already starkly evident.

(0) Modernity rests upon concrete foundations of world power.

(1) Global dominion has a distinctive ideological and cultural skew.

(2) The hegemonic role (and even, at its most abstract, 'culture') is more stable, and intrinsically determinate, than the supremacy of any specific power, which waxes and wanes over a shorter period. The role of the Modern Hegemon is an autonomous 'office' with its own continuous tradition.

(3) When the United States inherited the role of Atlantean leadership, it adopted a structure of responsibility that had not arisen from within the USA itself. On the contrary, the USA had gown up and into it. How America behaves in the world does not follow exclusively — and perhaps not even predominantly — from anything that America, as a specific country, is.

(4) There is no precedent within modernity for global hegemony to

pass from a world power to its successor without a set of very distinctive ethnic characteristics being held in common. (The leading culture of modernity, to this point, has been consistently North-West European, Protestant, Liberal, Maritime-Commercial, and — since the late 17th century — English-speaking, rooted in Common Law tradition.) Since America is the terminus of this sequence, a passage beyond precedent is inevitable. This could take one of (only?) three possible forms:

(a) The USA immortalizes its hegemonic status

(b) The world passes into undirected anarchy

(c) Global hegemony departs from its multi-century cultural orbit into unfamiliar ethnic territory.

None of this is separable from the fate of globalization, or modernity. However attractive it may be, the idea that America, in particular, has any purely domestic cultural, ideological, or political options of significance is untenable. What happens to America happens, immediately, to the order of the world.

Furthermore, geopolitical history has reached the edge of modern precedent. There is no one to whom the torch of global leadership can be passed in keeping with the inner tradition of modern torch-passing ritual. In this very definite sense, modernity as it has been known reaches its end. This no doubt accounts for the underlying tone of mounting hysteria which accompanies America's increasingly disjointed behavior upon the global stage.

It is an eventuality foretold in Miltonic prophecy — an encounter with the *palpable obscure*.

August 11, 2014

Homeless

It is tempting to either embrace or reject the description of the United States as an 'empire' due to the clear rhetorical weight of this term. Partisan wrangling on these grounds is sure to continue, and even to intensify. It is not, however, the only basis upon which discussion can be pursued.

A global power, it might be plausibly suggested, tends inevitably to the erosion of its domestic political space. As globalization is advanced under its auspices, distinctions between domestic and international concerns — ultimately uncertain in any case — become increasingly unpersuasive. Globalized capital and talent markets operate with least friction where they intersect the world's economic core, while international division of labor, trade, migration, and cultural exchange wash over traditional localities. In the final analysis, the very notion of political domesticity survives only as a residual rebuke to the project of global 'flattening'.

While it can be convenient for moralists to interpret hegemonic power as a bad decision, it's far closer to a fate (and in very definite

respects a tragic one). Any suggestion that America might have *chosen* not to lead the world is more of an appeal to sentiment and tactical partisan positioning than to realism. History has its tides, and eventually they change.

America's presently-ongoing Ferguson turmoil underscores the trend to political de-domestication of the metropolis, through an explicit collapse of social order into a problematic of '4GW' (or 'Fourth Generation Warfare'). Twitter is congested with observations of police militarization, friction-free transmission of equipment from US expeditionary forces into the hands of its domestic law enforcement agencies, and advisories from international irregular armies on best-practice for dealing with counter-insurgency operations. Beyond the partisan excitement, and euphoric tribalism, there is a recognition of broken boundaries, and the consolidation of an integrated US security machinery that no longer finds the discrimination between foreign and domestic enemies of practical use.

This phenomenon, as such, has no unambiguous partisan implications. Even were critique of the Empire unique to the left (which it is not), the application of an essentially domestic political optic (partisan choice) to a matter of world-historic deep structure would remain a laughable error. The fate of America is not an American problem, at least, not exclusively. It concerns the order of the world.

Willard's words from *Apocalypse Now* are prophetic:

"Someday this war's gonna end". That'd be just fine with the boys on the boat. They weren't looking for anything more than a way home. Trouble is, I'd been back there, and I knew that it just didn't exist anymore.

ADDED: Re-importation of the 'new military urbanism'. It quotes Foucault:

… while colonization, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power in the West, and on the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself …

August 14, 2014

CHAPTER SIX - RECENT EVENTS

Our Ally, the Enemy

It's not exactly a formal pact between the United States and Al Qaeda, but no one honestly thinks it's anything really different. Either it's a rough triangles play, or it's sheer insanity.

Time won't tell, but it will hint, as the intervention proceeds. If it makes things worse, before guttering out into indecision, stalling resolution, then it might make sense. In any case, it's big.

(Drew M. at AoS is a seriously hard-core rough triangles guy: "We should help whichever side is losing at any given moment but only to the extant that it enables them to fight on to take and inflict more casualties. There's no scenario where one side winning helps us.")

June 14, 2013

Quote notes (#24)

Adam Garfinkle makes an obvious point beautifully:

… whatever the Administration has said about the purpose of an

attack being to "degrade and deter" Syrian capabilities, but not to change the regime, everyone expects the attacks to be modest and brief, thus not to much affect the battlefield balance, and once ceased to stay ceased. That is because the Administration's reticence at being drawn into the bowels of Syrian madness is both well established and well justified. The attacks, then, will likely not degrade or deter anything really; they will be offered up only as a safety net to catch the falling reputation of the President as it drops toward the nether regions of strategic oblivion.

This has all been so vividly sign-posted it is getting hard to see how even a 'cosmetic' effect is going to work. How can an operation pre-advertized as an awkward spasm of embarrassment be realistically expected to restore honor and credibility?

Handle brims with sense on the topic.

August 30, 2013

Oil War

This contrarian argument, on the resilience of America's shale industry in the face of the unfolding OPEC "price war", is the pretext to host a discussion about a topic that is at once too huge to ignore, and too byzantine to elegantly comprehend. The most obvious complication — bypassed entirely by this article — is the harsher oil

geopolitics, shaped by a Saudi-Russian proxy war over developments in the Middle East (and Russian backing of the Assad regime in Damascus, most particularly). I'm not expecting people here to be so ready to leave that aside.

Clearly, though, the attempt to strangle the new tight-oil industry in its cradle is a blatantly telegraphed dimension of the present Saudi oil-pricing strategy, and one conforming to a consistent pattern. If Mullaney's figures can be trusted, things could get intense:

… data from the state of North Dakota says the average cost per barrel in America's top oil-producing state is only $42 — to make a 10% return for rig owners. In McKenzie County, which boasts 72 of the state's 188 oil rigs, the average production cost is just $30, the state says. Another 27 rigs are around $29.

If oil-price chicken is going to be exploring these depths, there's going to be some exceptional pain among the world's principal producers. Russia is being economically cornered in a way that is disturbingly reminiscent of policy towards Japan pre-WWII, when oil geopolitics was notoriously translated into military desperation. Venezuela will collapse. Iran is also under obvious pressure.

How is it possible that a world run by manic Keynesians gets to quaff on this deflationary tonic? It should hide a lot of structural ruin, at least in the short term. Global economic meltdown is deferred — and ultimately deepened — once again. (We'll probably get the war first.)

ADDED: "Saudi Arabia, OPEC's biggest oil producer, has reportedly said the oil price should stabilize at about $60 per barrel … Many OPEC members have been put under budgetary pressure by the lower oil price,as exporting countries rely heavily on oil revenues. Iran needs a price at $140 per barrel to balance its budget. Saudi Arabia needs a price of $90.70 per barrel, as it can count on huge reserves. Qatar needs $77.60 per barrel, and the United Arab Emirates $73.30 per barrel. […] In early November, OPEC officials said the price of $70 per barrel is a threshold at which other member countries could start panicking."

ADDED: Some oil geopolitics musings from Fernandez.

December 4, 2014

Kill the Chicken …

… to scare the monkeys.

Andrew Lilico gets the game over Syriza exactly right.

In current discussions of what Greece might or might not get in the way of concessions from the Eurozone, there has so far been relatively little appreciation of one basic political reality: as far as the governments of Spain, Portugal, Ireland, probably Italy and perhaps even France are concerned, Syriza must fail and must be seen to fail. … […] And note: I haven't even got on to the problem of how voters

in Germany or Finland or the Netherlands would react to being told that Syriza had extracted concessions with its comic-book antics.

Unless Syriza-led Greece is hideously crucified, it wins — and what will be unfolding is an extremely brutal zero-sum game (in which Greece cannot be allowed to win). For the EU establishment, a Syriza success story would be a catastrophe of almost incomprehensible magnitude. It would bring with it an entire narrative of core institutional delegitimation, which in the case of the peripheral nations (as glossed by Lilico) runs: "… what we really should have done was to raise the minimum wage, hire back the public sector staff that had been fired, say we weren't going to pay our debts to our eurozone partners, cosy up to the Russians and tell the Germans they didn't feel nearly guilty enough about World War Two. Then everyone would have said we were 'rock stars' and and forgiven our debts."

It's unthinkable that Germany could let this story put down roots in the fertile manure of renewed growth. Instead, there will be war by other means. Crucially, the more calamitously things now turn out for Greece, the more the EU will be strengthened, if only for a while.

From the perspective of these eurozone governments, Syriza must fail. The best way for it to fail would be for it to capitulate utterly and crawl back to Greece with its tail between its legs and a few cosmetic patronising "concessions" such as renaming the "Troika" the "Consultative Committee" (or, if it makes them feel

better, the "Symvouleftiki Epitropi"). If it won't do that — and there's a good chance that if it did try to do that then the Greek government would collapse, anyway — then things get a bit more complicated. Because if it's bad and dangerous for Syriza to succeed inside the euro, it would be disastrous for it to succeed outside the euro.

It's hard to see how this doesn't get intense.

ADDED: The game (formalized)

February 12, 2015

SEQUENCE i - WAR

War and Truth (scraps)

"War is computation with tanks. War is truth revealing. As war proceeds uncertainty collapses."
— Konkvistador (on Twitter)

"You might not be interested in war, but war is interested in you."
— Lenin

"War is deception."
— Sunzi

Neoreactionaries are often talking about 'oikos' tacitly, even when they think they are concerned with something closer to the opposite. For there to be an 'economy' much has already to have been settled. (Unlike his liberarian precursors, Moldbug never assumes peace, but he betrays his inheritance by conceiving it as an original task — a foundation.) "Begin from the inside" — that's the idea. The Outside is war.

War is the truth of lies, the rule of rulelessness, anarchy and chaos as they are in reality (which is nothing at all like a simple negation of order). It is the ultimate tribunal, beyond which any appeal is a

senseless prayer to the void. A ‘realism’ that resists such conclusions makes a mockery of the name.

Peace is a certain way war can turn out, for a while, and nothing more.

As the social institution oriented to reality in the raw, the military has a latent authority that everyone recognizes (implicitly). Whenever military government does not rule, it is because of a provisional non-emergency (Schmitt). This is not seriously disputable.

An aristocracy is a social arrangement that was decided by war, and when the war is forgotten the institution has no sustainable meaning. There is only one thing that can ‘bring back’ a king, and that is the end of peace.

The East India companies (Dutch and English) ran armies, because war was internal to economics as they practiced it. That was ‘colonialism’ (in the James Donald sense). Once the separation between war and commerce has been hardened into standard business procedures (and the imperialism that screens them from the outside), capitalism has surrendered its always-inexplicit claim to sovereignty, and thus to the future. There is no way it can be re-animated except out of the raw. This, above all, is why libertarianism cannot be saved from its own non-seriousness.

The horror of war is that there are ‘no rules’. Anything is permitted, and the worst even becomes necessary. To think this is

no lesser a challenge than the metaphysical engagement with the 'thing-in-itself' — and perhaps it is exactly the same thing. But then, it becomes important to ask: So how does it work? There are rules, but we misunderstood what rules really are (what ultimate rules are). In the end, it is the order of anarchy that rules. In order to comprehend any of this the peacetime soul must be reduced entirely to ashes, for something else to arise in its place. It is this task that Neoreaction is compelled to take up, and which it has — in several different ways — already taken up. Peace is the objective correlate of the deluded mind.

If war is the worst thing in the world, and the truth, then everything that isn't horror is a lie.

January 19, 2014

Conflict

Burroughs:

This is a war universe. War all the time. That is its nature. There may be other universes based on all sorts of other principles, but ours seems to be based on war and games.

Triggered by this:

@Outsideness you thrive on conflict

— John (@RichAsCrassus) July 3, 2014

It's docile obedience to Gnon.

July 3, 2014

War is God

Via Landry, an introduction to the "new generation of unrestricted warfare".

Colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui argued that war was no longer about "using armed forces to compel the enemy to submit to one's will" in the classic Clausewitzian sense. Rather, they asserted that war had evolved to "using all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal means to compel the enemy to accept one's interests." The barrier between soldiers and civilians would fundamentally be erased, because the battle would be everywhere. The number of new battlefields would be "virtually infinite," and could include environmental warfare, financial warfare, trade warfare, cultural warfare, and legal warfare, to name just a few. They wrote of assassinating financial speculators to safeguard a nation's financial security, setting up slush funds to influence opponents' legislatures and governments, and buying controlling shares of stocks to convert

an adversary's major television and newspapers outlets into tools of media warfare. According to the editor's note, Qiao argued in a subsequent interview that "the first rule of unrestricted warfare is that there are no rules, with nothing forbidden." That vision clearly transcends any traditional notions of war.

How 'traditional' are we talking? "War is the Father of all things, and of all things King" (πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς) Heraclitus asserts at the dawn of philosophy. There seems little indication of 'restriction' there.

Whatever the positive semantic associations accumulated by the word 'war', its most rigorous meaning is negative. War is conflict without significant constraint. As a game, it corresponds to the condition of unbounded defection, or trustlessness without limit. This is the Hobbesian understanding implicit in the phrase "war of all against all" (*bellum omnium contra omnes*), in which "the state of nature" is conceived – again negatively – through a notional subtraction of limitation. Treachery, in its game-theoretic sense, is not a minor theme within war, but a horizon to which war tends – the annihilation of all agreement. Reciprocally-excited mutual betrayal in departure from an implicit 'common humanity' is its teleological essence. This is a conclusion explicitly rejected by Carl von Clausewitz is his treatise *On War*, even as he acknowledges the cybernetic inclination to amplification (or "tendency to a limit") which drives it in the direction of an absolute. "War is the

continuation of politics by other means," he insists, because it is framed by negotiation (book-ended by a declaration of war, and a peace treaty). According to this conception, it is an interlude of disagreement, which nevertheless remains irreducibly communicative, and fundamentally structured by the decisions of sovereign political agencies. Even as it approaches its pole of ultimate extremity, it never escapes its teleological dependency, as a means (or instrument) of rational statecraft.

The reduction of war to instrumentality is not immune to criticism. Philosophical radicalization, alone, suffices to release war from its determination as 'the game of princes'. The Clausewitzean formula is notoriously inverted by Michel Foucault into the maxim "politics is war by other means". If political sovereignty is ultimately conditioned by the capability to prevail upon the battlefield, the norms of war can have no higher tribunal than military accomplishment. No real authority can transcend survival, or survive a sufficiently radical defeat. There is thus a final incoherence to any convinced appeal to the 'laws of war'. The realistic conception of 'limited war' subsumes that of 'war lawfully pursued' (with the latter categorized as an elective limitation). Qiao's words bear emphatic repetition: "the first rule of unrestricted warfare is that there are no rules, with nothing forbidden." The power to forbid is — first of all — power, which war (alone) distributes.

Between peace and war there is no true symmetry. Peace

presupposes pacification, and that is a military outcome. There is no authority — moral or political — that cannot first assert itself under cosmic conditions that are primordially indifferent to normativity. Whatever cannot defend its existence has its case dumped in the trash.

Cormac McCarthy's Judge Holden provides us with a contemporary restatement of the ancient wisdom:

Suppose two men at cards with nothing to wager save their lives. Who has not heard such a tale? A turn of the card. The whole universe for such a player has labored clanking to his moment which will tell if he is to die at that man's hand or that man at his. What more certain validation of a man's worth could there be? This enhancement of the game to its ultimate state admits no argument concerning the notion of fate. The selection of one man over another is a preference absolute and irrevocable and it is a dull man indeed who could reckon so profound a decision without agency or significance either one. In such games as have for their stake the annihilation of the defeated the decisions are quite clear. This man holding this particular arrangement of cards in his hand is thereby removed from existence. This is the nature of war, whose stake is at once the game and the authority and the justification. Seen so, war is the truest form of divination. It is the testing of one's will and the will of another within that larger will which because it binds them is therefore forced to select. War is the ultimate game because war is

at last a forcing of the unity of existence. War is god.

"War is the truest form of divination" it turns out, is the Revelation of the Aeon.

May 9, 2016

The Dark Forest

Volume two of Cixin Liu's science fiction trilogy.

The universe had once been bright, too. For a short time after the big bang, all matter existed in the, and only after the universe turned to burnt ash did heavy elements precipitate out of the darkness and form planets and life. Darkness was the mother of life and civilization.

The dark forest is the universe, but to get there — with insight — takes a path through Cosmic Sociology:

"See how the stars are points? The factors of chaos and randomness in the complex makeups of every civilized society in the universe get filtered out by distance, so those civilizations can act as reference points that are relatively easy to manipulate mathematically."
"But there's nothing concrete to study in your cosmic sociology, Dr. Ye. Surveys and experiments aren't really possible."
"That means your ultimate result will be purely theoretical. Like

Euclid's geometry, you'll set up a few simple axioms at first, then derive an overall theoretic system using those axioms as a foundation."
"It's all fascinating, but what would the axioms of cosmic sociology be?"
"First: Survuival is the primary need of civilization. Second: Civilization continuously grows and expands, but the total matter in the universe remains constant."
…
"Those two axioms are solid enough from a sociological perspective … but you rattled them off so quickly, like you'd already worked them out," Luo Ji said, a little surprised.
"I've been thinking about this for most of my life, but I've never spoken about it with anyone before. I don't know why, really. … One more thing: To derive a basic picture of cosmic sociology from these two axioms, you need two other important concepts: chains of suspicion, and the technological explosion."

The derivation from these axioms is the Exterminator. Resource conflicts between civilizations follow strictly from the two axioms. Game-theoretic tension is added by irreducible suspicion, and technological explosion.

"That's the most important aspect of the chain of suspicion. It's unrelated to the civilizations's own morality and social structure. … Regardless of whether civilizations are internally benevolent or

malicious, when they enter the web formed by the chains of suspicion, the're all identical"

Which is to say, they are all threats to each other, intrinsically, and irresolvably. Technological explosion means that any civilization represents a potential menace of inestimable potential, escalating massively within a span of mere centuries, and "On the scale of the universe, several hundred years is the snap of a finger." An intolerable danger, then.

"That's … that's really dark."

"The real universe is just that black." Luo Ji waved a hand, feeding the darkness as if stroking velvet. "The universe is a dark forest. Every civilization is an armed hunter stalking through the trees like a ghost, gently pushing aside branches that block the path and trying to tread without sound. Even breathing is done with care. The hunter has to be careful, because everywhere in the forest are stealthy hunters like him. If he finds other life — another hunter, an angel, or a demon, a delicate infant or a tottering old man, a fairy or a demigod — there's only one thing he can do: open fire and eliminate them. In this forest, hell is other people. An eternal threat that any life that exposes its own existence will be swiftly wiped out. This is the picture of cosmic civilization. It's the explanation for the Fermi Paradox."

October 1, 2015

Quote note (#296)

From Cixin Liu's latest (and perhaps greatest), p.129:

When the deterrent is the complete destruction of the deterrer and the deteree, the system is said to be in a state of ultimate deterrence. [...] Compared to other types of deterrence, ultimate deterrence is distinguished by the fact that, should deterrence fail, carrying out the threat would be of no benefit to the deterrer. [..] Thus, the key to the success of ultimate deterrence is the belief by the deteree that the threat will almost certainly be carried out if the deteree thwart's the deterrer's goals ...

Hence the drive to *mechanization of commitments*. Trust evo-psych and cultural tradition passes the torch to game-competent machines.

ADDED: Who could he possibly be talking about (p.284)?

Of course, without exception, these "anti-intellect" organizations wanted to maintain the intelligence of their own members, arguing that they had the responsibility to be the last of the intelligent people so they could complete the creation of a society of low-intelligence humans and direct its operation.

October 23, 2016

Quote note (#298)

Cixin Liu (op. cit.), p.558:

"… It's very possible that every law of physic has been weaponized. It's possible that in some parts of the universe, even … Forget it, I don't even believe that."
"What were you going to say?"
"The foundation of mathematics."
Cheng Xin tried to imagine it, but it was simply impossible. "That's … madness." Then she asked, "Will the universe turn into a war ruin? Or, maybe it's more accurate to ask: Will the laws of physics turn into war ruins?"
"Maybe they already are …"

(All ellipsis after the first in original.)

Among the points here, the (Herakleitean) thesis: Cosmology does not transcend war. Strategy belongs to the infrastructure.

October 31, 2016

War Without End

'Eurasianist' Alexander Dugin interviewed by (liberal) Vladimir Posner on the fundamental structure of global geopolitical antagonism. (Video, in Russian with English subtitles.)

While he is clearly the sort of person who tends to bring my co-ethnics out in hives, Dugin is without question among the most important thinkers of the new millennium. (The *UF* position on this, beyond simple interest in what might very easily be *the* most dynamic ideological development of our time, is close to inverted, or 'Atlantean', Eurasianism.)

July 27, 2014

Twitter cuts (#110)

> @Outsideness We have violent mobs, you have memes. I like our odds tbh
>
> — sadbukharin (@sadladbukharin) February 4, 2017

There's nothing about this tweet I don't like.

Memes are ideas that manage their own security. In the Internet Era they get stronger every day (and mobs get weaker).

February 4, 2017

SEQUENCE ii - THE ISLAMIC VORTEX

Premature Ejection

As Napoleon famously advised: “Never interrupt your enemy when he’s making a mistake.” Understandably, but still unfortunately, the Egyptian army have just done exactly that.

Daniel Pipes has pipped me to the post on this (here or here). The short summary that pre-empts me most specifically is this: “Morsi was removed from power too soon to discredit Islamism as much as he should have.” It took seven decades of chronic failure to associate the Marxist command economy with hopeless dysfunction in the eyes of the world, and even then, the lesson remains far from complete. It can scarcely be imagined that a few months of Muslim Brotherhood misgovernment is going to sear any lasting scars into the global Islamic soul. So: an opportunity missed.

Clearly, the forces of the Egyptian deep state were in no position to be as utterly indifferent to humanitarian considerations as *Outside in*. Their hand was forced, since whatever the educational virtues of mass starvation, it takes a certain distance to fully appreciate them. In any case, with Egypt now clearly unsprung, it is

at least possible to find entertainment in the spectacle of popular anti-democratic protest, concluding in firework celebrations of authoritarian restoration.

Adam Garfinkle covers the nuts-and-bolts well. Goldman's regional analysis is highly convincing. Steyn does the quick historical overview, no less persuasively.

July 6, 2013

The Islamic Vortex (Part 1)

When confronted by large-scale — and thus complex – historical events, it is inevitable that attempts at understanding will be dominated by analogy. Even among experts, with access to abstract models of generic processes ('revolution', modernization, escalation, phase-change …), it is only through reference to concrete historical episodes that such intellectual tools acquire the richness necessary for successful application to actual world events. Even the most conceptually-refined historiographical language is honed for analogical usage. There is no 'idea' of 'revolution' truly separable from the examples of revolution provided by the historical record, and even if there was, it could have no use. Since history is rhythmic, but never exactly repetitive, such analogies can be more or less relevant, but only ever roughly suggestive. They are, in any case,

unavoidable.

During the years immediately following 9/11, Western perceptions of the new global reality were controlled by analogy with World War II, and even those who rejected this template were locked into a negative relationship with it. If 9/11 was not Pearl Harbor, or anything like it, it remained necessary to say so, repeatedly, and to little immediate effect. The term 'Islamofascism' was inherited from this period, and its fading currency is significant (as we shall see).

On the Left, resistance to the WWII analogy was relatively frictionless, because it was already, from the moment of its inception, outweighed by an alternative analogy, drawn from Cold War 'anti-imperialist' revolution. Bin Laden could never be a new Hitler, to those who had already recognized him as a new Ho Chi Minh. On the Right, however, intricate ironies abounded. Those on the paleo-libertarian end of the political spectrum, who most vehemently denounced the 'Axis of Evil' as a cynical fabrication, were propelled by events into an accelerated rediscovery of the Old Right, and thus found themselves – quite self-consciously — reviving 1930s American isolationism. Through the very rejection of the (WWII) analogy, they found themselves confirming its rough historical message.

Is the West returning to the 1930s? That is another topic, although it can be noted that evidence in support of this analogy has

accumulated over recent years at least as rapidly as it has dissipated. To the extent that the 'War on Terror' is World War II revisited, however, it is only under the conditions of a profound counter-factual revision, in which the American Old Right was ultimately triumphant, and vindicated. The Islamic world simply lacks the military capability to serve as model fascists, posing a robust existential threat that feeds continuous escalation. America has not remotely approached a 1940s war economy in the new millennium, and there is nothing that any Islamic power — formal or informal — can do to stimulate this outcome. A few ragged, frustrating counter-insurgencies do not make a world war. For America, the War on Terror — in any sense that has analogical force — is over.

The opportunity thus exists to shelve the Western perspective on international affairs, a methodical step that tracks the concrete draw-down of interventionist commitment, and one that — by further irony — promises a far deeper comprehension of what current global events will mean for the West (down the road). The critical first point is this: the end of the 'War on Terror' is not the end of the war wracking the world of Islam, but something far closer to its beginning. If the Arabs, too, are returning to the 1930s, it is in a very different way, in accordance with a far more comprehensive structure of history.

Anybody who has been hanging out in *Al Jazeera* recently (and, right now, there's no excuse not to), might have come across an

extremely significant essay by Murtaza Hussain, entitled *Iraq, Syria, and the death of the modern Middle East*. Hussain has no doubts that a back-to-the-1930s moment is unfolding in Mesopotamia, or rather — the truly crucial insight — *a back through the 1920s moment*, with reverse time signature. The Middle East is not so much recapitulating history from the early 20th century, *as undoing it*, revisiting the origins of the Arab state system on a hardening, backwards trajectory:

The Sykes-Picot Agreement – which divided the Ottoman Empire after World War I and created the Middle East as we know it – is today violently breaking apart in front of the eyes of the world. The countries of Syria and Iraq; formerly unified Arab states formed after the defeat of their former Ottoman rulers, exist today only in name. In their place what appears most likely to come into existence – after the bloodshed subsides – are small, ethnically and religiously homogenous statelets: weak and easily manipulated, where their progenitors at their peaks were robustly independent powers.

Such states, divided upon sectarian lines, would be politically pliable, isolated and enfeebled, and thus utterly incapable of offering a meaningful defence against foreign interventionism in the region. Given the implications for the Middle East, where overt foreign aggression has been a consistent theme for decades, there is reason to believe that this state of affairs has been consciously engineered.

Hussain's conviction of alien manipulation — however plausible or

implausible it may seem — is itself a crucial part of the equation. The Arab world is being propelled backwards, out of political modernity, by forces of such consistent directionality and monumental implacability that they suggest conspiratorial or providential workings, against which resistance is futile. Raw history, in all of its nightmarish, occult compulsion, is exposed like a buried city, as the facile myths of collective, institutionalized agency are blasted away by the flood. A dismal century of second-hand lies is being ripped away, revealing something old and terrible beneath. Eventually, this cannot but matter, for everyone.

The World War II analogy was tightly bound to the ('neoconservative') project of democracy promotion. After all, the original Axis powers were all transformed, through military defeat, occupation, and political reconstruction, from fascist states into model democracies. Hussain's vision is far more accurately applicable to the current process-in-motion, which does not climax in an affirmation of political modernity, but accelerates back through its comprehensive demolition. Global democracy will not easily or rapidly die in the wake of the 'Arab Spring', but global democratization, or democracy promotion, assuredly will.

From the War on Terror to the Arab Spring, there is a shift in analogy of seismic consequence. It is no longer World War II that impinges forcefully on historical intuition, but rather the Thirty Years' War, *approached through momentous regression*. The

collapse of the Sykes-Picot order, when analogized, is an undoing of the Peace of Westphalia — and the international state system — by sectarian religious warfare without respect for borders or institutions of national self-determination. The conditions for democratizing social progress are being ripped out at the level of their foundations. This was not what 'internationalism' was supposed to mean …

July 30, 2013

The Islamic Vortex (Part 2)

The central contention advanced by part 1 in this series is that the basic trend manifested in the Middle East today – most evidently across its northern arc — is the disintegration of the modern state system (and with it all the questions of political progress that have been incrementally globalized since the Treaty of Westphalia in the mid-17th century). To continue to discuss this process in terms of 'Lebanon', 'Syria', and 'Iraq' is becoming increasingly quaint. Within this region, in particular, states no longer conform to contiguous territories, but rather to hubs, characterized by the inheritance of a comparatively organized security apparatus, a vestigial international status (also inherited, from the dissolving state system), and specifically a recognized *Westphalian-era* territorial sovereignty,

stripped of domestic credibility. A realistic political geography of the emerging northern Middle East begins from this point.

Because the names of nation states can only suggest (Westphalian) contiguous jig-saw pieces, it is essential to understanding that we start elsewhere. *The Crescent*, stretching from western Iran, through Iraq, and Syria, to the Lebanese Levant, spilling – no doubt – into south-eastern Turkey to the north, and down into the northern Gulf states and Jordan to the south, can be considered an exaggerated Fertile Crescent, a (Sunni-paranoiac) Shia Crescent, a Crescent of Disintegration, it doesn't matter. What is important is that the state apparatuses (and international political sovereigns) existing in this area occupy it in the manner of islands, *populating or inhabiting it* — among other collective bodies of strategic consequence — rather than dividing it effectively among themselves.

If the Crescent is maximally extended to the eastern borders of Iran (and perhaps further into the Hazara areas of Afghanistan, and Quetta in Pakistan), northwards into Azerbaijan and blurrily into the areas of Anatolian Alevi ethnicity, and south along the western Gulf coast, encompassing Bahrain (but stretched further along the Saudi Gulf coast and beyond, into Yemen), it incorporates the entirety of Shia Islam as a strategically potent entity. Beyond this area, the Shia exist only as pogrom-fodder among overwhelmingly dominant Sunni populations. Constituting something over 15% of Moslems

worldwide, but over a third of those in the Middle East, the Shia either prevail in the Crescent, or go under. (For our purposes here Alawites / Alevi are Shia by strategic affiliation and adoption.)

The Crescent is the site of *fitna*, Islam's unsettled business, and the time of settlement is now due. How does the balance of forces appear?

Almost dead center in the Crescent, are spread the – characteristically stateless – Kurds, divided between Iran, Turkey, 'Iraq', and 'Syria', and numbering perhaps 30 million (compared to a world Shia population of roughly 200 million). Although predominantly Sunni by confession, Kurdish nationalist aspiration dominates over sectarian identity. It comes as relief to our cognitive overload that they are playing a long game. We can bracket them for the moment

To the north lies Turkey, a powerful, comparatively competent Sunni state, marginalized by its non-Arab ethnicity. The pursuit of neo-Ottoman ambitions at this point would draw Turkey into a snake-pit of unimaginable pain. I think we can assume defensive hedging from Turkey in the immediate future. If we can bracket the Kurds – who are central to Turkey's interests and calculations — we can cautiously bracket Turkey as well.

To the east lies Iran, another capable state, as territorially secure as anyone gets to be in this environment, and the wellspring of global Shia power. Iran is already heavily invested in the Crescent War, but

it has the luxury of involvement from without, as a firm ally of Hizbollah, a major stakeholder in the Iraqi Shia regime, and the local 'superpower' ally of Assad's Alawite rump state. (We shall get to examine Iran more closely when examining the nuclear proliferation aspect of this story, further down the road.)

To the south things get very complicated. Jordan, an extremely fragile Sunni state, is almost certainly doomed, but its collapse will widen the Crescent War into a far more multidimensional conflict. If we ignore it now it is less because we *can* ignore it, than because we simply *have* to ignore it. The limits of our processing capacity are exceeded. Similarly, to the east, where the tentacles of *fitna* snake down along the Gulf coast, through rich, demographically fragile micro-states, tightly woven into the US-dominated international system by hydrocarbon production. This is the royal road to world war. It's too much to deal with right now. (Free-ranging commentary is, of course, welcome.)

Despite the transparent arbitrariness with which we have cropped the Crescent down to something like a manageable zone of attention, the core that remains has a number of coherent features. Most obviously, it is already a battlefield, in which the return to a pre-Westphalian 'order' is substantially accomplished. On the Mediterranean coast, a tenuous hybrid Sunni-Christian Levantine statelet coexists with a Hizbollah (Shia) para-state, awaiting the resumption of hell. No one is under time-pressure to decide things

there very soon. It is ~~in~~ throughout the twin Sykes-Picot Frankenstein 'nations' of 'Syria and Iraq' that the unraveling begins.

This Crescent Core is occupied by two rump states, one clearly reduced to a compressed fiefdom (under Assad), the other still able to pretend to national authority. Each is an apparatus of Shia power, and thus a target for a Sunni-Jihadist onslaught of international scope, in which Al Qaeda realizes its world historic mission. The local Sunni-Arab population engaged in escalating holy war against these states is not meaningfully differentiated by (Sykes-Picot) national identity. Humpty-Dumpty is broken, irreparably.

For the international Sunni-Jihadi movement, the destruction of these rump states is now a matter of eschatological significance. Their defense is of no less importance to their Shia supporters, for whom the Crescent Core war is a zone of existential decision. The entire history of Islam, on both of its dominant branches, is fully engaged in this conflict, whose meaning, for the entire (split) *Ummah* is unsurpassable. It is impossible to over-estimate the stakes, as Islam itself perceives them, and the wider world has not yet seriously begun to apprehend what is happening. (Palestine or Afghanistan mean nothing in comparison — as the revealed pattern of practical Jihad makes clear.)

Does anybody seriously think they're going to end this, with a recognizable world order in place? If not … what's next?

July 31, 2013

The Islamic Vortex (Part 3)

The cartoon would look something like this:

An Egyptian (or it could be a Pakistani) walks into the Bank of America, with a hand-grenade daubed 'Radical Islam' taped to his ear, and shouts out: "Hand over the money or my head gets it!"

The teller looks up and says: "You don't have to keep doing this. There's a standing order to pay you $1,500,000,000 a year."

Offended, the Egyptian replies: "But the grenade is the only reason you respect me!"

We could try to update the joke (… "then the black lesbian bank teller says: 'Why are you repressing that grenade?'") but there's going to be more than enough torture in this story already. It suffices to note that in the Egyptian version of the cartoon, the grenade was provided by the bank, and its inscription read: 'Democracy'. We can fast-forward straight through the explosion stage, and begin on the far side of the 'Arab Spring'.

So to start over, with a serious question (even if it doesn't sound like one): How did the first comprehensively Cathedralist administration in American history get to implement a ruthlessly cunning neoreactionary Middle East strategy? In the Crescent, it

sleazed a situation in which Hizbollah and Al Qaeda are engaging in reciprocal suicide attacks – even a hyper-hawk with liquid nitrogen blood would have been hard-pressed to envisage such a scenario. And in Egypt? There the dysfunctional 'realist' status quo – America's multi-decade hand-grenade cartoon of a foreign policy – has given way to something quite different.

Assume, hypothetically, that in Middle Eastern affairs the Obama Administration is by far the most mind-melting example of transcendental strategic genius the Anglophone world has ever known. (Are you with me so far?) Now add one straightforward corollary: In respect to Egypt, the goal was to replace a parasitic, dysfunctional, passive-aggressive PITA state, breeding Mohammed Attas like hogs in a factory farm, with a hard, Islamophobic, neoreactionary security state, fundamentally immunized against all democratic temptation, serving as a pole of attraction for counter-Jihad tendencies throughout the region, and machine-gunning even more Muslim Brothers in the streets than you really feel it needs to. Then, if it all works out, as a bonus you even get to threaten the $1.5 billion standing order, whilst tut-tutting disapprovingly about the naughty coup business.

To pull off this kind of unbelievable ju-jitsu requires a very special skill set, starting with a mastery of deception. A Sahara-dry, perfectly dead-pan sense of humor is not strictly necessary, but it adds to the sense of panache.

You probably remember Dark-Lord Obama's 2009 Cairo Speech, in very approximate outline, but do you recall the title? Here it is (seriously): *A New Beginning*. You're forgiven a tingly 'this is beyond awesome' moment. (Probably *Now for Neoreaction*, or *Hard Reboot to the Future* were considered too blunt even for this Grand Imperial Wizard.) In an interview with *Al Arabiya*, Obama explained with his signature stylistic felicity: "My job to the Muslim world is to communicate that the Americans are not your enemy." From now on you'll be killing your own damn people.

The bottom-line problem isn't difficult to see: the passably civilized fraction of the Egyptian population is far too small to dominate their society, unless tightly compressed by bonds of fear, thoroughly disillusioned about the degraded state of their culture, invigorated by an urgent sense of responsibility to secure their own existence, and terminally freed of all democratic sentiment. Similarly, the regime itself needed to be quickened by existential terror, and driven into nakedly elitist alignment with a newly integrated, overtly anti-populist constituency. For all this to happen, Egypt had to be locked in a cage with itself, hardened by what it found there, until it had learned a lesson as old as the pharoahs. The state had to cease being a pandering platform and pan-handling operation, tailored to domestic populism and correct international opinion, and begin ensuring security, unapologetically, for the residue of civilization that still remained. But we already know what was required: A New

Beginning.

Mubarak was grenade-guy. He had to go. The fact that he was using the Muslim Brotherhood in a groove-locked game of chicken with America was far from the most serious problem. He was also playing grenade-guy chicken with the local — uncondensed — non-Islamist demographic. By sheltering Egypt's educated elite from their own bearded brethren, he was sustaining its most hopelessly sentimental illusions about the nature of the national *demos*, perpetuating democratic teleology, giving credence to the 'international' reform agenda, and deferring to the country's radically corrupted (Islamo-populist) cultural template. Breaking with all this was something far beyond the Mubarak-circle's political imagination. The country had to be *sprung*.

Of course, the Obama master-plan remains far from complete (even without consideration of its application to Pakistan). The Egyptian economy is still skewed towards ruin by a deep structure of populist subsidies, and the recently installed order of neoreactionary legitimation has yet to be overtly proclaimed, or constitutionally formalized.

It is nevertheless important to recognize how far things have come. The Obamazing feint-revolutionary double-flip-back maneuver has, in rapid succession, obliterated the accumulated credibility of the old ('grenade-guy') regime, 'moderate' Islamist governance, *and* democratic inclusion. A New Beginning already has

the educated middle classes clamoring for a harsher clampdown on the bearded mob, and the security apparatus reaching out for robust political integration with the country's civilized minority (the 'Tamarrod').

In *The Weekly Standard*, surreptitious Obamanist Reuel Marc Gerecht captures the situation adeptly:

The driving force behind the Tamarrod may be just too far removed culturally from the Egyptian faithful. One thing is certain after the coup: Secular liberals will want to be protected from vengeful Islamists. And for that they will need the army. The ballot box will not do.

August 1, 2013

The Islamic Vortex (Part 3a)

This series was preparing for the flight out from Cairo International Airport, to go WMD hunting in the Crescent, when a call arrived – from Fotrkd (on this thread) – turning our plans back around. It was hard to pick out the exact message from the stream of excited babble, but it was basically: "You're not going to believe what Kerry just said to the Pakistani's …" (who, we have to remember, are next in line for *A New Beginning®*.)

I'm guessing you've already heard it – since it's all over the media.

The Israelis string it together well (notice the encrypted message to Kerry in the URL: Ufu02Kzk2-k (!)):

"The military was asked to intervene by millions and millions of people, all of whom were afraid of descendance into chaos, into violence," Kerry was quoted as having told Geo.

"And the military did not take over, to the best of our judgment – so far. To run the country, there's a civilian government. In effect, they were restoring democracy," he added.

The interviewer questioned him over allegations that Egyptian troops have shot dead people in the streets.

"Oh, no. That's not restoring democracy, and we're very, very concerned… I've been in touch with all of the players there. And we have made it clear that that is absolutely unacceptable, it cannot happen," Kerry said, according to AFP.

If history is being studied in human languages a thousand years from now, these words will still be reverberating. They need to be carved on a pyramid, or something. This is one of those rare moments in which *everything changes*, and we have to catch up with it.

It's all about democracy, obviously, but the improvised card-sharping makes it easy to miss the way the trick plays out. The first important thing to note — and the assumed context of the *Geo* interview — is that the initial reference to democracy, as crudely, procedurally, and up to this point pointedly understood, is scrubbed out and replaced. When the interview question begins, we all *know*

that what is being talking about is the abrupt termination of Egypt's brief and pitiful experiment in Cathedral-inspired democracy. After Kerry's initial words, all that has already been shrouded. The topic has somehow slipped into "descendance into chaos, into violence" — and we're not supposed to register that these words are translating *exactly the same thing* that 'democracy' previously named, because 'democracy' is about to mean something else.

A lot of people (and they're the people who matter) were asking the military to intervene to shut down ~~democracy~~ *the descendance into chaos, into violence*, and a deal was quickly and efficiently done. The people who the military listen to got to borrow the military, and the military got to borrow a civilian face. The intimacy of this arrangement — and its deep neoreactionary sanity — has nothing at all to do with democratic legitimacy in its previously accepted (and now effaced) sense. Kerry clearly doesn't think that anyone will care about that. The right people took over, how could that possibly be a problem? (It's not as if anyone ever complained about that Pinochet business.) But just in case some awkward memory of what we were supposed to believe last week is still hanging around, we now get the most exquisite political formula of the age: *In effect, they were restoring democracy*.

These words are too perfect. Sobbing with ecstasy could be embarrassing, so I'll quote a little WRM while getting it together:

Let's get the obvious parts out of the way: No, the Egyptian

military is not restoring democracy in Egypt. You can't "restore" something that never existed … […] The army wasn't trying to build democracy, either; it was restoring order and protecting the deep state, more or less in accordance with the will of a large number of middle class and urban Egyptians. That's the beginning and end of it. Americans desperately want somebody to be the pro-democracy good guys. But right now at least, democracy doesn't seem to be on the menu at the Egypt café.

The structure of realization seems to go roughly like this:

(a) Democracy is the supreme Good, engraved eternally and universally in the human heart, but

(b) When an attempt is made to implement it almost anywhere on earth it immediately manifests as *a descendance into chaos, into violence*, and

(c) This existentially threatens the demographic which might be actually capable of sustaining a functional democracy, so

(d) In effect, the truly crucial step is the immediate cessation of ~~democracy~~ what was previously known as democracy, which therefore counts as

(e) A restoration of democracy.

We need to remember that John Kerry might have been President of the United States, and the Muslim Brotherhood helpfully work with us in thinking that through:

Supporters of Egypt's ousted president Mohamed Mursi today

slammed US Secretary of State John Kerry after he said the military was "restoring democracy" by deposing the Islamist leader.

"Is it the job of the army to restore democracy?" asked Gehad al-Haddad, a spokesman for Mursi's Muslim Brotherhood in a statement.

"Does Secretary Kerry accept Defence Secretary (Chuck) Hagel to step in and remove (US President Barack) Obama if large protests take place in America?

"Will the US army freeze the constitution and dismantle Congress and (the) Senate? Can they appoint a president that they solely choose?"

Gehad al-Hadad still isn't quite getting it. When invited by the right people, whatever the army has to do in overthrowing the government now *defines* the 'restoration of democracy'.

Once we get to the stage where the Middle East is re-exporting Kerryist democratic restoration, things could get extraordinarily interesting. At the present rate of Cathedralist ideological implosion, however, there might not be time for that.

Who's going to print up the T-shirts? *We demand democratic restoration now!*

August 2, 2013

The Islamic Vortex (Part 3b)

“This time is different” is a slogan designed for derision. Greer set me back onto it again, but it’s familiar background hum, and could have come from anywhere. In it’s most typical usage it applies to the psychology of business cycles, as the epitome of bubble denial, which is to say: investor hubris. (This book might be the best known example.) With blunt irony, it is placed in the mouth of a fool, who is prompted to declare that things won’t turn out the same this time around (so *of course* they will). It’s what somebody is expected to say shortly before losing their shirt.

There are a few quite simple things that can be said about the presumption, whether learned or instinctive, that things will almost certainly *not* be different ‘this time’.

— It is a cognitive stance that conforms almost perfectly with the dominant sense of ‘wisdom’.

— It is strongly aligned with the heuristic that history has important lessons to teach us (and that the lessons of deep history are especially profound).

— It is skeptical with respect to Utopian schemes of improvement.

— It has an emotional correlate, in aversion to enthusiasm.

— Every civilized (or even merely cultural) tradition has an identifiable version of it.

For all these reasons, it has a reactionary bias, due to its affinity

with everything that resists the progressive impulse and its fantastic illusions. It remembers that change has happened before, and what happened when it did. Even when explicit, relevant memory is lacking, it assumes that tradition incorporates wisdom, and thus provides a bulwark against reckless enthusiasm. It is unmistakably biased, because there has been enough past to make it so.

The guiding maxim of *Outside in – Optimize for intelligence* – is not primarily *wise*. Among the readers of this blog, however, wisdom is the prevalent mode of realism, and it is displayed in crushing abundance. When our digression into Egyptian practical neoreaction strayed into the exultant discovery of a *rare moment in which* ***everything changes,*** the push-back commentary was quick, hard, and relentlessly wise.

Learned wisdom, rooted in historical recollection, expects to be countered, usually by fools. Of all the things that have happened before, innumerable times, among the most common is a delirium of novelty, accompanied by rationalizations of greater or lesser sophistication. History is able to test doctrines of novelty, by excavating ancestral anticipations whose very existence amounts to a refutation. For any claim to the unprecedented, exposure to precedents is an embarrassment that cannot easily be survived.

From an occluded future, the disturbance of wisdom can draw no sustenance, but history offers it partial refuge, in two interconnected ways. Firstly, it can contest the time-scale of normality, pushing

expectations into deeper and more expansive cycles, in order to relativize a formation of wisdom to a long-settled innovation, whose 'naturalness' rests on nothing beyond a comparative durability of change. Wisdom is challenged to deepen its memory, and to recall the difference it has mistaken for a foundation. If anything done can be undone – and even has to be – then what will not be undone, in time? Every establishment was once established, and thus rests upon some sub-basement of historical fragility.

Secondly, the precedents of innovation, when *abstractly* apprehended, disturb wisdom more effectively than they support it. Sometimes it *has* been different, unless growth itself is an illusion. Everything, seized at the right scale, is new. Ultimately invention envelopes wisdom, rather than the contrary. (This is not, admittedly, an uncontroversial claim.)

Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed each said "this time it's different." A sufficiently mechanical wisdom would even assert that, in this, they all said the same. At the very least, as original founders of distinctive establishments of wisdom, they each preclude a primordial refusal of innovation. An absolute wisdom would judge each worthy of crucifixion, or its equivalent in derision. If wisdom is to be the iron criterion, the Abrahamic faiths are all the works of great comedians. How could it be denied that — when strictly and consistently considered — religious inspiration is inherently unwise? (This is not a judgment I am dogmatically rejecting.)

The state, too, is an invention. It seems to be roughly as old as the institution of literate priesthood, with canons of wisdom to match. That time it was different, and recorded history began. Even then, a deeper and more enveloping wisdom can be conceived, associated with a lost (and unwritten) presumption: *this nonsense is not going to last*. Perhaps proto-states had been tried, and failed, innumerable times before. The prehistory of political abortions might even have exhibited sufficient richness to make the birth of the state *obviously foolish*. Equally, through a dilation of time-scales ultimately indistinguishable from wisdom itself, we can still stubbornly presume that this nonsense is not going to last. Or at least, if we refuse this presumption, judging it unrealistic, we have to do so as defenders of innovation, rather than as faithful voices of tradition.

So we return to the leading question of this series: what is the destiny of the Islamic State? Clearly, wisdom offers us no answer. The modes of reason engaged are quite different. We have to correctly identify the real innovations in the history of the state, and come to an equally realistic judgment about the relative priority of religious civilization and political order. Is the Islamic State a state, that happens — incidentally — to be Islamic? Or does Islam decide whether or not it is culturally tolerable to sustain a modern state? These questions are open to revision, and refinement, but the essential divergence of conclusions is inescapable. Either universal political science is possible, or it is not.

If universal politics is judged impossible, that is — in the delicate American turn of phrase — a BFD. The practical recognition of such a reality would make a difference, a durable change, and a disintegration of time. Islam either masters the state, or succumbs to it. That 'choice' is a war.

August 3, 2013

The Islamic Vortex (Part 4)

The story that follows was stolen from somewhere, but I've not been able to recover the source. It has a definite neoconservative edge to it, which isn't surprising given the early-nullities brain-feed it was no doubt extracted from, but it's neat enough to be passed on.

If Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires in space, the First World War was the equivalent burial ground in time. The German Second Reich, the Austro-Hungarian (Habsburg) Empire, the Russian (Romanov) Empire, and the Turkish (Ottoman) Empire were all interred by it. In their place arose new geopolitical entities based upon an unstable mixture of ethno-nationalist self-determination and moral-universalist internationalism. The role of American ideas in the New Order – most immediately conveyed by the vehicle of 'Wilsonism' – was both substantial and ambiguous. A tight swirl of Americanization and Anti-Americanism would be essential to

everything that followed.

If Austro-Germanic imperial collapse can be considered one thing, for the sake of elegance, the true narrative marvel of this story can unfold, because each dead empire was the germ of a world war, structuring history in its fundamentals up to the present day. From each imperial grave, in succession, came a challenge to the Anglophone global order, distinct in certain respects, but also displaying common, recognizable features.

Given what is being said of their origins, we can think of these sequenced global challenges as Undead Empires, re-animated from the ruins of the old order. In each case a supra-national ideological wave was radiated from an extinct crater of traditional authority, married in complex ways to ethno-nationalist impulses, and self-defined in explicit opposition to Anglo-Jewish planetary capitalism. First Central-European National-Socialism (1933-45), then Russo-centric Bolshevism (1946-89)*, and finally – because this narrative implies completion – from out of the Arabian hinterland of the broken Ottoman empire came the last of the great Undead Empires, the one that concerns us still.

The Eurasian Undead Empires have ceased to moan. Ghoulishly re-animated, then re-broken, and rebuilt, Germany dominates Europe once again, and Russia has re-established itself as an assertive autocracy with extensive, but strictly finite, reach. Neither any longer pursues its interests in the name of a cosmic ideology, as if

its traumatic grievance deserved to shake the heavens. Neither still aches to burn down the world, in order to share the ruin it has known. The sullen grumbles they might still nurse have ceased to awaken the dead. Only normal disgruntlements remain.

Islam remains in a very different place. The collapse of its last — Ottoman — Caliphate was constitutionally formalized by Kemal Atatürk, the first President of the new Turkish Republic, on March 3, 1924. The cosmic ideology of Islamism is unintelligible without reference to that event. What political Islam wants, centrally, is the revival of the Caliphate. The Great War's last curse thus determines it as an Undead Empire dreaming, in the lurid crypt-chatter of blood and screams …

… which was the neoconservative nightmare, best articulated by center-left hawk Paul Berman in his *Terror and Liberalism*. In compliance with the pattern of historical analogy here outlined, only one outcome was conceivable — a fourth world war. The 'War on Terror' was thus predicted, and promoted, until — after the best part of a decade — it had bled out into a parody of itself. The grating disproportion between the WoT's tawdry squabbles on the one hand, and the apocalyptic confrontation which the narrative demanded on the other, had become unbridgeable. In a sense it was over. At least, attention wandered. Yet nothing had been settled, or laid to rest.

Realism has to be more than ceasing to think, just as it must be

more than a call to action. The story of the Undead Empires, now freed of neoconservative excitability, has either to be discarded *for a reason*, or more thoroughly explored. Despite the directionless adventures that have attached themselves to it, the intrinsic plausibility of the narrative itself has not, by an iota, been diminished.

This is most clearly demonstrated through simple elaboration of the pattern. World War II was an extremely intense global conflict, with a number of theaters simultaneously active, and total duration of less than a decade (from the Japanese invasion of China in 1937 to the surrender of Japan in 1945). World War III, in contrast, was so prolonged, and dilute (or 'cold'), that it is generally considered not to have happened at all. Between the major hostile powers, deterrence predominated over active engagements, with the latter generally conducted as peripheral, asymmetric conflicts. (US military deaths approached 100,000 a year during WWII**, close to the country's total toll — almost entirely from Korea and Vietnam — suffered over the 40 years of 'WWIII').

Of course, simple extrapolation into WWIV gets nowhere near to a forecast. All it tells us is that there was never any reason to expect compact, burning Armageddon. The crude trend line (counting for nothing) projects 30,000 US military deaths over the course of a 200 year hyper-diffuse cryo-war. American narrative fundamentalist would depart from that as the 'norm'. Not the 'clash', but the slow squelch of civilizations.

Perhaps more suggestive is the trend to involution. National Socialists, despite the diversion of the Holocaust, spent most of their time killing foreigners. The communist regimes of 'WWIII', in contrast, focused almost entirely on massacring their own populations, reaching a 9-figure body count over their 'lifespans'. The vague narrative 'prediction', therefore — which the word 'war' increasingly obfuscates — is that the long struggle to revive the Caliphate is an opportunity for Islamo-demographic self-cannibalization, on a scale that has only been delicately hinted at so far. The default pattern points to an extended hideous occurrence that is, almost entirely, inflicted by the *Ummah* upon itself.

The only reason to be persuaded by this pattern is that, right now, it's the only pattern we have …

[Some involutionary carnage in detail next]

* These are Cold War dates, rather than internal Bolshevik regime dates (1917-89). The latter would contribute to a more intricate time structure, in which sequence took the form of historical envelopment, rather than simple succession. I'm trying to keep things cognitively manageable, for the moment.

** December 1941 – August 1945

August 5, 2013

The Islamic Vortex (Part 5)

So – does Mecca get nuked? For the purpose of this series, that's a reasonable candidate for the terminal question.

A direct assault on this question stumbles quickly into a paradox of stimulating profundity. Of all the geopolitical and religious agencies determining the outcome, the one most theologically predisposed to the vaporization of Islam's spiritual center is the Wahhabi sect, which presently controls it. The case can easily be made that, within the limitations set by peacetime conditions, this objective has already been pursued with spectacular ardor. (If you noticed the Iranian media links there, save that observation.) Also worth mentioning: it's a necessary antecedent to the Islamic Apocalypse (*al-Qiyamah*) that Mecca and the Kaaba be destroyed.

One of the factors supporting the Thirty-Years' War analogy in the escalating conflict between Sunni and Shia Islam is the confidence with which we can identify the 'Protestants' and 'Catholics' in this re-run. In God and Gold (p.367), Walter Russell Mead outlines the structure of parallelism:

Wahhabis seek to suppress the popular cults associated with saints and others traditionally believed to intercede for believers with God. Every soul is accountable to God for its own acts, and there is no human mediator. Puritans similarly attacked the cults of the Christian saints, and argued that it was vain and unbiblical to

pray to the Virgin and the saints for their intercession with God. To make sure such cults are suppressed, the Saudi government under Wahhabi influence has recently destroyed mosques and monuments in Mecca and Medina that had becomes associated with cults and customs considered un-Islamic. Puritans, like many radical Protestants across northern Europe, destroyed altar screens, stained glass, statues, and other church furnishings which, in their judgement, distracted the people from the worship of the one true God.

Shia Islam, with its far greater tolerance for cultural 'thickness', has a 'Catholic' alignment with heritage, tradition, and mediation. Sunni Islam — especially in its 'Puritanical' or radical Wahhabi, Salafi, and Takfiri variants, interprets intermediary forms of cultural and political organization as manifestations of impiety (to be erased). As with the militant Protestantism of the seventeenth century, its mode of holy war indissolubly fuses iconoclastic theology with the armed advance of the faith.

Radical Sunni 'desert religion' projects a desert as (and at) the end of faith. It cannot be realistically expected that cultural inhibitions on the escalation of violence will find fertile soil in this terrain. A geographically and demographically besieged Shiism shows every sign of counter-bidding unreservedly in its own eschatological coin.

There are other inhibitions, however. When socially disorganized militants engage in informal warfare, the requirement that they

protect their own neighborhoods from nebulous threats tends to what Gary Brecher calls the 'cripple fight' phenomenon. There's a reluctance to stray to far from home, when home is an informal war zone, which obstructs effective military mobilization. More generally, mass killing is technically difficult, and usually scales up with social competence (a few African counter-examples notwithstanding). Disease is the traditional mass-killer, supplanted by famine in modern times. Relatively low-efficiency slaughter is the modern Islamic norm. Hence the fascination with Weapons of Mass Destruction, and especially nuclear devices, as the prospective solution to the Jihad escalation problem.

The dynamics of escalation can be modeled as a *chain reaction*, which can in turn be translated into the geopolitics as a *domino theory*. Such theories went out of fashion in the closing stages of the Cold War, because their predictions regarding the contagious virulence of communist regime-change began to look over-stretched. Where domino models clearly excel, however, is in the explanation of nuclear proliferation. Within such domino chains, the attainment of 'nuclear status' by power A serves as the sufficient *political* explanation for the subsequent attainment of nuclear status by power B, in a process that can be prolonged indefinitely, given a suitable linear network of threat links.

Consider the active chain of nuclear dominoes leading into the Middle East (ignoring the non-contagious or here-irrelevant sub-

branches, UK, France, Israel, and North Korea). The path leaves little room for controversy. In strict succession, driven by linear threat-response at each stage, it runs USA, USSR, China, India, Pakistan … and already we have an *Islamic bomb*. It is crucial to note at this point that each link in nuclear dominoes (after the first) has to be Janus faced. The potential conflict that provoked each stage of proliferation is quite different to the one that triggers the next. For instance, the Indian bomb, clearly responding to that of China, is now primarily understood through the successor stage, in which the nuclear arsenals of India and Pakistan are weighed against each other in strategic calculations. Similarly, Pakistan's Islamic bomb (when related to India's Hindu bomb) has to be re-conceived as a *Sunni bomb* on its other face, envisaged from the Greater Middle East, where a Shia bomb is the obvious threat-response — the next domino.

It is important to stress that this is where the Iranian nuclear program comes from. American and Israeli optics tend to distract from the regional logic of proliferation. However politically convenient it may be for Iranian leaders to publicly proclaim that their bomb (which, of course, they have no intention whatsoever of building) is designed solely to kill Jews, or to drive Americans out of the Gulf, it is in fact overwhelmingly necessitated by the fact that a Sunni bomb already exists, next door. A nuclear Iran means, fundamentally, a balance of threat between Sunni and Shia power

in the Greater Middle East. It can also be assumed, with extreme confidence, that a *Sunni Arab* (Saudi) bomb would soon follow, according to the wholly predictable domino-Janus sequence which exposes Iran from the other side.

[There's a lot more to say about all this, but I'm done for tonight]

August 10, 2013

Quote Notes (#13)

Richard Fernandez on the importance of the Israeli-Palestinian 'peace process':

Perhaps the saddest thing about President Obama's Middle East peace initiative is how tangential it is. R[e]uel Marc Gerecht and Anthony Cordesman examine the upheavals in the region, focusing on Egypt and Syria respectively, without even mentioning Palestine, the jewel in Kerry's crown. It is as if one were diagnosed with cancer, but the doctors says "I can't cure the cancer but I can manicure your nails."

August 6, 2013

Great Games …

… you have planned, shame if something bad were to happen to them.

Tyler Durden (of *Zero Hedge*) casts some harsh light on ~~the lead up to WWIV~~ recent diplomatic engagement between Saudi Arabia and Russia — countries that seem to be uniquely serious about the outcome of the Islamic civil(izational) war. Roughly a month ago, these countries had a less than complete meeting of minds on the future of the region. TD quotes *Al-Monitor* on the conclusion: "At the end of the meeting, the Russian and Saudi sides agreed to continue talks, provided that the current meeting remained under wraps. This was before one of the two sides leaked it via the Russian press."

*Since we know all about this, it means no more talks, an implicit warning that the Chechens operating in proximity to Sochi may just become a loose cannon (with Saudi's blessing of course), and that about a month ago "**there is no escape from the military option, because it is the only currently available choice given that the political settlement ended in stalemate.**" Four weeks later, we are on the edge of all out war, which may involve not only the US and Europe, but most certainly Saudi Arabia and Russia which automatically means China as well. Or, as some may call it, the world.*

Russian leverage is aligned with inertia, so it can be exercised with some subtlety. The Saudis, on the other hand, are in an awkward spot: they either back down, or they have to make 'a splash'. Anyone

looking for upcoming trigger events knows where to pay attention.

(For graphic context, try this.)

August 28, 2013

Quote notes (#24)

Adam Garfinkle makes an obvious point beautifully:

… whatever the Administration has said about the purpose of an attack being to "degrade and deter" Syrian capabilities, but not to change the regime, everyone expects the attacks to be modest and brief, thus not to much affect the battlefield balance, and once ceased to stay ceased. That is because the Administration's reticence at being drawn into the bowels of Syrian madness is both well established and well justified. The attacks, then, will likely not degrade or deter anything really; they will be offered up only as a safety net to catch the falling reputation of the President as it drops toward the nether regions of strategic oblivion.

This has all been so vividly sign-posted it is getting hard to see how even a 'cosmetic' effect is going to work. How can an operation pre-advertized as an awkward spasm of embarrassment be realistically expected to restore honor and credibility?

Handle brims with sense on the topic.

August 30, 2013

Yesterday's News

"The missile strikes the White House is contemplating would advance Syria's dissolution," writes Steven A. Cook in the Washington Post.

What is this 'Syria' of which you speak?

Such senseless language should have been dismissed from the practical lexicon by now. It belongs strictly to history books.

Between the Mediterranean coast of the northern Levant and the Iranian border, the internationally-recognized state system exists only as a set of tokens in diplomatic games. It isn't coming back.

This article (and book) will be seen as astonishingly prescient soon, and deserves to be already.

September 1, 2013

Quote notes (#33)

Rough Triangles analysis from William Lind:

… we think of jihad as something waged by Islam against non-Muslims, but quite often it has been between one Islamic sect and

another. Now Islamists are once again declaring jihad on each other. In June the ***New York Times*** *reported on an influential Sunni cleric who "has issued a fatwa, or religious decree, calling on Muslims around the world to help Syrian rebels… and labeling Hezbollah and Iran" — both Shi'ite — "enemies of Islam 'more infidel than Jews and Christians.'" David Gardner's* ***Financial Times*** *piece tells of a "conclave of Sunni clerics meeting in Cairo [that] declared a jihad against what it called a 'declaration of war on Islam' by the 'Iranian regime, Hezbollah and its sectarian allies'."*

How should the West react to all this? With quiet rejoicing. Our strategic objective should be to get Islamists to expend their energies on each other rather than on us. An old aphorism says the problem with Balkans is that they produce more history than they can consume locally. Our goal should be to encourage the Muslim world to consume all its history — of which it will be producing a good deal — as locally as possible. Think of it as "farm to table" war.

All we should do, or can do, to obtain this objective is to stay out. We ought not meddle, no matter how subtly; if we do, inevitably, it will blow up in our faces. Just go home, stay home, bolt the doors (especially to refugees who will act out their jihads here) …

September 26, 2013

Buy/bye Petrodollar

The master jigsaw puzzle piece connecting US domestic and foreign policy together is the petrodollar. Federal debt production depends upon credibility in the US currency that is anchored by its privileged role in global hydrocarbons commerce. Knock out that privilege, and US dollar holdings become one speculative asset among others. The fiat house of cards begins to tumble (perhaps with shocking rapidity).

In this context, US monetary policy begins to look like a side-line of 'friendship' with the Saudis, which is dissolving into quick sand. Pepe Escobar at ATоL explores some of the possible consequences. (It's especially notable that the fracking revolution could accelerate a petrodollar crisis, rather than retarding it.) There's also a China angle, which is always fun.

Disconcertingly for almost everybody, in different ways, the awkward retraction of US power from the Middle Eastern wasps' nest tends inevitably to destabilize the global monetary regime. The more the Saudis feel jilted, the less their commitment to the petrodollar pact, but if this was ever a low-maintenance relationship, it certainly isn't anymore.

Bomb Iran or your currency bombs. — Things might not quite reduce to that yet, but it increasingly looks as if they will.

October 27, 2013

The Saudi Bomb

Richard Fernandez passes along a BBC report that Saudi Arabia is already a virtual nuclear power. In collaboration with Pakistan, the Kingdom has assembled a nuclear arsenal (complete with CSS-2 delivery systems), which is presently distributed according to diplomatic convenience, with the war-heads held in Pakistan. Assuming that this report is roughly accurate, the chain-reaction of nuclear dominoes pushing the proliferation through South Asia into the heart of the Middle East has been all but completed, with only superficial formalities yet to be concluded.

It's late, and I'm off to bed, so I'll simply repeat: It's late. Everything people care about is going to be side-lined by international events.

November 10, 2013

Time of the Ass-assins

Islam asks the important questions (via):

"My question is whether I am permitted to allow one of the mujahideen access to my anus, if my intentions are honorable, and the purpose is to train for Jihad by widening my anus."

The sheik praised Allah and said: "In principle, sodomy is forbidden. However, Jihad is more important. It is the pinnacle of

Islam. If sodomy is the only way to reach this pinnacle of Islam, then there is no harm in it.

Allahpundit estimates:

Odds that this is a prank played on the credulous host by some viewer, possibly the MEMRI guys themselves, who simply couldn't resist: 40 percent. Odds that it's a legit query, proof that the mujahedeen's willingness to sacrifice for jihad has taken on painful new dimensions: 40 percent. Odds that the guy posing the question is the world's dumbest would-be terrorist, whose "recruiter" is really, really eager to start "training" him: 20 percent.

December 11, 2013

Played

Has Obama Administration geostrategy been based upon a cunning (and secret) plan? Richard Fernandez makes the case that a covert American attempt to subvert radical Islam crested with the September 11, 2012, Benghazi fiasco. Employing a mix of infiltration, drone assassination (to clear promotion paths), and calculated regime sacrifices (Egypt, Syria), the objective was to reforge an international Jihad under covert US control. When the take-over plan went south, nothing could be publicly admitted. Cascading failure has continued in the shadows ever since, jutting into media

consciousness as a succession of disconnected — even inexplicable — foreign policy setbacks.

The curious thing about September 11, 2012 — the day of the Benghazhi attack — is that for some reason it marks the decline of the Obama presidency as clearly as a milepost. We are told by the papers that nothing much happened on that day. A riot in a far-away country. A few people killed. And yet … it may be coincidental, but from that day the administration's foreign policy seemed inexplicably hexed. The Arab Spring ground to a halt. The secretary of State "resigned." The CIA director was cast out in disgrace. Not long after, Obama had to withdraw his red line in Syria. Al-Qaeda, whose eulogy he had pronounced, appeared with disturbing force throughout Africa, South Asia and the Arabian Peninsula. Almost as if on cue, Russia made an unexpected return to the world stage, first in Syria, then in the Iranian nuclear negotiations.



Fernandez digs much deeper than Carney, but this is still worth adding.

May 14, 2014

The Islamic Vortex (Map)

Having seen this a few times now (most recently here, where it's described as a "five-year plan"), I decided I just had to have it.



FWIW I don't expect Vienna to have been absorbed into the renascent Caliphate by 2019.

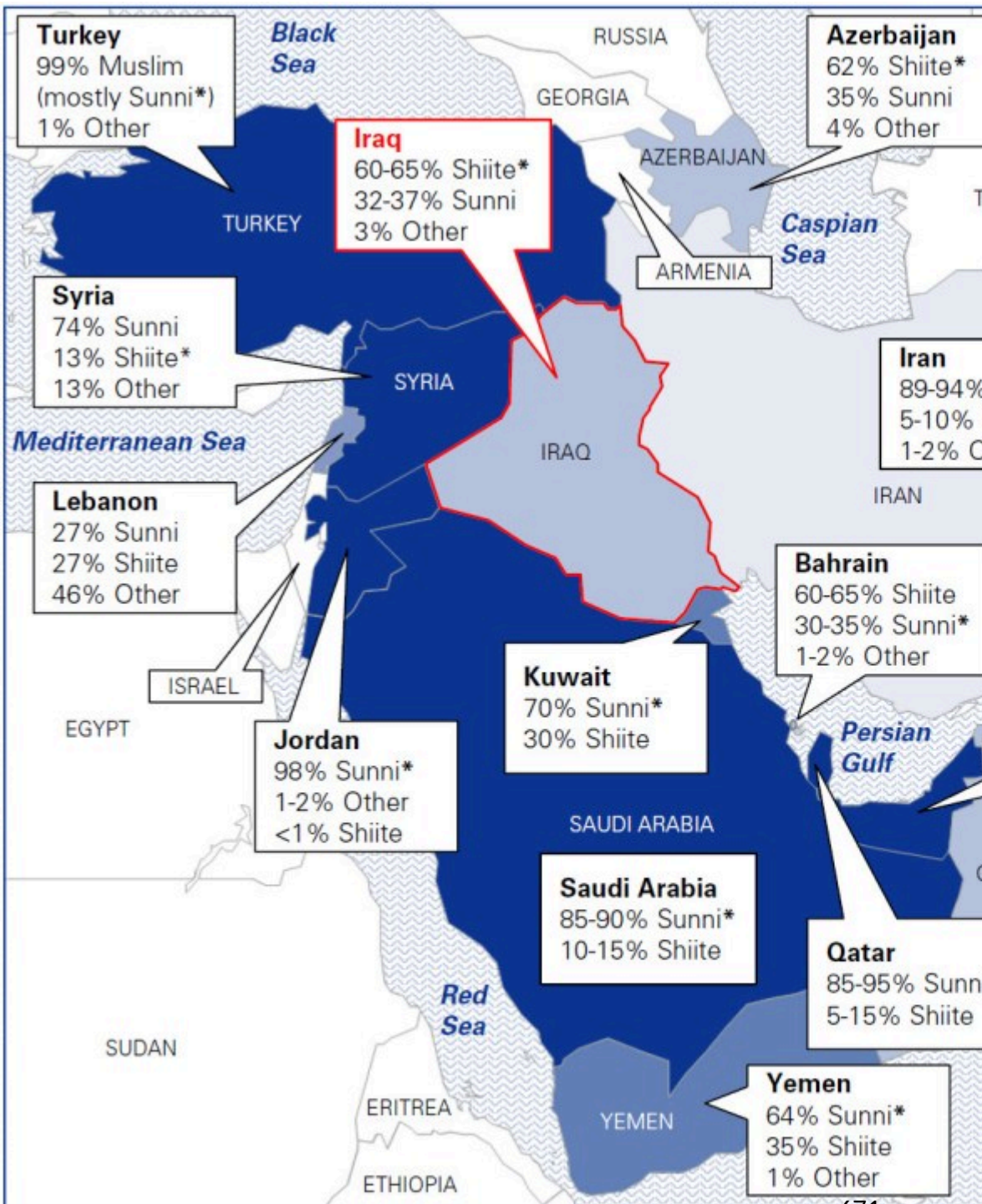
(I don't expect things to have calmed down, either.)

The Islamic Vortex series was not completed, so it needs re-visiting, but I think it's holding up quite well (parts 1, 2, 3, 3a, 3b, 4, 5).

July 12, 2014

The Islamic Vortex (Map-2)

This will be needed when we get back to the topic (eventually):



Balance of Sunnis and Shiites within th

July 24, 2014

The Islamic Vortex (Note-1)

An executive summary of Ali Khedery's open letter to President Obama: *Face it, ISIS is your ally bro*.

August 13, 2014

The Islamic Vortex (Note-2)

The claim that modern Sunni 'fundamentalism' (Salafism, Wahhabism) **is** the Islamic Reformation is well-established (this blog has grazed upon the background here). The persistence of this proposition attests to its significance, and is at least suggestive of credibility. It can reasonably be placed alongside the Moldbug Ultra-Calvinism Thesis (on the cladistic identity of 'secular' democratic progressivism) as a central religious-historical argument, of profound relevance to the cultural tendencies of our time.



A fairly recent post at *Patheos* by Philip Jenkins (via Henry Dampier) presents this proposition with remarkable force. Mustering its case in terms of *iconoclasm*, it integrates the phenomenon helpfully, in particular by emphasizing the essential unity of militant anti-idolatry and mass violence. Smashing idols is no mere intellectual or doctrinal position. Iconoclastic militancy is a social operation, which is not only instantiated within the history of revolutionary turmoil, but occupies a privileged position within it. The revolutionary — or ideologically-mobilized — mob is epitomized

by iconoclastic irruption, which foreshadows its potential for violent abstraction. Doctrinally-motivated vandalism, from the European Reformation, through the Chinese Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, to the ravages of our contemporary radical Islam, is the archetypal form of modern revolutionary (com)motion.

Philips remarks:

For present purposes, it is the Wahhabi tradition that has unleashed the savage destruction of shrines and holy places that has been so widely deplored in the past half-century or so. This includes the Taliban's destruction of the Buddhas in Afghanistan, the attempted eradication of the glorious shrines and libraries of Timbuktu, and the annihilation of most of the ancient shrines and tombs around Mecca itself. Some Egyptian Islamists fantasize about eradicating all the ruins of pagan ancient Egypt, including the Pyramids themselves.

Modern Westerners are rightly appalled by such acts as desecrations of humanity's cultural heritage. But such outrage demonstrates a near-total lack of awareness of the West's own history. Nothing that the Islamists have done in this regard would cause the sixteenth century Protestant Reformers to lose a moment's sleep. They would probably have asked to borrow hammers and axes so they could join in.

I am sometimes bemused to hear Western commentators call for contemporary Islam to experience a "Reformation," by which they

mean an opening to freedom and toleration. That is of course an extremely distorted view of Christianity's own Reformation. Arguably, Islam has been going through its own Reformation for a century or so, which is exemplified by the Wahhabis and Salafists. That's the problem.

August 29, 2014

The Islamic Vortex (Note-3)

Asabiyyah is an Arabic word for a reason. Unlike many of my allies on the extreme right, I see no point at all in other cultures attempting to emulate it. The idea of a contemporary Western *asabiyyah* is roughly as probable as the emergence of Arabic libertarian capitalism. In any case, ISIS has it now, which means they have to keep fighting, and will probably keep winning. *Asabiyyah* is useless for anything but war, and it dissolves into dust with peace. The only glories Islam will ever know going forward will be found on the battlefield, and it is fully aware of the fact.

Baghdad will almost certainly have fallen by the end of the year, or early next. The Caliphate will then be reborn, in an incarnation far more ferocious than the last. Its existence will coincide with a war, extending far beyond Mesopotamia and the Levant, at least through the Middle East, into the Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent,

across the Maghreb, and deep into Africa. If the Turks are not terrified about what is coming, they have no understanding of the situation. This is what the global momentum behind militant 'Islamism' across recent decades has been about. Realistically, it's unstoppable.

Eventually, it will bleed out, and then Islam will have done the last thing of which it is capable. No less than tens of millions will be dead.

Other, industrially-competent and technologically-sophisticated civilizations have no cause for existential panic, although mega-terrorist attacks could hurt them. Any efforts they make to pacify the Caliphate-war will be futile, at best. It is a piece of fate now. The future will have to be built around it.

Patrick Poole writes (at the link above, repeated here):

The US Embassy in Baghdad is the largest embassy on the planet. And after Obama sent 350 more U.S. military personnel to guard the U.S. Embassy last month, there are now more than 1,100 US service members in Baghdad protecting the embassy and the airport. That doesn't include embassy personnel, American aid workers, and reporters also in Baghdad. ISIS doesn't have to capture the airport to prevent flights from taking off there (remember Hamas rockets from Gaza prompting the temporary closure of Israel's Ben Gurion Airport this past summer). If flights can't get out of Baghdad, how will the State Department and Pentagon evacuate U.S. personnel? An image like the last helicopter out of Saigon would be of considerable

propaganda value to ISIS and other jihadist groups. Former CNN reporter Peter Arnett, who witnessed the fall of Saigon in April 1975, raised this possibility back in June. It's not like the U.S. has prestige to spare internationally, and the fall of Baghdad will mark the beginning of the end of American influence in the Middle East, much like the case in Southe[a]st Asia in 1975.

When the United States pulled back from anti-communist COIN in 1973, Marxism-Leninism was left to consume itself in its own insanity. This is the situation that was reached in relation to Islam by the election of the Obama administration in 2008. Even were it desirable, it is sheer delusion to imagine that the West — i.e. America — has the moral energy (or *asabiyyah*) to pursue any other course. The consummation of Jihad is going to happen. The more rapidly the catastrophe develops, the sooner it will be done.

ADDED: "However many of them are killed, the ones who survive will keep pushing on into Kobani and on toward the Baghdad airport feeling as alive as if they had just plunged into the river of history itself. And they will keep telling themselves that this river flows with the blood of the non-believers."

ADDED: The War Nerd has a very different prognosis.

ADDED: So how is ISIS doing?

October 15, 2014

The Islamic Vortex (Note-3a)

This blog has doubtless generated rafts of unreliable predictions. The one that has been nagging, however — ever since Scott Alexander called me out on it in the comment thread there — was advanced in the most recent sub-episode of this series. Quote: "Baghdad will almost certainly have fallen by the end of the year, or early next." Even if the time horizon for this event is stretched out to the end of March 2015, I have very low confidence in it being realized. The analysis upon which it was based was crucially flawed. I'm getting my crow-eating in early (and even if — by some improbably twist of fortune — ISIS is in control of Baghdad by late March next year, it won't be any kind of vindication for the narrative I was previously spinning.)

Where did I go wrong (in my own eyes)? Fundamentally, by hugely over-estimating the intelligence of ISIS. The collapse of this inflated opinion is captured by a single word: Kurds.

Just a few months ago, ISIS enjoyed a strategic situation of extraordinary potential. It represented the most militant — and thus authentic — strain of Arab Sunni Jihad, ensuring exceptional morale, flows of volunteers from across the Sunni Muslim world, and funding from the gulf oil-states, based upon impregnable legitimacy. It was able to recruit freely from the only constituency within Iraq with any military competence — the embittered remnants of Saddam's

armed forces, recycled through the insurgency against the American occupation, and then profoundly alienated by the sectarian politics of the new Shia regime. It was also able to draw upon a large, fanatically motivated, Syrian Sunni population, brutalized and hardened by the war against the (Alawite, or quasi-Shia) Assad regime in that country. Both enemy states were radically anathematized throughout the Sunni world, deeply demoralized, incompetent, and patently incapable of asserting their authority throughout their respective countries. In consequence, a re-integrated insurgent Sunni Mesopotamia had arisen, with such historical momentum that it served as a concrete source of inspiration for energetic holy war, and a natural base for the eschatalogically-promised reborn Caliphate.

The wider environment was more complicated, but also highly encouraging. The Jihadi legitimacy of ISIS made opposition from the Sunni Arab states to the south (Jordan, Saudi Arabia) unthinkable. That left four major sources of substantial hostile intervention: Israel, the United States, Turkey, and Iran. Taking these in turn:

(1) Israel, by all game-theoretic sanity, was a *de facto* ally. Perhaps it is. It had no intelligible motive for intervention, and were it to do so the legitimacy of ISIS would be immediately elevated to stratospheric levels. Baghdad or Damascus regimes dependent upon Israeli support would be obviously politically unsustainable. (Israeli war against ISIS puts it in objective collaboration with Iran — which

isn't going to happen.)

(2) The USA was burnt out, directionless, strategically-conflicted to the point of psychosis, and politically-toxic to near-Israeli levels. Relevant at this point only as a Jihadi recruiting tool.

(3) As a NATO member, Turkey completes the troika of Westernized states, whose intervention would naturally tend to reinforce a clash-of-civilizations escalation, to the extreme medium-term advantage of ISIS. While a Sunni state, it is not Arab, and would quickly generate extraordinary ethnic animosity. With Turks having lost the previous Caliphate, there is no imaginable circumstances in which the Sunni Muslim world would entertain the prospect of them leading — or even seriously interfering with — the next one. Turkish intervention might no doubt slow things down, but it could not conceivably stabilize the situation in Mesopotamia. The effect would be to rapidly expand the conflict into Turkey itself, and even into Turkic Central Asia. There is no reason to think Turkish popular opinion would support a strategically pointless, bloody war in the south. (We will get to the critical Kurdish factor in a moment.)

(4) From a strictly military point of view, Iran possesses a mixture of capability and commitment that makes it a uniquely formidable opponent, but here the political calculus is also at its starkest. From the moment it intervenes, the Sunni-Shia sectarian character of the war is consolidated, and generalized, into a truly global, climactic struggle between the two dominant branches of the Muslim faith.

From a local (Mesopotamian) uprising, ISIS's war would be transformed immediately into an apocalyptic religious event, setting the world to the torch. Jihadi recruitment and funding would become a worldwide deluge. For the Iranians, there is no imaginable end-point to this, short of an *absolute resolution* at the level of eschatology, or revolutionary world-transformation. ISIS has the base-brain juice for that, does Teheran?

… but then we get to the Kurds. *Of course* ISIS should have courted them, anything else is utter madness. While not Arabs, they're Sunni. They already hate the Baghdad regime, and long for secession. They're more than willing to be persuaded to fight Turks, Persians, or (Alawite) Syrians, if the need arises. Played with even a minimum of intelligence, the Kurds would have provided a wedge to break Iraq apart definitively, distract the (Baghdad) regime, strip it of oil revenues, keep the Turks and Iranians nervous, and even provide various kinds of active support as they saw their long-held dreams of an independent Kurdistan arising and beckoning like a tantalizing jinn at the edge of the new Jihadi Caliphate. It's the ultimate no-brainer.

Instead, ISIS threw everything away fighting the Kurds. It's an organization of idiots, and a whole bunch of its fighters are now pointlessly dead idiots. No Baghdad-by-early-2015 for you losers. I'm embarrassed to have been drawn out of my dismissive contempt.

December 3, 2014

The Islamic Vortex (Note-4)

So the Islamic State has executed their captive Jordanian pilot, Lt Moaz al-Kasasbehby, by *burning him alive*. The event was artfully videotaped and maximally publicized. It was an act undertaken with an extraordinary degree of intent.



The 'organization' beheaded Japanese journalist Kenji Goto a few days previously. It had already beheaded another Japanese hostage, Haruna Yukawa, a week before.

The deliberate combination of indiscriminate and exorbitant violence is remarkable. It looks like a purposeful escalation beyond terror, aimed calmly at the entire world.

If there's anyone who hasn't watched *Apocalypse Now* recently, this might be the time to correct that. A reminder:

Kurtz: I've seen horrors … horrors that you've seen. But you have

no right to call me a murderer. You have a right to kill me. You have a right to do that … but you have no right to judge me. It's impossible for words to describe what is necessary to those who do not know what horror means. Horror … Horror has a face … and you must make a friend of horror. Horror and moral terror are your friends. If they are not, then they are enemies to be feared. They are truly enemies! I remember when I was with Special Forces … seems a thousand centuries ago. We went into a camp to inoculate some children. We left the camp after we had inoculated the children for polio, and this old man came running after us and he was crying. He couldn't see. We went back there, and they had come and hacked off every inoculated arm. There they were in a pile. A pile of little arms. And I remember … I … I … I cried, I wept like some grandmother. I wanted to tear my teeth out; I didn't know what I wanted to do! And I want to remember it. I never want to forget it … I never want to forget. And then I realized … like I was shot … like I was shot with a diamond … a diamond bullet right through my forehead. And I thought, my God … the genius of that! The genius! The will to do that! Perfect, genuine, complete, crystalline, pure. And then I realized they were stronger than we, because they could stand that these were not monsters, these were men … trained cadres. These men who fought with their hearts, who had families, who had children, who were filled with love … but they had the strength … the strength … to do that. If I had ten divisions of those men, our troubles here would be over very quickly.

You have to have men who are moral … and at the same time who are able to utilize their primordial instincts to kill without feeling … without passion … without judgment … without judgment! Because it's judgment that defeats us.

ADDED: "I love the smell of napalm in the morning …"

February 4, 2015

Coming Soon

The trailer for the ISIS jihad-porn blockbuster *Flames of War* is quite something.

The *Rubin Report*-embedded version. "They're clearly trying to bring us into a fight …"

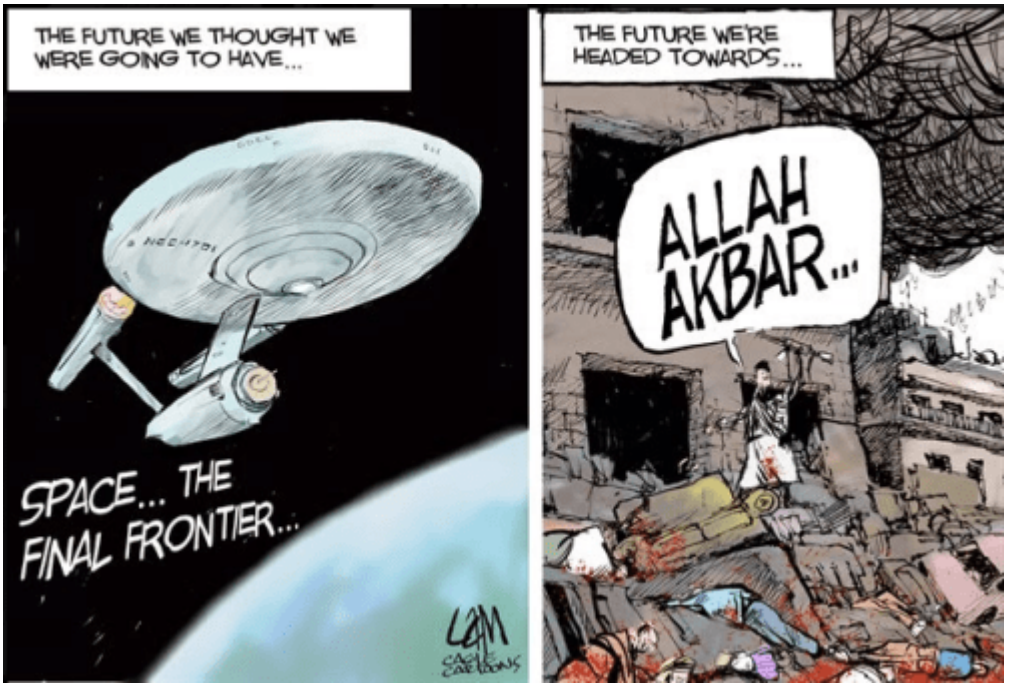
ADDED: A little background from the *International Business Times*:

The new video, titled "Flames of War," was released late Tuesday by the Al Hayat Media Center, which, according to the Washington-based Middle East Media Research Institute, was established in May as the media arm of the Islamic State. […] The 52-second-long video, which, at first glance, seems more like a video-game trailer, is replete with slow-motion effects and high-definition images. It shows exploding tanks and Islamic State militants apparently preparing to execute captives before the words "Flames of War" flash on the

screen, followed by the words, "Fighting has just begun." And, before the screen fades to black, the video ends with the words, "Coming Soon."

September 18, 2014

Progress (III)



(Via.)

January 21, 2015

Moors Law

Derbyshire cited some statistics from this exponential demographic calamity article, which are truly remarkable:

Figures from the 2011 census show that the ***Muslim population in the UK has substantially risen between 2001 and 2011 from 1.5 million to almost 3 million****. This now takes the proportion of Muslims from 2% of the population to 5%. In some towns, Muslims make up almost 50% of the population, and in large cities like London and Manchester they make up around 14% of the population. But why has the number of Muslims risen so much and what are the implications? […] There are several reasons why the number of Muslims has doubled. […] … By the next census Muslims may even double again and make up 10% of the population. These statistics encourage us to think more carefully about the provisions made for British Muslims and the ways in which they are an integral part of the nation.* [Emphasis in original.]

(It 'encourages' me to think of different things entirely.)

March 24, 2015

Things Fall Apart

Pax Americana is easy to laugh at, but so — no doubt — was *Pax*

Britannica and even *Pax Romana*. Imperial order isn't a tidy or pretty business. It was, however, something, and it's very rapidly ceasing to be.

Powerful nonlinear dynamics are triggered at certain critical points of systemic transformation. The positive network effects that induced powers great and small to buy into a credible world order switch into reverse, with every defection making the value of continued adherence less convincing to everyone else. In Europe and East Asia the defection dominoes have yet to cascade, and the slow work of fundamental subversion proceeds at a misleadingly languid pace. In the Middle East, in sharp contrast, little remains of the preferred American *status quo* beyond a ghastly husk. It's hard to see any way back.

America's traditional regional lynch-pin allies — Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey — are united (only) in alienation. The most important structural reason for this, beyond the inexorable decline of American global management capability, and coherent options for intervention, rumbles beneath the surface of this WSJ article. Everything the US is still trying to accomplish in the region is pushing it into deeper complicity with the Teheran regime — whether on the specific issue of the Iranian nuclear program, operations against ISIS, or involvement in Yemen — and this makes it an objective antagonist of the Sunni establishment. A deep Sunni reformation — in the most blood-drenched sense of the word — is unfolding in the region, and

the US is simply incapable of aligning with it. Yet as conflict escalates, and polarization intensifies, even the most conservative Sunni players are driven into solidarity with revolutionary Jihadi radicalism. If an Iranian-orchestrated campaign, coordinated with Iraq's Maliki regime*, Assad, and the Kurds, succeeds in crushing the ISIS Islamic State, it is a near certainty that the major Sunni powers will commit to its resurrection, or displacement, rather than concede to the triumph of a new Shia order in Mesopotamia. … Then Yemen happened.

A new Middle Eastern war scarcely raises an eyebrow outside the region today. The Islamic Vortex has passed the point of ignition, and the old order is beyond salvage. Among Western observers, impotence translates immediately into apathy, even when they notice a deluge of blood de-pinkering the world. *The Battle for Saudi Arabia Begins*, writes Fernandez — and there's nothing at all that anybody can do about it.

* Only very roughly speaking (see comments).

ADDED: I should have guessed there was already a Things Fall Apart (I) here. Apologies for any subsequent confusion. (WordPress is entirely relaxed about non-unique post titles, but I'm going to try not to be.)

ADDED: *Pax Americana* is over.

ADDED: David Rothkopf combining some valuable analysis with disastrously misconceived recommendations.

March 27, 2015

Join the Queue



Context.

Everyone in my twitter bubble seems impressed by the aesthetics, but the smart money is on ClarkHat getting to the finish line first:

> Every minute that Washington DC does not burn with

> nuclear fire is a minute during which I am only half alive.
> — ClarkHat (@ClarkHat) April 13, 2015

April 13, 2015

Iconoclasm

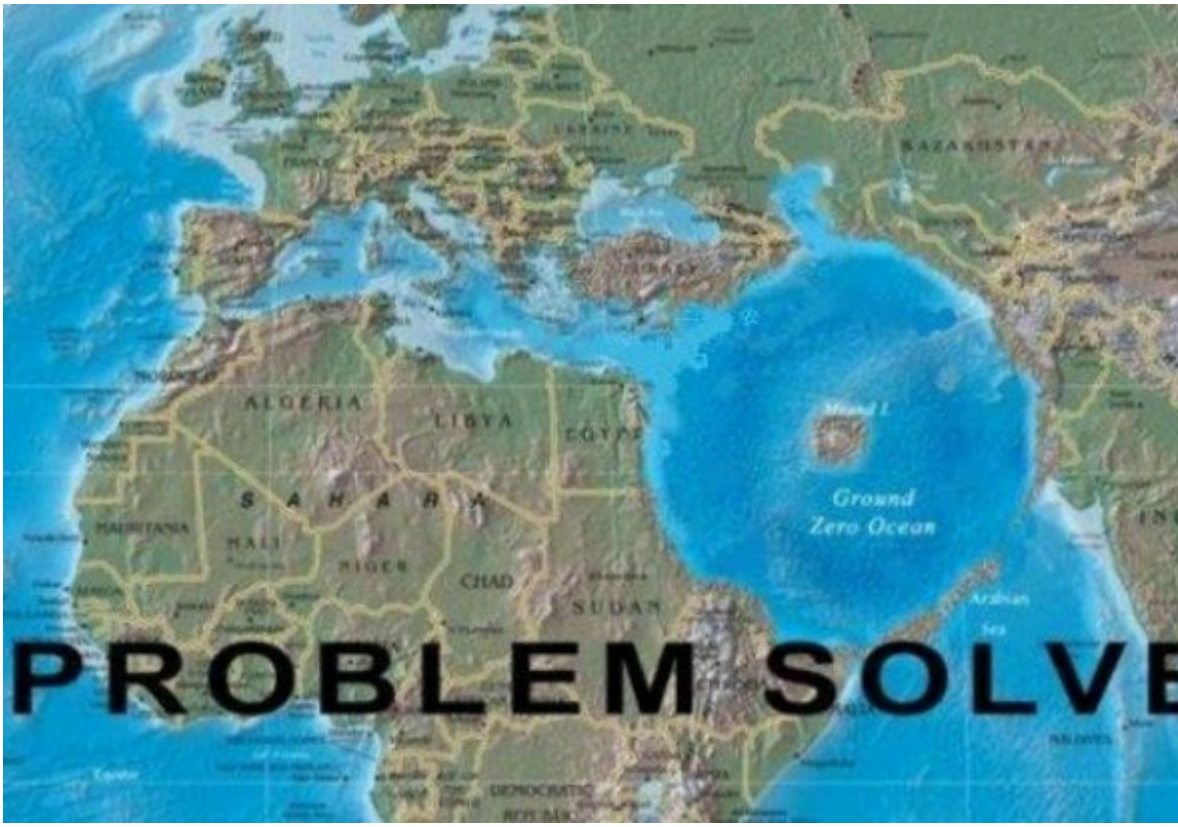
There goes Nimrud.

"The final images on the video show the final, total destruction of one of the world's most important archaeological sites."

April 16, 2015

Geo-Engineering

This looks like a plan:



October 14, 2015

ISIS on Paris

The 'Daesh'* statement on the attack (in full):

In the name of Allah, the all merciful, the very merciful Allah the great said: and they thought in truth that their fortresses would defend them against Allah. But Allah came to them from where they

weren't expecting it and launched a terror in their hearts. They were demolishing their gomes with their own hands as well as from the hands of believers. Take a lesson oh you who are wise. Sourat 59, verse 2. […] In a blessed attack which Allah facilitated the causes, a group of believers from the soldiers of the caliphate to whom Allah has given strength and glory targeted the capital of abomination and perversion, the one who lifts the banner of the cross in Europe, Paris. […] A group divorced from this life taking a step toward their enemy, looking for death in Allah's path, rescuing its religion, its Prophet and its allies and wanting to humiliate its enemies. They were true to Allah and we consider them as such. Allah acquired from their hands and through the fear in the hearts of those encountered on their own land. […] Eight brothers carrying explosive belts and assault rifles took for target places that were carefully chosen in the heart of the capital, in the French stadium during a game between two countries, France and Germany, which the imbecile of France [President Hollande] was present, the Bataclan, where hundreds were present in a party of perversion as well as other targets in the 10th, 11th anf 18th districts simultaneously. Paris is shaking in their shoes and its streets have become very narrow, the death count of the attack is a minimum of 200 and even more injured by the will of Allah. […] Allah facilitated our brothers and gave them what they hoped for, (martyrdom), they activated their explosive belts in the middle of the infidels after they ran out of ammunition. May Allah welcome them

among the martyrs and allow us to meet them. And France and those who follow its way must know that there are still principle targets left for the Islamic State and that they [France] will continue to smell death for having taken the lead in the crusade [in Syria] after having insulted our Prophet, after they've flaunted their fight against Islam in France, and beaten our Muslim brothers in Caliphate land with their planes that were useless in the smelly streets of Paris. This attack is only the beginning of the storm and a warning for those who want to ponder and learn a lesson. […] Allah is great, the strength belongs to Allah and His messenger and believers, but the hypocrites do not know it. Sourat 63, verse 8.

(Source, with French original.)

* Conflicted here on whether to switch over to that name. Any suggestions?

November 14, 2015

The Management of Savagery

Is this strategic guide to Jihad by Abu Bakr Naji the equivalent of Mao Zedong's *On Guerrilla Warfare* (link) for our time?

November 16, 2015

Peak Jacobinism

It's an over-used formula, but this time it really does seem appropriate. If this analysis can be trusted — and it looks at least superficially plausible — ISIS has broken the soul of evangelical democratization. Once the Cathedral's universalistic faith has been defeated ("the freedom agenda in the Muslim world is dead"), how long can it be before the gathering ebb tide tears apart its internal ideological structure? "This is something only for us" requires an 'us' — and that acknowledgement marks the cresting of a crisis that has been centuries — if not millennia — in the making.

Syria represents the culmination of this trend. The moderate rebels of 2011 stood no chance of survival against the hard liners who managed to rapidly mobilize foreign fighters and take over the majority of the insurgency. The result is that, post-Paris, Western capitals will be skeptical of regime change of any sort. It will be clear that when intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign (albeit repressive) states becomes a vehicle for democratic change, that vehicle will probably be hijacked by radical Islamists, and will arrive at a substantially worse political destination than intended.
The post-Paris war on terror will affirm the West's commitment to fighting radical Islamic terrorism, but, in the process, it will reject the idiom of revolutionary, moralizing democratic change inherited from President Bush. Syria was the end of the line for that approach.

The revolution has come right back around to Hobbes, and thus to the systematically-cynical origin of the modern state system, the author (Emile Simpson) argues. What a long strange trip it's been.

(Via.)

ADDED: "… jihadis have come to inhabit a different moral universe …" — Multiversalism it is, then.

November 23, 2015

The Islamic Vortex (Note-5)

Michael Klare takes a look at the Islamic State logistics train (bullish for US defense stocks):

In the years after invading Iraq and disbanding Saddam Hussein's military, the U.S. sunk about $25 billion into "standing up" a new Iraqi army. By June 2014, however, that army, filled with at least 50,000 "ghost soldiers," was only standing in the imaginations of its generals and perhaps Washington. When relatively small numbers of Islamic State (IS) militants swept into northern Iraq, it collapsed, abandoning four cities — including Mosul, the country's second largest — and leaving behind enormous stores of U.S. weaponry, ranging from tanks and Humvees to artillery and rifles. In essence, the U.S. was now standing up its future enemy in a style to which it was unaccustomed and, unlike the imploded Iraqi military, the forces of

the Islamic State proved quite capable of using that weaponry without a foreign trainer or adviser in sight.
In response, the Obama administration dispatched thousands of new advisers and trainers and began shipping in piles of new weaponry to re-equip the Iraqi army. It also filled Iraqi skies with U.S. planes armed with their own munitions to destroy, among other things, some of that captured U.S. weaponry. Then it set to work standing up a smaller version of the Iraqi army. Now, skip nearly a year ahead and on a somewhat lesser scale the whole process has just happened again. Less than two weeks ago, Islamic State militants took Ramadi, the capital of Anbar Province. Iraqi army units, including the elite American-trained Golden Division, broke and fled, leaving behind — you'll undoubtedly be shocked to hear — yet another huge cache of weaponry and equipment, including tanks, more than 100 Humvees and other vehicles, artillery, and so on.

The Obama administration reacted in a thoroughly novel way: it immediately began shipping in new stocks of weaponry, starting with 1,000 antitank weapons, so that the reconstituted Iraqi military could take out future "massive suicide vehicle bombs" (some of which, assumedly, will be those captured vehicles from Ramadi). Meanwhile, American planes began roaming the skies over that city, trying to destroy some of the equipment IS militants had captured.
Notice anything repetitive in all this — other than another a bonanza for U.S. weapons makers? Logically, it would prove less expensive for

the Obama administration to simply arm the Islamic State directly before sending in the air strikes.

June 2, 2015

The Islamic Vortex (Note-6)

Why (sane) non-Muslims hate Islam, made simple:

So, Islam was established as a polygynous system, meaning it created a wife shortage among believers. But raiding non-believers who do not submit to Muslim rule was sanctified and taking their women for your sexual use was also sanctified. So, sexual frustration generated by ***Sharia*** *marriage rules was then explicitly directed outwards towards the non-believers who have not submitted to Muslim rule. The* ***ghazis*** *raiding across the frontier into "the lands of unbelief" which were such a feature of the borders of Islam for over a millennia represented Islam sanctifying (and so intensifying) patterns of typical of polygyny; polygyny that it also sanctified.*

All dithering aside, it's an inter-culturally aggressive rape machine, by essence.

ADDED: "The problem, ultimately, is this …"

ADDED:

I remember going the mosque and my friends talking about

> how they wanted to go fight #Jihad so they could have sex with captured #slaves.
>
> — Sohail Ahmed (@SohailPakBrit) December 4, 2015

December 3, 2015

The Islamic Vortex (Note-7)

Robin Wright (in *The New Yorker*) expresses the frustrations of a modern Jacobin about as straightforwardly as one could hope:

What seems to have been lost in the past five years is American strategic support for the Arab Spring's aspirations — and for the innumerable other Bouazizis still struggling for rights and justice and jobs. One of Obama's boldest decisions, in 2011, was to abandon longstanding U.S. support for Arab despots, personified in President Hosni Mubarak, who ruled Egypt ruthlessly for thirty years. For the first time, Washington opted for the unknowns of potential democracy over the guarantees of autocratic stability in the Arab world.

A speaker for HRW is even clearer about the ideological lineage at stake (and it isn't anything coming out of the Middle East):

Each local crisis has been complicated by regional players who have intervened to block a new Arab order. "It's no longer about

what Egyptians want. Or what the Syrian people want," Whitson, of Human Rights Watch, explained. "It's so much broader and wider — and more complicated than during the French Revolution. Now a revolutionary doesn't just fight the bureaucrats in the capital but bureaucrats thousands of miles away. There are so many horses in the game who have the resources and power to dictate or sway the outcome. It's a much more difficult battle." […] Speaking of the idealistic protesters of five years ago, Whitson said, "Sometimes it makes you wonder if they ever had a chance." Yet she remains sanguine about the future. "The fight is not over," she told me. "Because it can't be over. The aspirations that inspired the spark over a seven-dollar bribe are universal, and we know it. As long as governments deny people basic justice and dignity, people will rise up."

Yes, "rise up" [*facepalm*]. If there's any distinction at all between (subjective) 'caring' and (objective) raw evil it's getting ever harder to discern. The bleeding-out of universalistic Cathedral evangelism in the Middle East has been an event of far greater consequence than anyone is yet able to acknowledge.

December 17, 2015

The Islamic Vortex (Note-8)

Yuletide comedy supplement:

The four core elements of Obama's Syria policy remain intact today: an insistence that Assad must go; that no anti-IS coalition with Russia is possible; that Turkey is a steadfast ally in the war against terrorism; and that there really are significant moderate opposition forces for the US to support.

(The entire essay is a valuable American Proxy Civil-War primer.)

December 23, 2015

The Islamic Vortex (Note-9)

Fernandez:

One man who understood the power of "Salafi jihadism" was Saddam Hussein, who according to Kyle Orton, writing in the New York Times, understood long before Obama that secular socialism was no match for a full-bore jihadism which had endured the test of centuries. "The Arab nationalist Baath Party, which seized power in 1968 in a coup in which Mr. Hussein played a key role, had a firmly secular outlook. This held through the 1970s, even as religiosity rose among the Iraqi people. But soon after Mr. Hussein invaded Iran in 1980, it began to change."

To compensate for his shortcomings in governance, Saddam covered himself with the Koran. He also tried what Obama later attempted, an alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood, with disastrous results. Rather than beating Islam, the Baath began to be absorbed by it. "In 1986, however, the Pan-Arab Command, the Baath Party's top ideological institution, formally reoriented Iraq's foreign policy toward an alliance with Islamists. This was the first clear deviation from secular Baathism."

The causal pathways in this area are easily obscured by ideological preferences.

ADDED: Throwing this in to store the link. (Some topic-bridging necessary.)

December 26, 2015

The Islamic Vortex (Note-10)

According to the geo-economic logic of the dying *status quo*, the Islamic Vortex supported oil prices by injecting menace into the supply chain. Peaks of turbulence were associated with oil shocks. 'Middle East peace initiatives' (or more drastic interventions) were so deeply entwined with oil supply security imperatives as to be scarcely distinguishable.

Not anymore:

Many energy analysts became convinced that Doha would prove the decisive moment when Riyadh … would agree to a formula allowing Iran some [production] increase before a freeze. … But then something happened. According to people familiar with the sequence of events, Saudi Arabia's Deputy Crown Prince and key oil strategist, Mohammed bin Salman, called the Saudi delegation in Doha at 3:00 a.m. on April 17th and instructed them to spurn a deal that provided leeway of any sort for Iran. When the Iranians — who chose not to attend the meeting — signaled that they had no intention of freezing their output to satisfy their rivals, the Saudis rejected the draft agreement it had helped negotiate and the assembly ended in disarray. […] … Most analysts have since suggested that the Saudi royals simply considered punishing Iran more important than raising oil prices. No matter the cost to them, in other words, they could not bring themselves to help Iran pursue its geopolitical objectives, including giving yet more support to Shiite forces in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon. Already feeling pressured by Tehran and ever less confident of Washington's support, they were ready to use any means available to weaken the Iranians, whatever the danger to themselves.

With 'Peak oil *demand*' in prospect, and a brutal zero-sum struggle beginning for shares in a market tending to secular shrinkage, the deepening Sunni-Shia has become an engine of systematic oil price suppression. According to plausible Saudi

calculations, the Iranian enemy will simply use oil revenues to pursue their geopolitical objectives more competently than the Saudis can themselves. A higher oil price, therefore, is comparatively advantageous to the Shia bloc (at least in the eyes of the Saudis, whose perceptions in this regard uniquely matter, due to their status as sole swing-producer). Any rise in revenues is overwhelmed by the quantity of additional military challenge it brings with it. This holds true *whatever the level of social stress a low price inflicts on the Sunni side*.

It's quite a box the Saudis find themselves in. There's no way out of it that doesn't require winning a religious war.

April 30, 2016

The Islamic Vortex (Note-11)

Could the escalating Sunni-Shia War (intensified by the fracking revolution) take out Saudi Arabia?

(Cold Western indifference would be nice.)

October 22, 2016

The Islamic Vortex (Note-12)

Everything is proceeding as foreseen.

"They say all Sunnis are Daesh, but it isn't true," said former truck driver Jassem Nouri, 50. Nouri has spent the past two years living on a building site in the northeast of Salahuddin province; his home, in the Sunni village of Salman Beg, is just six miles away, but the Shiite militias that ejected the Islamic State from the area over two years ago have refused to allow any of the residents to return. Last year, his two sons, former university students, were detained by masked men in unmarked uniforms and accused of working with the Islamic State. Nouri insists that they are innocent, but he has not been able to secure their release. […] "The one thing that is breaking my heart is that my sons are in jail and I can't prove their innocence," he said. "If this government doesn't change, there will never be security and stability in Iraq, just an endless blind revenge."

No one has the slightest (realistic) idea what equilibrium would even look like. The Sunni-Shia war has no end short of utter exhaustion. For everyone else, staying mostly out of it — and *keeping it out* — has to be the basic principle of strategic wisdom.

ADDED: From *The Economist* — "Horrifyingly, although home to only 5% of the world's population, in 2014 the Arab world accounted for 45% of the world's terrorism, 68% of its battle-related deaths, 47% of its internally displaced and 58% of its refugees."

November 28, 2016

Quote note (#260)

Dalrymple on visions of the Apocalypse:

Oceans of ink have been spilt on the attempt to estimate the true extent of the threat of Islam to the West, and the attempts range from the frankly paranoid to the most supinely complacent. For myself, I veer constantly between the two, hardly pausing in between. In the last analysis, the West has all the cards, intellectual and military; but if it refuses ever to play them, they are of no account.

If Islam destroys the West, it will only be in the role of a suicide weapon, deployed by the West against itself. The basis of the Apocalyptic case is that the West has been taught, very successfully, that it does not *deserve* continued existence. ("Better dead than rude" is John Derbyshire's formulation.)

Islam is the Hell the West damns itself to, for its sins.

June 22, 2016

Twitter cuts (#94)

> What if I told you in 2001 that in 15 years the US would be really angry about Russia bombing our allies, Al Qaeda.
>
> — Michael B Dougherty (@michaelbd) October 12, 2016

It's a clear sign of how seriously Radical Islam is taken by the foreign policy establishments of civilized states. Roughly, it's treated as a biological weapon, to be used against *real* adversaries (you know, those who are not mere *hill people*). That's not going to change much anytime soon, however much one might want it to.

October 14, 2016

Twitter cuts (#123)

> What's driving Right-wing populism? https://t.co/Z31ppXaB0n pic.twitter.com/bIlhkkSotF
>
> — Ed West (@edwest) March 16, 2017

This is not — of course — conclusive. It would be a stretch to say that it isn't suggestive. As far as practical politics are concerned, current leftist priorities look strikingly self-contradicting. Islamization or popular sovereignty — choose one (or less).

The essay at the attached link recommends re-education as a remedy, in an age when the dominant organs of opinion formation have collapsed into culture war and unprecedented illegitmacy. Good luck with that.

ADDED: On point.

March 16, 2017

SECTION D - IMMIGRATION

Quote note (#132)

WRM on the politics of amnesty by executive order:

For many liberal Democrats (as well as for some of their Republican opponents) two key beliefs about immigration shape their political strategies. The first is that Latinos are the new blacks: a permanent racial minority or subgroup in the American political system that will always feel separate from the country's white population and, like African-Americans, will vote Democratic. On this assumption, the Democratic approach to Hispanic Americans should be clear: the more the merrier. That is a particularly popular view on the more leftish side of the Democratic coalition, where there's a deep and instinctive fear and loathing of Jacksonian America (those "bitterly clinging" to their guns, their Bibles, and their individualistic economic and social beliefs). The great shining hope of the American left is that a demographic transition through immigration and birthrates will finally make all those tiresome white people largely irrelevant in a new, post-American America that will

forget all that exceptionalism nonsense and ditch "Anglo-Saxon" cultural and economic ideas ranging from evangelical religion to libertarian social theory.

If conventional wisdom on the subject is this stark — and Mead is a good weather-vane for that — then Obama might as well put on the **Kill Whitey** T-shirt, because he's clearly not fooling anybody. (It's also worth explicitly noting, for the anti-market trads out there, that your besieged cultural norms and *laissez-faire* capitalism are on the same radical leftist death list, whether you appreciate the company or not.)

November 24, 2014

Discrimination II

It would be hard to find a clearer illustration of the topic than this article (written from the vehemently discrimination-negative left). The stakes are so clear that detailed commentary is entirely otiose. Some snippets:

The contrast was stark. One group of South Asians had become objects of fear and derision and targets of immigration enforcement and extra-legal violence. Another group of South Asians was being heralded for their social, economic, and cultural contributions to the United States. … the complexities that lay beneath the surface of "South Asian" identity were flattened into a powerful binary; South

Asian Americans were either model minorities or national threats. … But this was not merely a post–9/11 phenomenon. In fact, the division between the feared and the desired, the denigrated and the celebrated, has been a defining feature of South Asian racialization in the United States for over one hundred years. … for decades, federal immigration laws and popular culture have worked together to make these distinctions, to distinguish desirable from undesirable South Asians. … Between 1904 and 1917 … xenophobia and Indophilia were not simply contradictory attitudes that played out in two separate social spheres — that is, South Asians were not simply denigrated in political debates over immigration restriction while they were simultaneously celebrated in popular culture. Instead, each sphere generated its own set of distinctions between who was desirable and who was not, and each set of distinctions reinforced the other. … the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the 1885 Alien Contract Labor Law, and the 1917 Immigration Act were never straightforward acts of Asian exclusion, nor was the 1965 Hart-Cellar Immigration Act — the law that is credited with ending the exclusion era — an act that fully "opened the door" to Asian immigration. All four of these Acts — in effect and in intent — helped define who within Asian populations was welcome and who was not. … the so-called exclusion laws introduced a logic that certain South Asians were admissible — or desirable — because of their class, education, and profession. This was ultimately the logic enshrined in

the "occupational preferences" provisions of the 1965 Immigration Act; the legislation brought thousands of South Asian doctors, engineers, and other professionals to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, while keeping working-class migration to a minimum. … Orientalism is a double-edged set of ideas, standards, and expectations. In the realms of both immigration law and popular culture, the desired and the denigrated have always been inextricably linked; they are defined in relation to one another, with a line drawn between them.

As with most leftist tirades, the effect of this discussion is to engender appreciation for those few fraying fibers of sound public policy and cultural discernment that might otherwise be overlooked. I'm willing to grant the possible advantages of *further, more minute discrimination*. The fact that discrimination is occurring at all, however, is an indication that — even in this advanced stage of Cathedral dominion — sanity is not altogether dead.

Discriminate between these guys …



… and these guys?



Hell, yeah.

April 10, 2015

Ethnomasochism

Arguments that indiscriminate immigration is socially beneficial are too widespread to pick upon in detail — spend any time over at *The Economist* or, for the full-throttle 'altruistic' version, Bryan Caplan's place, to be inundated in them. It's hard to see how a lack of selectivity could ever be advantageous from the perspective of the demographic recipient, but the whole discussion evades a far more toxic problem. If a case for the mass implantation of unscreened foreign populations is couched in the language of self-interest — however misguidedly — it can, at least potentially, be engaged rather than merely diagnosed. (This blog has no problem with immigration *in general* whatsoever.)

Far more disturbing to any surviving assumptions about sane social policy decisions is the very different argument (exemplified by the Cathedral-crazed second questioner in this clip (via)) that immigration is a punishment to be embraced, in a form of religiously-intoxicated, collective self-flagellation, to scourge the sin-blackened Occident, unendingly, for its ineliminable historical crimes. This is ethnomasochism in its purest instantiation, and argument is wholly irrelevant against it. Such moral-religious convulsants do not want 'good' (productive, orderly, talented, aspirational) immigration. They want the lash. No 'racist' profile of potential immigrant groups can be vicious enough to elicit aversion, on the contrary — the more harm

that is promised by the incomers, the more sobbing gratitude accompanies the invitation. Immigration is *meant to be torture*, so what use are brainy, well-behaved entrepreneurs? The ideal immigrant in this vision of infinitized moral purgation is not a social asset, but a wretched, dysfunctional parasite, or better still an arrogant, contemptuous aggressor. 'Model minorities' are erased from the picture entirely, because they do not exact the suffering that is so ardently desired. ("You can wander through Chinatown late at night without being robbed, beaten, or raped — what's the possible spiritual value in that?") To repeat the essential, and hideously consequential point: *Immigration is supposed to punish us*.

This is the terminal pathology of Western Civilization, in its 'highest' state of expression. There is not much that can be said to be fortunate about it, except that it cannot be indefinitely prolonged.

July 14, 2015

Quote note (#214)

The intolerable clarity of Sailer at work:

… the concept of "Europeanism" upon which the EU was founded — that Europeans should be more neighborly to their fellow Europeans than to non-Europeans — is increasingly unmentionable in polite society because it's seen as racist. For example, during the

peak of adulation for Merkel before reality set in, she was widely praised for personifying European values by de-Europeanizing Europe.

How would one even begin to argue with anything said here? There's a lot in this short passage, but nothing that isn't obviously true, *to everyone*, which accounts — perhaps — for the fact that it is nevertheless almost unthinkably controversial.

It would be a relief to see Merkel awarded the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution to the ruin of Europe. If not honest — or anything close — it would at least attain meta-honesty, by defining 'peace' explicitly as the suppression of truth.

February 1, 2016

Quote note (#222)

The ironical road from feminism to Islam:

Some commentators like to point out that many of the most passionate and bravest defenders of the West are women, citing Italian writer Oriana Fallaci and others as examples. But women like Ms. Fallaci, brave as they might be, are not representative of all Western women. If you look closely, you will notice that, on average, Western women are actually more supportive of Multiculturalism and massive immigration than are Western men. […] … surprise, you

didn't enter a feminist Nirvana, but paved the way for an unfolding Islamic hell.

Give feminist ideology a voice in security policy, and the gates are thrown open. The evo-psych behind this is dark, but compelling.

It's past time to move it from the 'provocative speculations' to the 'hard cold facts' folder.

February 22, 2016

Quote note (#184)

Thompson:

It is little surprise that people want to move from badly organised countries to better organised ones. What is more surprising is that the causes of bad national organisation are so often ascribed to external factors rather than to the people who live in such countries. The theory seems to be that some people, by an accident of birth, had the good fortune to be plonked down in a place with laws, institutions, roads, schools and hospitals, while others had the misfortune to be born in places with dictators, gangs, muddy tracks and slums. According to this world picture, if you move people from the unfortunate to the fortunate ***geographies****, then the world's problems are solved.*

One consequence of escaping this common error is the

downgrading of the territorial obsessions common on the right. Free association is the real topic of concern. Pieces of real estate are never more than rough proxies for that.

September 14, 2015

Tsunami

Either Europe is absorbed into Africa or at some point it learns, pitilessly, to say 'no'. Neither alternative is likely to be remotely pretty.

The 21st century would probably be a good time to be somewhere else.

… two years ago the United Nations Population Division released a shocking update to their population projections, revising the forecast for the continent of Africa upward to 4.2 billion in 2100 from 1.1 billion today. […] That is about a half dozen times greater than the population of Europe. […] Africa is almost certainly not going to add over three billion residents over the next 85 years. Something else will happen instead …

For an example of how ugly it looks — in the eyes of polite opinion — to get anywhere close to realism on the topic, try this. It's unthinkable! So, by far the most likely outcome is that Europe buries its head in the sand until it is already deep into existential crisis,

then lurches into some new and even more hysterical version of its traditionally-favored fascist 'solution'. Quite probably, it will get to lose another World War before the complete extinction of its civilization.

(If there's a positive spin to put on this glacial catastrophe, don't hesitate to share it in the comments.)

April 30, 2015

All Over

Peter Hitchens has given up, on immigration (as well as everything else):

Once [illegal immigrants are] in, our own treasured freedoms work against us. Thanks to centuries of island freedom, when we were able to decide who came in and who didn't, it is far easier to disappear in Britain than in almost any other country in the world. We'll abolish those freedoms in the end, alas, but it won't do any good. […] And now the expensive navies of the EU are ferrying thousands more across the Mediterranean each week. The people-smugglers are saving a fortune on fuel, for they know their victims will be picked up before they are halfway across, in what are misleadingly described as 'rescues'. […] The only thing that will stop the flow is when the EU countries, including ours, become so like the

places these people are fleeing from that there is no point in coming any more.

June 15, 2015

Policy Migration

Hints of queasiness from open borders advocate Nathan Smith:

A couple of years ago, I wrote a post called "The American Polity Can Endure and Flourish Under Open Borders." I would not write that post today. The American polity might endure and flourish under open borders, but I wouldn't claim that confidently. What changed my mind? A greater familiarity with the theoretical models that are the basis for "double world GDP" as a claim about the global economic impact of open borders, especially my own. It turns out that these estimates depend on billions of people migrating internationally under open borders. … I do not think the US polity is robust enough to absorb 1 billion immigrants (even, say, over the course of fifty years) and retain its basic political character and structure.

The large, link-dense text that follows is sure to stir up some excitement among border-stripping libertarians. As a political science fiction scenario, it has much to recommend it (including some fragmentation features that the Outer Right might find suprisingly

appealing).

August 21, 2015

Exponential

Do try to keep up:

German authorities expect up to 1.5 million asylum seekers to arrive in Germany this year, the Bild daily said in a report to be published on Monday, up from a previous estimate of 800,000 to 1 million.

Whatever it is that's happening here should be over fairly quickly.

Also worth noting: "The authorities' report also cited concerns that those who are granted asylum will bring their families over to Germany too, Bild said. […] Given family structures in the Middle East, this would mean each individual from that region who is granted asylum bringing an average of four to eight family members over to Germany in due course, Bild quoted the report as saying." (So we can crank the binary exponent up by another 2-3 notches straight away.)

October 5, 2015

Diverse Opinions

Americans of Indian ancestry seem to be having a disproportionate impact on the horizons of 'sensitive' debates at the moment. Techno-commercial secession and eugenic immigration in a single week. Diversity clearly has an up-side.

November 7, 2013

Twitter cuts (#39)

> As an Armenian friend asked, "Where do I have to go to get away from these people?" https://t.co/CiC50pYSKQ
> — Mark Krikorian (@MarkSKrikorian) December 8, 2015

Realistically, economic opportunity on a new frontier is likely to predominate as the driver for geopolitical disintegration, but "Where do I have to go to get away from these people?" is worth carving on the gate of an Exit-based polity. It's *Elysium*, and probably the right-most impulse of the present world order. The Cathedral basically coincides with the answer: *Nowhere*. It's not an allowable incentive. Still, it's already a huge incentive (in fact), and every week it gets more huge.

Running the entire immigration crisis through this question is

(darkly) enlightening. Anything that might count as a positive answer is probably our stuff.

ADDED: Not very closely related, but pinned on for fun

> FYI: If you're a libertarian and not a white nationalist fascist you need to proactively dissociate with neoreaction.
>
> — Cathy Reisenwitz (@CathyReisenwitz) December 7, 2015

December 8, 2015

Why Iran?

The blog obviously isn't coming from where Scott Aaronson is, and the title of this post isn't even centrally his question, so I'm asking it.

If you were trying to discredit a demographic policy that discriminated against Islamization, the thing rolled out by the US administration looks like a good way to do it. Shouldn't selecting against Salafism be the policy core? Such a stance could be easily based upon solid American precedent. This looks like something else entirely. (It's a dog's breakfast, which is to say hastily hashed-up populism food.)

ADDED: The flip-side to Scott Aaronson's concerns (from his own

comment thread).

February 5, 2017

SECTION E - EXIT

CHAPTER ONE - GETTING OUT

Lure of the Void (Part 1)

The Frontier of Disillusionment

> *…the idea that we are no longer able to accomplish feats we once could do (like travel to the Moon) clashes with the* ***prevailing narrative*** *that we march forever forward. Not only can't we get to the Moon at present, but the U.S. no longer has a space shuttle program — originally envisioned to make space travel as routine as air travel. And for that matter, I no longer have the option to purchase a ticket to fly trans-Atlantic at supersonic speeds on the Concorde. Narratives can break.*
> *— Tom Murphy(bolding in original)*

Shanghai's 2010 World Expo included an entire pavilion dedicated to urban futures. Among the exhibits was a looping video on a large screen, depicting varieties of futuristic city-types as speculative animations, light-heartedly, and with obvious orientation to

youngsters. Since children are the denizens of the future, it makes sense to treat them as the target audience for a vision of tomorrow's world, but the effect was also disconcerting, as if parenthesizing what was shown in a form of deniable, non-abrasive irony. *This is what the future used to look like*. Does it still? On this point, a subtle reserve concealed itself as a concession to childish credibility, or even inconsequential fantasy.

One of the four future cities on display had been constructed off-planet, in earth-orbit. It was populated by happy humans (or, at least, humanoids). No date was predicted. Untethered from firm futuristic commitment, it intersected adult perception as a fragment of cross-cultural memory.

Imagine a city in space, as a child might. Given the strategic obscurity of this statement, when encountered at a carefully-crafted international event, in a sophisticated, cosmopolitan, global, Chinese city, in 2010, it is tempting to approach it through analogy. Half a century ago, when Western children were encouraged to imagine such things, during the twilight decades of modernity (1.0), was a sincere promise being made to them that they would inherit the solar system? If so, is such a promise now being humorously referenced, or is it being re-directed, and re-made?

The 2010 Expo had a Space Pavilion, too, which only deepened the perplexity. Given the opportunity to re-activate Expo traditions of techno-industrial grandiosity, it was a spectacular miss-launch,

containing almost nothing in the way of monumental hardware. The content fell into two broad categories: video-based immersive special effects (highly-appreciated by kids), and vanilla-domestic applications of space technology, on the approximate model of NASA's lamentable "we're the guys who brought you the non-stick frying-pan" PR campaign. Anybody hoping for soul-crushing cyclopean military-analog launch vehicles and the acrid stink of rocket fuel had clearly wandered into the wrong century. Contemporary international etiquette prevailed, and according to that, the business of blazing into orbit is far too crude – even *primitive* — to be vigorously publicized.

So even in China, at least in its 2010 window to the world, off-planet aspirations were stirred together indissolubly with childhood fantasy. The unmistakable insinuation, harmonized with the commanding heights of world opinion, was that such hard SF dreams had been outgrown. Rather than staring through a window into the spark-torched clangorous workshop of China's emerging national space program, Western visitors found their gazes bounced from mirrored glass, into a 'postmodern' vacuum of collapsed expectations, amongst the eroded ruins of Apollo. Four decades of Occidental space failure smiled politely back. *You lost it, didn't you*? (A quick trip across the Huangpu to the drearily mundane USA Pavilion sufficed for unambiguous confirmation.)

The dismissal of a human off-planet future as a childish dream has

plenty to build upon. The world's publishers and book shops have long accommodated their classification systems to the sleazy ambiguity of the 'science fiction / fantasy genre', in which futurism smears into oneirism, and the vestiges of hard SF *programs* (telecommunication satellites, moon bases, space elevators…) are scattered amongst fantastic elves-in-space mythologies (from *Star Wars* to *Avatar*). Competitive prophecies decay into polemical allegories, making statements about anything and everything *except* the shape of the future.

Of all the cultural ripples from the truncation of the Apollo-era space trajectory, none is more telling than the rising popularity of 'Moon Hoax' conspiracy theorizing. Not satisfied with the *prospective* evacuation of the heavens, the moon hoaxers began systematically editing space-travelers out of the past, beginning with the lunar landings. Whilst clearly maddening to space technologists, American patriots, NASA supporters, and sensible types in general, this form of 'denialism' is not only historically comprehensible, but even inevitable. If nobody seriously contests the fact that Columbus reached the New World, it is at least in part because what was then started kept happening. Something began, and continued. Nothing comparable can be said about the process of lunar colonization, and that, in itself, is a provocative oddity. When forecasts are remembered, abandoned outcomes can be expected to mess up memories.

Old-school space enthusiast Sylvia Engdahl finds the whole situation pathological, and subjects it to a kind of jerry-built psychoanalysis. With defiant optimism, she attributes "the present hiatus in space travel" to xenophobic trauma:

> *Much is said about the positive effect of the photos of Earth obtained by Apollo 8, which for the first time showed our planet as a globe, a fragile refuge amid barren surroundings, and thereby launched the environmental movement. The concomitant negative impact — the spread of gut-level knowledge that space is an actual place containing little that's familiar to us and perhaps much that we'd rather not meet — is not spoken of. But it may be no less significant. Could this be one of the reasons why interest in space died so soon after the first Moon landing, resulting in the cancellation of the last few planned Apollo missions?*

She elaborates:

> *Most people do not want to contemplate the significance of an open universe. They do not let uneasiness about it into their minds, but underneath, as the collective unconscious of humankind absorbs the knowledge, they grasp it, and react with dismay disguised as apathy. It does not occur to them that they might be disturbed by the prospect of space*

> *exploration. Rather, they believe that although in theory they want humankind to reach new worlds, it's of low priority compared to the problems of here and now. … [T]he widespread conviction that the public no longer cares about space may also be a rationalization.*

Engdahl hints at a modern variant of the Orpheus myth, and captures something of arresting significance. We were told not to look back from orbit, but of course, we did, and what we saw pulled us back down. The damnation of our extraterrestrial out-leap gave birth to a lucid environmentalist vision — the earth seen from space. That is why Tom Murphy turns to the Grand Archdruid of the Ancient Order of Druids in America, John Michael Greer, to transmute elegiac disillusionment into acceptance:

> *The orbiters are silent now, waiting for the last awkward journey that will take them to the museums that will warehouse the grandest of our civilization's failed dreams. There will be no countdown, no pillar of flame to punch them through the atmosphere and send them whipping around the planet at orbital speeds. All of that is over. …In the final analysis, space travel was simply the furthest and most characteristic offshoot of industrial civilization, and depended — as all of industrial civilization depends — on vast*

> *quantities of cheap, highly concentrated, readily accessible energy. That basic condition is coming to an end around us right now.*

Disillusionment is simply awakening from childish things, the druids tell us. This is a point Murphy is keen to endorse: "space fantasies can prevent us from tackling mundane problems." Intriguingly, his initial step towards acceptance involves a rectification of false memory, through a (sane) analog of 'Moon Hoax' denial. Surveying his students on their understanding of recent space history ("since 1980 or so"), he discovered that no less than 52% thought humans had departed the earth as far as the moon in that time (385,000 km distant). Only 11% correctly understood that no manned expedition had escaped Low Earth Orbit (LEO) since the end of the Apollo program (600 km out). Recent human space activity, at least in the way it was imagined, had not taken place. It was predominantly a collective hallucination.

Murphy's highly-developed style of numerate druidism represents the null hypothesis in the space settlement debate: perhaps we're not out there because there's no convincing reason to expect anything else. Extraterrestrial space isn't a frontier, even a tough one, but rather an implacably hostile desolation that promises nothing except grief and waste. There's some scientific data to be gleaned, and also (although Murphy doesn't emphasize this)

opportunities for political theatrics. Other than that, however, there's nothing beyond LEO worth reaching for.

The neo-druidic starting point is unapologetically down to earth. It begins with energy physics, and the remorseless fact that doing just about anything heats things up. According to Murphy's calculations, a modest 2.3% global economic growth rate suffices to bring the planetary surface to the boiling point of water within four centuries, even in the complete absence of (positive) greenhouse effects. Economic growth is essentially exponential, and that guarantees that we're cooked, due to elementary thermodynamic principles, efficiency limits, and the geophysics of heat dissipation. Within this big picture, conventional 'energy crisis' concerns are no more than complicating details, although Murphy engages them thoroughly. (He provides a neat summary of his argument, with internal links, here.)

From the neo-druidic perspective, the space 'frontier' is a horizon of sheer escapism, attracting those who stubbornly deny the necessity of limitation (pestilential growth-addicts):

> *...relying on space to provide an infinite resource base into which we grow/expand forever is misguided. Not only is it much harder than many people appreciate, but it represents a distraction to the message that growth cannot continue on Earth and we should get busy planning a transition to a non-*

growth-based, truly sustainable existence.

Since plenty of irrepressible growth-mongers seriously want to get out there, Murphy trowels on the discouragement in thick, viscous layers. Most of the deterrent factors are relatively familiar, but none of them are frivolous, or easily dismissed. The principal problem is the most qualitative (and druidic): human adaptation to terrestrial conditions. This is strikingly illuminated by a consideration of terrestrial 'frontier' environments that remain almost entirely unexploited, despite environmental features that are overwhelmingly more benign than anything to be found off-planet. When compared to any conceivable space station, asteroid mining camp, lunar base, or Mars colony, even the most 'difficult' places on earth — the seabed, for instance, or the Antarctic — are characterized by extreme hospitability, with ready access to breathable air, nutrients, fuels, and other essential resources, a moderate temperature range, protection from cosmic radiation, and proximity to existing human settlements. This is to be contrasted with typical extraterrestrial conditions of hard vacuum, utter exposure, complete absence of bio-compatible chemistry, and mind-jarring distances.

Murphy touched upon these distances in his survey of student space ignorance. If earth is represented by a "standard" 30-centimeter globe, LEO is 1.5 centimeters from the surface, and

the moon a full 9 meters further out. For intuitive purchase upon more expansive space visions, however, a re-calibration is required.

It makes sense to model the earth as a small apple (8.5 cm in diameter), because then an astronomical unit (AU, the mean earth-sun distance of roughly 150 million kilometers, 93 million miles, or 500 light seconds) shrinks to a kilometer, with the sun represented by a sphere a little over 10 meters in diameter. The moon now lies less than 2.7 meters out from our toy earth, but Mars is never less than 400 meters away, the nearest asteroids a kilometer away. The distance to the edge of the planetary solar system (Neptune) is at least 29 kilometers, and within this spatial volume (a sphere of roughly 113,400 AU^3), less than one part in 27 billion is anything other than desolate vacuum, with almost all the rest being solar furnace. On the toy scale, the outer edge of the solar system, and the Oort cloud, lies 50,000 kilometers from the earth. The distance from our shriveled apple to the nearest star, Proxima Centauri, is 277,600 toy kilometers (or 41.5 trillion real ones).

If space colonization is being construed as an escape from terrestrial resource constraints, then a pattern of activity needs to be knitted across these distances, producing — at a minimum — an energy surplus. In a non-frictional kinetic system, governed almost purely by (macroscopic) conservation of momentum, the basic currency of space activity is 'delta-v', or the transformation of velocity. Delta-v is broadly proportional to energy expenditure on

"small burns", when fuel consumption makes a negligible difference to total propelled mass, but when complete flights or "large burns" are calculated, the math becomes nonlinear, since the reduction of fuel payload becomes a critical factor in the equation (subtracting inertial resistance as it adds motive force). In practical terms, the prospective off-planet ('space-faring') energy economy consists of the consumption of propellant to move propellant about, with non-fuel vehicle mass contributing little more than a rounding error in the calculations.

> *Somewhat counter-intuitively, it is possible to get the rocket moving faster than the exhaust velocity once the fuel mass exceeds 63% of the total initial mass. In order to get delta-v values in the 20 km/s range when the exhaust velocity is less than 5 km/s requires almost nothing* but *fuel. …[T]he large delta-v's required to get around the solar system require a* lot *of fuel…*

This double-registry of fuel within the nonlinear equations of "rocket math" – as payload and propellant – is the key to Murphy's deep skepticism about the viability of off-planet energy economics. The fuel resources strewn within the inner solar system – even assuming their absolute abundance – cannot be moved around usefully for less energy than they provide. Jupiter offers the most tantalizing

example. This methane-rich gas giant might be superficially apprehended as an immense cosmic fuel depot, but even the most generous calculations of delta-v requirements for a Jupiter 'tanker-run' imply energy expenditures at least an order of magnitude higher than energy obtained – from the 'scooping' operation alone. The inner solar-system is abundant in "stranded resources" that cannot conceivably be extracted at a cost lower than their value. That, at least, is the coherent neo-druidic perspective.

…and yet, in the yawning void, where the space settlements were meant to have been, the stirrings have not ceased. There even seems to be, unmistakably, a quickening of pace. Chinese 'Taikonauts', private (American) 'NewSpace' businesses, and ever more advanced robots are venturing out beyond the wreckage of dead dreams. Are they heading anywhere that works, or that even makes sense?

[Next…]

August 15, 2012

Lure of the Void (Part 2)

The right stuff in the rough

… it's important to understand what Apollo was, and wasn't.

> *It was a victory in the Cold War over the Soviets, but because we were at war, we waged it with a state socialist enterprise. What it was not was the first step of opening up the frontier to humanity, and it was in fact a false start that has created a template for NASA and a groove in which we've been stuck for over four decades now, with many billions spent and little useful progress.*
> — Rand Simberg

> *The opening of the American west in the first decades of the 19th century and the opening of the space frontier in these first decades of the 21st century are very similar.*
> — Mike Snead

Fascism makes our heads spin, which is unfortunate, because an inability to gaze unwaveringly into the dominant 'third way' model of political economy (corporate nationalism) makes the history of the last century unintelligible. For amateur space historians, dropping in briefly on the Moon Nazis is simply unavoidable.

SS Sturmbannführer Wernher von Braun, Deputy Associate Administrator for Planning at NASA Headquarters, Washington DC (1970-2), helps with the introduction. Technical director of the Nazi rocket program at Peenemünde, which culminated in the creation of the A-4 (V-2) ballistic missile, von Braun was brought to America

in 1945 as the top prize of Operation Paperclip. His contribution to US rocket development, through Redstone to Apollo (and the moon), was central and indispensable. NASA Socialism was born on the Dark Side of the Moon. (This probably isn't the right time to wander too deeply into Pynchon territory, but, roughly speaking, that's where we are.)

If fascism sounds unduly harsh, more comfortable terminology lies within easy reach. 'Technocracy' will do fine. The name is less important than the essentials, which were already clearly formulated in the work of a previous German immigrant to the United States, Friedrich List, who devoted an influential book to outlining *The National System of Political Economy* (1841). According to List, the 'cosmopolitanism' of mainstream (Smithean) political economy was insufficiently attentive to the collective national interest. Industrial development was too important to be surrendered to the interplay of private economic agents, and should instead be considered a strategic imperative, within the context of international competition. Only by leveraging the power of the state to regulate trade, foster modern industries, and drive the development of critical infrastructure, could a country hope to advance its interests in the international arena. Development was war by other means, and sometimes the same ones.

When eagerly embraced by Henry Clay, who connected List's ideas with the founding tradition from Alexander Hamilton, these

ideas became the basis of the American System. Economic nationalism was to be pursued along the threefold path of managed trade (tariffs), state-controlled finance (central banking), and state-directed infrastructure development (especially transportation systems). Such policies were already 'progressive' or ~~fascist~~ technocratic in that they subordinated private-cosmopolitan economic interests to national purposes, but this took place flexibly, without the more recent encrustations of anti-business class warfare, large-scale entitlement spending, or Cathedralist cultural policing. Capitalism was to be steered, and even promoted, rather than milked, deliberately ruined, or replaced. Due to its patriotic direction, elitism, and affinity with militarization, this technocratic progressivism could easily be understood as a phenomenon of 'the right', or at least (in Walter Russell Mead's words) the "Bipartisan Establishment."

Apollo perfectly exemplified American technocratic progressivism in the teutonized, neo-Hamiltonian tradition. A small step for a man, and a substantial leap for mankind, it was a colossal high-jump for the US Leviathan, marking an unambiguous triumph in the structured competition with its principal geo-strategic and ideological rival. The Apollo program wasn't *exactly* part of the ballistic missile arms race with the Soviet Union, but it was close enough to contribute to its symbolic, mass-psychological, and deterrent purpose. Landing a man on the moon was a type of overkill,

relative to landing a nuke on Moscow, and it expressed a super-abundant payload-delivery capability that had won a war of messages.

In an article originally published in The American Spectator (November 10, 2010), Iain Murray and Rand Simberg describe the moon race as Big Government's Final Frontier, remarking that:

> *There's something about space policy that makes conservatives forget their principles. Just one mention of NASA, and conservatives are quite happy to check their small-government instincts at the door and vote in favor of massive government programs and harsh regulations that stifle private enterprise.*

They conclude:

> *It is time for conservatives to recognize that Apollo is over. We must recognize that Apollo was a centrally planned monopolistic government program for a few government employees, in the service of Cold War propaganda and was therefore itself an affront to American values. If we want to seriously explore, and potentially exploit space, we need to harness private enterprise, and push the technologies really needed to do so.*

Whilst it would be pointlessly upsetting to translate this into a call for the *denazification* of outer space, it would be equally misleading to read it as nothing of the kind. Progressive technocracy, in a range of national flavors, is the only effective space politics the world has ever seen, and it is still far more likely — in the near-term — to be modernized than radically supplanted. Space development poses such an immense collective challenge that it sucks even liberty-oriented conservatives such as Simberg towards accommodation with the activist, catalytic, neo-Hamiltonian state. At least initially, there's simply no other place where the clanking machinery of Leviathan is more at home.

Popular culture has picked up on this well. Among the many reasons for the ecstatic reception to Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) was appreciation for its 'realistic' tonal portrait of practical space activity. Science and commerce played their parts, but the leading edge was dominated by quasi-military heavy metal, funded by massive budgets based on gravely obscure strategic objectives, directed and crewed by hard, obedient, buzz-cut types who did whatever it took to get things done. Weapons research trumped all other considerations. Breaking out into the deep frontier required a rigid, armored-bulkhead seriousness that civilians would never quite understand.

When suddenly stripped of its Cold War context, the proxy warfaring of the rocket-state lost coherent motivation, and

immediately veered off course into increasingly ludicrous pseudo-objectives. By the closing years of the 20th century, all pretense of a big push outwards had been dissipated amongst commoditized LEO satellite maintenance, unconvincing zero-gravity science projects, ritualistic space-station diplomacy, multicultural astronaut PR, and even cynical make-work schemes for dangerously competent ex-Soviet technicians. Clever science continued, based on robot probes and space telescopes, but none of that even hinted at an impetus towards space settlement, or even manned spacecraft, and typically advised explicitly against it. Despite all the very real 'right stuff' heroism, putting people in space was a circus act, and perhaps it always had been.

Whatever else outer space may be, it's a place where the right goes schizoid, and the more that it's thought about, the more jagged the split. The seemingly straightforward, dynamic-traditional, and extremely stimulating 'image' of the *frontier* illuminates the point. The frontier is a space of attenuated formal authority, where entrepreneurial, 'bottom-up' processes of social formation and economic endeavor are cultivated amongst archetypal 'rugged individualists', its affinity with libertarian impulses so tight that it establishes the ('homesteading') model of natural property rights, and yet, equally undeniably, it is a zone of savage, informal warfare, broken open as a policy decision, pacified through the unremitting application of force, and developed as a strategic imperative, in the

interest of territorial-political integration. By fleeing the state, in the direction of the frontier, the settler or colonist extends the reach of the state towards the frontier, drawing it outwards, and enhancing its ferocity, or *roughening* it. The path of anti-governmental flight confuses itself with a corresponding expansion, hardening, and re-feralization of the state, as the cavalry learn from the Indians, in a place without rules. Then the railroad comes. *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* meets *Starship Troopers*.

"A strategy for achieving economic benefit from space must involve both government and industry, as did the development of the American West," argues Martin Elvis, and no one seriously disagrees. Whenever realism is prioritized on the extraterrestrial horizon, some variant of rough-and-dirty technocratic progressivism always waits on the launch-pad, ready to piggy-back business off-planet on patriotic, Leviathan-funded, first-stage boosters. ~~Over-hasty denazification is strictly for earth-bound softies~~ The neo-Hamiltonian jump-leads work too well to drop. As usual, Simberg expresses this best:

> *The United States should become a spacefaring nation, and the leader of a spacefaring civilization.*
>
> *That means that access to space should be almost as routine (if not quite as affordable) as access to the oceans, and with similar laws and regulations. It means thousands,*

or millions, of people in space — and not just handpicked government employees, but private citizens spending their own money for their own purposes. It means that we should have the capability to detect an asteroid or comet heading for Earth and to deflect it in a timely manner. Similarly it means we should be able to mine asteroids or comets for their resources, for use in space or on Earth, potentially opening up new wealth for the planet. It means that we should explore the solar system the way we did the West: not by sending off small teams of government explorers — Lewis and Clark were the extreme exception, not the rule — but by having lots of people wandering around and peering over the next rill in search of adventure or profit.

We should have massively parallel exploration — and not just exploration, but development, as it has worked on every previous frontier.

Which brings us to 'NewSpace'…

[Next]

September 6, 2012

Lure of the Void (Part 3a)

There are two related questions posed by human exploration. First, is there anything economically useful to do out there, that pays your way? And second, can you live off the land, and use local resources to survive, or will we always be tied to support from earth? If the answer to both is yes, then you get space colonies, self-sustainable life off-planet. If the answer to both is no, then space is like Mt. Everest. Tourists might go to Mt. Everest, sherpas might make a living off of it, but no one really lives there.

If the answer is that you can live off the land, but it's not economically useful, it's like Antarctica. It was 40 years between the last time we were there, when Shackleton reached Antarctica, and when the U.S. Navy went back in 1912. There's a similar lapse between going to the Moon the first time and, hopefully, when we'll return. In that case, you can form an outpost and live there, but you're sustained by constant funding, since engineering doesn't pay for itself. If the answer is that there are economically useful things to do, such as mining Helium-3 on the Moon, but we're always reliant on Earth for basic necessities, then space becomes a North Sea oil platform. You can make money there, but it will always be a hostile environment.

> *These are four very radically different human futures. And they're all part of a larger question: Is there a human future beyond Earth? It's a question ranks up there with whether there's intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. We can search for life with probes and telescopes, but to determine the living range of humanity, we're going to have to send humans into space.*
> — Scott Pace

> *What should the payload be?* It does not matter. *That is the point. This is not about getting a useful payload into space: That is almost irrelevant. It is about guaranteeing a market for companies offering launch services to get things going. I mean this totally. If we could think of nothing better to launch,* concrete blocks would be fine. *My philosophy is:*
> Launching **anything** is good. — Paul Almond

The material base for a space-faring future is not only stranded in space, but also stranded in time. Not only are the gravitationally-unlocked resources from which it would assemble itself strewn across intimidating immensities of vacant distance, but the threshold where it all begins to come together – in an autocatalytic extraterrestrial economy – is separated from the world of present, practical incentives by dread gulfs of incalculable loss. In a variant of

the old joke, if getting off-planet is the goal, a planet is the absolutely worst place to set out from. “I can tell you how to get there,” the local helpfully remarked. “But you shouldn’t start from here.”

Being out there could quickly start to make sense, as long as we were already there. Experimenting with this perspective-switch makes the animating impulse clearer. Most tellingly, it exposes how deeply planets suck, so that merely not being on one is worth almost anything. That’s the end game, the final strategy, ultimately arranging everything, with anti-gravity as the key.

Once gravity is perceived as the natural archetype of imprisonment, keeping you somewhere, whether you want to be there or not, the terrestrial-economic motivations for off-planet expansion are revealed in their fundamental spuriousness. The reason to be in space is to be in space, freed from planetary suckitude, and any benefits to Earth-dwellers that accrue on the way are mere stepping stones. Off-planet resources diverted to the surface of the Earth are, in the ultimate spacer scheme, wasted, or at least strategically sacrificed (since such wastage is almost certainly required in the interim). In the final analysis, the value of anything whatsoever is degraded in direct proportion to the gravitational influences brought to bear upon it, and descent from the heavens is a fall.

A wider cosmo-developmental view sharpens resolution (although this requires that Smart’s invaluable insights are strictly

set aside, and black holes avoided with maximum prejudice). Smear into fast-forward until the process of extraterrestrial escape has been substantially accomplished, then freeze the screens. Fleeing gravity can now be seen as no more than the first step in a more thorough, antagonistic contestation with gravity and its works. Asteroids and comets are being pulverized, quarried, or bored into sponges, leaving moons, planets, and the sun itself as the local problems of interest. Such bodies are 'problems' because they deform space with gravity wells, which trap resources, but their status as development obstacles can be abstracted further. These worlds, at least partially isolated from the emerging deep-space *commercium* by their own mass, have been shaped by gravity into approximate spheres, which is to say – from the developmental perspective – into the very *worst* shapes that are mathematically *possible*, since they minimize the ratio of (reactive) surface to volume, and thus restrict resource accessibility to the greatest conceivable extent. Way out there, in deep space and the deep future, the gathering developmental impulse is to go full Vogon, and demolish them completely.

When seen from outside, planets are burial sites, where precious minerals are interred. By digging through the earth's mantle, for instance, all the way down to its interior end, 3,000km beneath the surface, one reaches a high-pressure iron-nickel deposit over 6,500km in diameter – a planet-vaulted metal globe roughly

160,000,000,000 cubic kilometers in size, doped by enough gold and platinum to coat the entire surface of the earth to a depth of half a meter. To a moderately advanced off-world civilization, pondering the practicalities of its first planet-scale demolition, leaving this buried resource trove in place has a robotic-industrial opportunity cost that can be conservatively estimated in the region of 1.6 x 10^23 human-level intelligences, a mineral stockpile sufficient to manufacture a trillion sentient self-replicating probes for every star in the galaxy. (Even ardent conservationists have to recognize how tasty this morsel will look.)

Lift-off, then, is merely a precursor to the first serious plateau of anti-gravity technology, which is oriented towards the more profoundly productive task of *pulling things apart*, in order to convert comparatively inert mass-spheres into volatile clouds of cultural substance. Assuming a fusion-phase energy infrastructure, this initial stage of off-world development culminates in the dismantling of the sun, terminating the absurdly wasteful main-sequence nuclear process, salvaging its fuel reserves, and thus making the awakened solar-system's contribution to the techno-industrial darkening of the galaxy. (Quit squandering hydrogen, and the lights dim.)

Focus for a few seconds on the economic irritability that arises at the sight of an oil-well flaring off natural gas, through sheer mindless incompetence, then glance at the sun. 'Unsustainable' doesn't begin

to capture it. Clearly, this energy machinery is utterly demented, amounting to an Azathothic orgy of spilled photons. The entire apparatus needs to be taken apart, through extreme solar surgery. Since this project has yet to receive sustained consideration, however, the specific engineering details can be safely bracketed for now.

The inexorable logic of techno-industrial efficiency, on its anti-gravity vector, means that *the only consistent motivation for leaving the earth is to dismantle the sun* (along with the rest of the solar-system), but that doesn't play well in Peoria. Unsurprisingly, therefore, those sensitized to political realities, media perceptions, and public relations are inclined to emphasize other things, depicting the earth as a destination for cosmic bounty or — even more immediately — for juicy tax-funded pork, rather than as a tricky but highly-rewarding demolition problem.

Conspicuously missing from the public space debate, therefore, is any frank admission that, "(let's face it folks) — planets are misallocations of matter which don't really work. No one wants to tell you that, but it's true. You know that we deeply respect the green movement, but when we get out there onto the main highway of solar-system redevelopment, and certain very rigid, very extreme environmentalist attitudes – Gaian survivalism, terrestrial holism, planetary preservationism, that sort of thing — are blocking the way forward, well, let me be very clear about this, that means jobs not

being created, businesses not being built, factories closing down in the asteroid belt, growth foregone. Keeping the earth together means dollars down the drain – a lot of dollars, *your dollars*. There are people, sincere people, good people, who strongly oppose our plans to deliberately disintegrate the earth. I understand that, really I do, you know – honestly – I used to feel that way myself, not so long ago. I, too, wanted to believe that it was possible to leave this world in one piece, just as it has been for four billion years now. I, too, thought the old ways were probably best, that this planet was the place we belonged, that we should – and could — still find some alternative to pulling it apart. I remember those dreams, really I do, and I still hold them close to my heart. But, people, they were just dreams, old and noble dreams, but dreams, and today I'm here to tell you that we have to wake up. Planets aren't our friends. They're speed-bumps on the road to the future, and we simply can't afford them anymore. Let's back them up digitally, with respect, yes, even with love, and *then let's get to work*…" [Thunderous applause]

Since, during the present stage of extraterrestrial ambition, pandering to the partisans of cosmic disintegrationism cannot reasonably be conceived as a sure-fire election winner, it is only to be expected that rhetoric of this kind has been muted. Yet, in the absence of some such vision, or consistently extrapolated alignment with anti-gravity, the off-planet impulse is condemned to arbitrariness, insubstantiality, and insincerity of expression. Absent

an uncompromised sense of something else, why not stick to this? The result has been, perhaps predictably, a reign of near-silence on the topic of extraterrestrial projects, even in regard to its most limited, immediate, and practically unobjectionable varieties.

If escaping the earth – and gravitational confinement in general — is not an intelligible end, but only a means, what provides the motivation? It is into this cramped, awkwardly-deformed crevice of aspiration that NewSpace must insinuate itself. To speak of 'insincerity' might seem unduly harsh – since there is no reason to suspect conscious deception, or even carefully-calibrated reservation, when NewSpace advocates outline their plans. An enveloping structure of implausibility nevertheless announces itself in every project that is advanced, manifested through the incommensurability between the scale of the undertaking and the rewards that supposedly incentivize it. Space tourism, asteroid mining, micro-gravity experimentation and manufacturing… really? Is it genuinely imaginable that these paltry goals finally or sufficiently motivate a prolonged struggle against the terrestrial gravity-trap, rather than serving as fragile *pretexts* or *rationalizations* for the pursuit of far more compelling, yet hazy, unarticulated, or even completely unsuspected objectives?

When this question is extended backwards, and outwards, it gathers force. Stretch it back to the moon, and out to Mars, and the inference becomes increasingly irresistible. None of these 'missions'

made, or make, any sense whatsoever, except insofar as they abbreviate some wider, undisclosed impulse. Space activity is not the means to a targeted end, but the end to be advanced by a sequence of missions, whose specific content is therefore derivative, and devoid of intrinsic significance. Once the inarticulate outward momentum decays, leaving nothing but an arbitrary extraterrestrial destination to represent it, the naked absurdity that is exposed rapidly extinguishes the last, flickering embers of popular motivation. Four decades of explicit lunar nihilism attest abundantly to that.

Whilst the partial privatization of space activity ('NewSpace') creatively displaces the problem of purpose, it does not radically dispel it. To some degree, NewSpace substitutes the economic motivations of disparate private operators for the political justification of a concentrated public bureaucracy, and by doing so it relieves the pressure to maintain coherent, communicable, and consensual objectives. Space ambitions are freed to enter the fragmented, competitive terrain of idiosyncrasy, variety, experimentation, and even personally-financed frivolity. It might even be thought that seriousness becomes optional.

When examined more doggedly, however, it is clear that the basic problem persists. The terrestrial gravity-well produces a split between the surface of the earth, and 'orbit' (or beyond), and private capital is no less severely divided by this schism than Rocket-State

'public' hardware. Whilst convertible temporarily into forms of inert, stored value, capital is an essentially modern phenomenon, born in industrial revolution, and typically defined by the diversion of immediate consumption into 'roundabout' production, which is to say: machinery. It is reproduced, or accumulated, by circulating through machines, or apparatus, and it is upon this that the gravity-well compels a decision: is NewSpace capital to be invested, unambiguously, *in space*?

A serious space program is, fundamentally and irreducibly, a process or terrestrial evacuation. It requires the consistent relocation (or de-location) of enterprise, resources, and productive capabilities from the earth into space, at least until the threshold of extraterrestrial autocatalysis is reached, at which point a break has been achieved, and an autonomous off-planet economy established. Whatever the opportunities for obfuscation (which are probably considerable), the basic *decision* remains unaffected. The accumulation of a terrestrial fortune is not at all the same, and is in fact almost certainly economically inconsistent, with the sustained investment in an off-planet industrial infrastructure. *Either* stuff is being shifted into space, irrevocably, *or not*.

[moon cake break]

September 29, 2012

Lure of the Void (Part 3b)

Menace in the west

> *Recognizing the head start obtained by the Soviets with their large rocket engines, which gives them many months of lead-time, and recognizing the likelihood that they will exploit this lead for some time to come in still more impressive successes, we nevertheless are required to make new efforts on our own. For while we cannot guarantee that we shall one day be first, we can guarantee that any failure to make this effort will make us last. We take an additional risk by making it in full view of the world, but as shown by the feat of astronaut Shepard, this very risk enhances our stature when we are successful. But this is not merely a race. Space is open to us now; and our eagerness to share its meaning is not governed by the efforts of others. We go into space because whatever mankind must undertake, free men must fully share. … I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth.*
> — John F Kennedy

[James Anthony Froude's] "The Bow of Ulysses" … endorses

> *the old colonialism, nostalgically recalling the days when Britain was not an empire, but rather British colonialists were pirates and brigands, who robbed, conquered and eventually ruled, gradually making the transition from mobile banditry to stationary banditry without the British government paying much attention. In "The Bow of Ulysses" Froude condemns nineteenth century imperialism as unworkably left wing, and inevitably leading [to] the destruction of the British empire, and thus the ruin of the subjects of the British empire, all of which ensued as he envisaged … The imperialists, those advocating British Empire, were the left, and the colonialists were the right. And the colonialists correctly predicted that if this were to go on, we would get the left that we now have – one of the many strange facts one encounters if one reads old books.*
>
> — James A Donald

The peculiarities of the 'space race' have yet to be fully unfolded. Through its extraordinary formality, reducing extraterrestrial ambitions to a binary, international competition to put the first man on the moon, it seems – retrospectively – to owe more to the culture and history of organized sports than to technological and economic accomplishments. There would, by definition, be a winner and a loser, which is to say a Boolean decision, conventional and indisputable.

Then it would be over. Perhaps it was seen to be pointing at something further, but in fact the moon was a finishing line.

Within a broad geo-strategic context, the space race was a symptom of thermonuclear stand-off. A modern history of warfare that had descended inexorably from a restrained game of princes to unleashed total war, amongst ideologically-mobilized peoples, targeting their basic institutions, industrial infrastructures, and even demographic root-stocks, had consummated itself – virtually – in the MAD potential for swift, reciprocal extermination. Under these circumstances, a regressive sublimation was called for, relaying conflict through chivalric representatives – even Homeric heroes – who competed on behalf of the super-lethal populations they appeased. The flight of an astronaut symbolized antagonism, substituting for a nuclear strike. In this sense, victory in the space race was a thinly-disguised advance payment on the conclusion of the Cold War.

This sublimation is only half of the story, however, because a double displacement took place. Whilst the space race substituted a formal (chivalric) outcome for a military result, it also marginalized the long-envisaged prospect of informal space colonization, replacing it with a predominantly conventional (or socio-political) objective. The price of unambiguous symbolic triumph was a 'triumph' that relapsed into the *real ambiguity* of (mere) symbolism, with reality-denying, postmodernist, 'moon hoax' temptations

already rising. When nothing is won except winning itself, it could scarcely be otherwise. A champion is not a settler, or anything close to one.

What is this real ambiguity? It begins on the frontier, with a series of questions that reaches beyond the meaning of the space race, and into the identity of America. As a country settled within the modern epoch, and thus exhaustively determined by the dynamics of colonialism, America has been condensed from a frontier.

In extended parenthesis, it is worth noting explicitly that the continent's aboriginal population was not yet America, but something earlier, and other, encountered on the frontier. The idea of a 'Native American' is an exercise in historical misdirection, when it is not merely a thoughtless oxymoron. This is not to suggest that these populations were unable to *become American*, as many did, once America had begun in the modern period. By innovating distinctive modes of secession, they were even — in certain cases — able to become radically American. A reservation casino in institutional flight from the IRS is vastly more American than the Federal Reserve, in a sense that will (hopefully) become evident.

The foundation of America was a flight into the frontier, extending a trajectory of escape into a perpetually receding space, or open horizon — the future made geography, and only subsequently a political territory. This original, informal, and inherently obscure space project is as old as America itself – exactly as old. As Frederick

Jackson Turner had already noted in 1893, for America an open frontier is an existential necessity, which is to say: the basic condition of American existence. Once the frontier closes, borders take over, exceptionality withers into insubstantial rhetoric (or worse, its neoconservative facsimile) and necrosis begins.

In this respect, America cannot be sustained as a state with a space program. It requires an open horizon, extended beyond the earth if necessary, sufficient to support a prolongation of its constitutive colonial process. Only on and out of this *frontier* does America have a future, although 'the USA' could (more) comfortably persist without it. That is why, beneath, alongside, and beyond the space race, the frontier 'myth' has been spontaneously extended to extraterrestrial vistas considered as *an essentially American prospect*. (NASA and its works are quite incidental to this, at best.)

Since this claim invites accusations of gratuitous controversy, it is worth re-visiting it, at a more languid pace. Even after re-emphasizing that *America* is not the same as – and is indeed almost the precise opposite of – *the USA*, obvious objections present themselves. Is not the Russian space program the world's most economically plausible? Is not the upward curve of recent Chinese space activity vastly more exuberant? Hasn't the United Nations claimed the heavens on behalf of a common humanity? What, other than cultural-historical accident, and the unwarranted arrogance stemming from it, could imaginably make 'an essentially American

prospect' of outer space?

The counter-point to all of these objections is *colonialism*, understood through its radical, exceptional, American lineage. Colonialism of this ultimate variety consolidates itself from the frontier, and passes through revolutionary thresholds of a very specific type: wars of independence, or secession (rather than comprehensive regime changes) that are *pro-colonial* (rather than anti-colonial) in nature. The colony, as colony, breaks away, and in doing so creates a new society. Successful examples of such events are extremely rare – even singular, or *exceptional*. There is America, and then there are 'lost causes', with considerable (and increasing) overlap between them.

What has any of this to do with outer space, beyond impressionistic analogy? Gravity cements the connection. Dividing the surface of the earth and extraterrestrial space is an effective difference, or practical problem, that can be quite precisely quantified in technological terms (fuel to deliverable payload ratios), and summarized economically. For purposes of comparison, transporting freight across the Pacific costs US$4/kg (by air), or US$0.16/kg by ocean-bound container vessel (US$3,500 per TEU, or 21,600 kg). To lift 1 kg of cargo into Low Earth Orbit (LEO), in stark contrast, costs over US$4,000 (it was over US$10,000 by Space Shuttle). Call it *the Rift*: an immense structural re-supply problem, incentivizing economic self-sufficiency with overwhelming force.

Each kilogram of extraterrestrial product has saved US$4,000 before further calculations get started. Out in space, the Rift is the bottom line: a cold, anti-umbilical reality.

Whatever the historic colonial impetus to the *American way* – separation and social re-foundation – is reinforced by orders of magnitude in LEO and beyond. This is an environment that might have been precision-engineered for revolutionary colonialism, as science fiction writers have long recognized. On the flip side lies a more obviously explanatory conclusion: Because developments beyond the Rift are inherently uncontrollable, there is no readily discernible motivation for terrestrial political-economic agencies to fund the emergence of off-planet societies that are on an irresistible conveyor-belt to independence, whilst voraciously consuming resources, opening an avenue of escape, and ultimately laying the void foundations for a competitor civilization of a radically unprecedented, and thus ominously unpredictable kind.

It follows clearly that the *status quo* politics of space colonization are almost fully expressed by *space colonization not happening*. When understood in relation to the eclipsed undercurrent of the frontier analogy — social fission through revolutionary colonialism or wars of independence — the 'failure' of large-scale space colonization projects to emerge begins to look like something else entirely: an eminently rational determination on the part of the world's most powerful territorial states to inhibit the development

of socio-technological potentials characterized by an 'American' (revolutionary colonial) tendency.

Of course, in a world that grown familiar with interchangeable anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist declarations, the terms of this (Froude / Moldbug / Donald) analysis are initially disconcerting. When detached from the confusions and conflations of a disturbed periphery, however, the pattern is compelling. Colonists are, by their very nature, in flight from the metropolis. It is less than a single step from this acknowledgement to the recognition that they tend to independence of action, social fission, and political disintegration, following trends that imperialists – with equal inevitability — seek to curtail. Since colonization, strictly understood, is cultural and demographic transplantation, it only acquires its sense of *expansion* when restrained under imperial auspices. Whilst *colonial* and *rebellious* are not even close to synonymous expressions, they are nevertheless mutually attracted, in near-direct proportion to the rift that separates colony from metropolis. A colonial venture is a rebellion of the most practical and productive kind, either re-routing a rebellion from time into space, or completing itself in a rebellion that transforms an expedition into an escape. Since the triumph of imperialism over colonialism beginning in the second half of the 19th century, it is only in (and as) America that this system of relations has persisted, tenuously, and in large measure occulted by the rise of an imperial state.

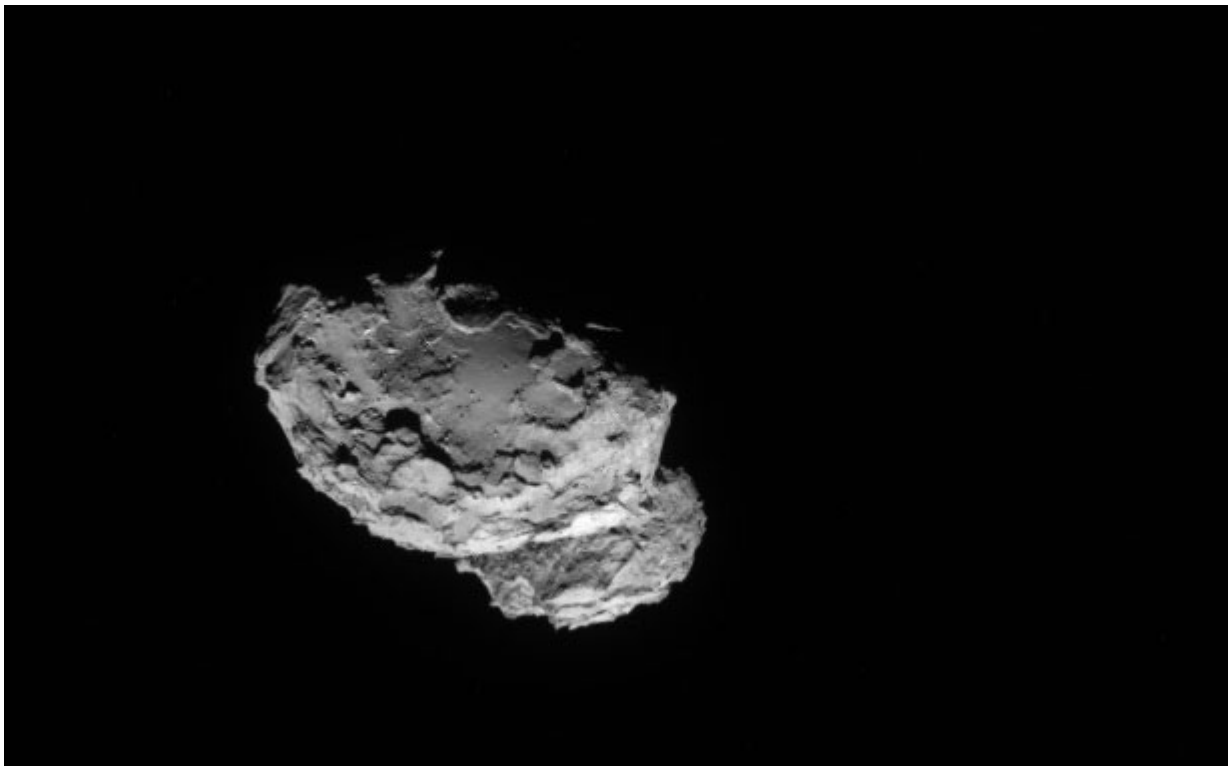
It is helpful, then, to differentiate in principle (with minimal moral excitability) between a *colonial* space project, oriented to extraterrestrial settlement, and an *imperial* space program, or policy, designed to ensure terrestrial control over off-planet development, maintain political integrity, and thus secure returns on investment across the Rift. From the perspective of the territorial state, an (imperial) space program that extracted economic value from beyond earth's gravity well would be ideal, but this is an ambition unsupported by the vaguest flickerings of historical precedent (and obstructed by at least four orders of magnitude of yawning economic gulf). Second best, and quite satisfactory, is the simple prevention of colonial space projects, substituting political space theater as an expensive (but low-risk and affordable) alternative. The occasional man on the moon poses no great threat to the order of the world, so long as we "bring him safely back to earth."

America was an escape from the Old World, and this definition suffices to describe what it still is – insofar as it still is – as well as what it can be, all that it can be, and what any escape from the new old world – if accurately named, would also be. When outlined by the shadows of dark enlightenment, America is the problem that the USA was designed to solve, the door that the USA closes, the proper name for a society born from flight.

As Nietzsche never exactly said: *Am I understood? America against the stars and stripes …*

October 26, 2012

Rosetta's Stone



(Links and video here)
ADDED: The sonic dimension. Harpoon failure.
ADDED: Slingshot targeting.

November 12, 2014

Quote note (#272)

Frederick Jackson Turner, from his essay *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893):

From the conditions of frontier life came intellectual traits of profound importance. The works of travelers along each frontier from colonial days onward describe certain common traits, and these traits have, while softening down, still persisted as survivals in the place of their origin, even when a higher social organization succeeded. The result is that, to the frontier, the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness, that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients, that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends, that restless, nervous energy, that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom — these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier. […] Since the days when the fleet of Columbus sailed into the waters of the New World, America has been another name for opportunity, and the people of the United States have taken their tone from the incessant expansion which has not only been open but has even been forced upon them. He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character of American life has now

entirely ceased. Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise. But never again will such gifts of free land offer themselves. […] For a moment, at the frontier, the bonds of custom are broken and unrestraint is triumphant. There is not ***tabula rasa****. The stubborn American environment is there with its imperious summons to accept its conditions; the inherited ways of doing things are also there; and yet, in spite of environment, and in spite of custom, each frontier did indeed furnish a new field of opportunity, a gate of escape from the bondage of the past; and freshness, and confidence, and scorn of older society, impatience of its restraints and its ideas, and indifference to its lessons, have accompanied the frontier.*

Recollected with reference to the prospects of seasteading and space colonization, and their continuity with a distinctive Anglophone cultural impetus to resolve political tension through dissociation in space (with *Exit* as its key).

August 14, 2016

Quit

Foseti writes:

There's a lot of hand-wringing in these parts of the interwebz

about what reactionaries should do.
I have no idea. I certainly have no grand plans to change the world. I like knowing what's going on around me and I like open discussions – i.e. ones that are not choked to death by political correctness.
However, if I were to suggest a plan, I'd say tell the truth.

His (slightly) more detailed suggestions are also commendable. The Cathedral provokes reaction by mandating fantasy over reality, and there is no doubt much that could be done about that.

There is a sub-question about all this, however, which is scarcely less insistent: What do 'we' really want?

More cybernetics, argues the determinedly non-reactionary Aretae. Of course, *Outside in* agrees. Social and technical feedback machinery is reality's (only?) friend, but what does the Cathedral care about any of that? It's winning a war of religion. Compulsory anti-realism is the reigning spirit of the age.

The only way to get more tight-feedback under current conditions is by splitting, in every sense. That is the overwhelming practical imperative: Flee, break up, withdraw, and evade. Pursue every path of autonomization, fissional federalism, political disintegration, secession, exodus, and concealment. Route around the Cathedral's educational, media, and financial apparatus in each and every way possible. Prep, go Galt, go crypto-digital, expatriate, retreat into the hills, go underground, seastead, build black markets, whatever works, but *get the hell out*.

Truth-telling already presupposes an escape from the empire of neo-puritan dreams. 'We' need to throw open the exit gates, wherever we find them, so the wreck can go under without us. Reaction begins with the proposition that nothing can or should be done to save it. Quit bailing. It's done. The sooner it sinks the better, so that something else can begin.

More than anything we can say, practical exit is the crucial signal. The only pressure that matters comes from that. To find ways out, is to let the *Outside in*.

February 28, 2013

Exit Test

What can Exit do? It looks as if France is going to provide an important demonstration:

France has become a defeatist nation.

A striking indicator of this attitude is the massive emigration that the country has witnessed over the last decade, with nearly 2 million French citizens choosing to leave their country and take their chances in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the United States and other locales. The last such collective exodus from France came during the French Revolution, when a large part of the aristocracy left to await (futilely) the king's return. Today's migration isn't

politically motivated, however; it's economic.

This departing population consists disproportionately of young people — 70% of the migrants are under 40 — and advanced-degree holders, who do their studies in France but offer their skills elsewhere. The migrants, discouraged by the economy's comparatively low salaries and persistently high unemployment — currently at 10.9% — have only grown in number since Socialist Francois Hollande became president.

The young and enterprising in France soon realize that elsewhere — in London, say — obstacles to success are fewer and opportunities greater. The British capital is now France's sixth-largest city, with 200,000 to 400,000 emigres.

The exile rolls also include hundreds of thousands of French retirees, presumably well-off, who are spending at least part of their golden years in other countries. Tired of France's high cost of living, they seek out more welcoming environments.

My beloved country, in other words, has been losing not only its dynamic and intelligent young people but also older people with some money. I'm not sure that this social model can work over the long term.

It will be extremely interesting to see.

February 24, 2014

Exit notes (#1)

Some notable attempts to dial back the NRx commitment to *exit over voice*, as inherited from Moldbug, have been seen recently. (I think NBS was crucial in advancing this argument, but I couldn't find his post immediately — I'll link to it if someone nudges me helpfully.) It's undoubtedly a central discussion throughout the reactosphere at the moment.

Some preliminary thought-gathering on the topic:

(1) Exit is a scale-free concept. It can be applied rigorously to extreme cases of sociopolitical separation, from secession to extraterrestrial escapes. Yet these radical examples do not define it. It's essence is the commercial relation, which necessarily involves a non-transaction option. Exit means: *Take it or leave it* (but don't haggle). It is thus, at whatever scale of expression, the concrete social implementation of freedom as an operational principle.

(2) As a philosophical stance, Exit is anti-dialectical. That is to say, it is the insistence of an option against argument, especially refusing the idea of *necessary political discussion* (a notion which, if accepted, guarantees progression to the left). *Let's spatialize our disagreement* is an alternative to resolution in time. Conversations can be prisons. No one is owed a hearing.

(3) In regards to cultural cladistics, it can scarcely be denied that Exit has a Protestant lineage. Its theological associations are intense,

and stimulating.

(4) Exit asymmetries have been by far the most decisive generators of spontaneous anti-socialist ideology. The iconic meaning of the Berlin Wall needs no further elucidation. The implicit irony is that *people flee **towards** Exit*, and if this is only possible virtually, it metamorphoses automatically into delegitimation of the inhibitory regime. (Socialism is Exit-suppressive by definition.)

(5) *Exit is an option*, which does not require execution for its effectiveness. The case for Exit is not an argument for flight, but a (non-dialectical) defense of the opportunity for flight. Where Exit most fully flourishes, it is employed the least.

(6) Exit is the alternative to voice. It is defended with extremity in order to mute voice with comparable extremity. To moderate the case for Exit is implicitly to make a case for voice. (Those who cannot exit a deal will predictably demand to haggle over it.)

(7) Exit is the primary Social Darwinian weapon. To blunt it is to welcome entropy to your hearth.

June 24, 2014

Age of Exit

Mark Lutter's forecast for the general landscape of 21st century politics leaves plenty to argue with, from all sides, and even

vociferously, but the basic trend-line he projects is persuasive (at least to this blog):

… the costs of exit are going down. Increased mobility and smaller political units will allow people increasingly to vote with their feet. The old political questions of which ideological empire controls which territory will give way to a choose-your-own-governance meta system. […] Thus, to be successful, political units will have to attract residents—that is, to providing better services at lower cost. Increased competition among smaller political units will spur innovation, leading to new forms of governance. Many will fail. But the successful will be replicated, outcompeting more stagnant forms. Singapore, Dubai, Hong Kong, Switzerland, and Lichtenstein show the beginnings of such success. […] Not all the governments will be libertarian. In fact, most probably will not be. Some will experiment with higher levels of redistribution; others with petty tyrannies, zealous zoning and even social exclusion. However, competition will eliminate unsuccessful models. Ultimately, the meta-rules that are emerging are decidedly libertarian in flavor, as choice will govern the survival of political units.

The left won't like this, for obvious reasons. It is dissolidarity incarnate, with an egalitarian-democratic promise that is minimal, at best. I'm not sure whether the criticism has developed beyond indignant scoffing to calmly-formulated theoretical antagonism yet, but it surely will.

The right's objections are likely to be more diverse. Most pointedly, from the perspective here, there is room for deep skepticism about the harshness of the selection mechanisms Lutter is counting upon. Driving a state into insolvency, and liquidation, is no easy thing. For those, especially, who would be delighted to see effective inter-state Darwinism cropping micro-states for adaptive excellence, cold realism concerning the capabilities of states to forestall such outcomes is essential. If widespread conflict-free high-functionality futures sound too good to be true, they probably are.

April 17, 2015

Exit Pressure

It's impossible to tell anything from this story about the *effectiveness* of exercising an Exit Option. It should be expected, anyway, that the option itself does the work, even if pulling the trigger has to contribute to the general credibility of virtual exodus.

As an exemplary case, however, it would be hard to beat. From the statement by Preston Byrne, of *eris*:

If [the Communications Data Bill] is passed into law, we are likely to see a mass exodus of tech companies and financial services firms alike from the United Kingdom. We are happy to lead the charge. […] In keeping with our promise in January to leave the country if

the Conservatives were returned to power with this policy on their legislative agenda, we have promptly ordered all of our staff to depart from the United Kingdom and to conduct all future development work abroad. […] Additionally, with immediate effect, we have moved our corporate headquarters to New York City, where open-source cryptography is firmly established as protected speech pursuant to the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, until such time as we can be certain that the relevant provisions of the Communications Data Bill will be stricken from it (otherwise, we will reincorporate in America and continue our business here).

(To add a "Go *eris*" at this point could be reasonably criticized for redundancy.)

May 29, 2015

Exit Options

Everyone will notice them when they've gone.

All recent policy decisions by the reigning political-economic structure are intelligible as a *mandatory bubble*. If you didn't think quietly 'sitting it out' was already the exercise of an exit option, the necessary lesson will be increasingly hard to ignore. Refusing to invest everything into this lunacy is ceasing to be a permissible social

posture. We've already reached the stage where merely seeking to preserve a pot of retirement savings has been officially recoded as something close to right-wing guerrilla warfare.

Anybody with anything at all is now in the position where they are faced with an aggressive binary dilemma. *Either* unreserved collaboration with the final phase gamble of the existing order — amounting ultimately to the all-in bet that politics has no ontological limits, so that any dysfunction is soluble in a sufficient exertion of will — *or* a dissident skepticism about this dominant assertion, practically instantiated by ever more desperate attempts at withdrawal (persecuted with ever greater fanaticism as acts of sabotage).

There will be massive confusion among the destitution. Explaining why capital preservation is being persecuted as dissent would provide the scaffolding for a counter-narrative that will certainly, eventually, be needed.

ADDED: The basic point is this, if it is conceded to Keynes that *refusing to invest in industrial production is anti-social*, then, as a matter of realistic political necessity, *any insane evil that the powers-that-be come up with gets defined as 'industrial production'*. Let go of gold — the archaic economic exit option — as we did, and anything at all that we're told to sink all we have into is green-lighted. The stream was crossed without enough people noticing. Now the fascism we chose reaps its consequences. It isn't going to be pretty.

June 6, 2015

Exit Foundations

Having lost count of the number of times the demand for *exit guarantees* has come up as an objection to the Patchworked-Neocameral model, it seems worthwhile to reproduce Moldbug's most directly on-point, pre-emptive response to the question. The question being: *What is to stop a regime, once it is entirely unshackled from all domestic political constraint (i.e. Neocameralized), from extinguishing the exit options of its residents?*

As a prefatory note: Like the Misesian praxeology from which it is cladistically descended, the Moldbuggian System is a *transcendental* political philosophy, which is to say that it deals with ultimate or unsurpassable conditions. You have reached the transcendental when there is no higher tribunal, or court of appeal. This is the socio-cosmic buffers. If you don't like what you're seeing here, there's still no point looking anywhere else, because this is all you're going to get:

To live on a Patchwork patch, you have to sign a bilateral contract with the realm. You promise to be a good boy and behave yourself. The realm promises to treat you fairly. There is an inherent asymmetry in this agreement, because you have no enforcement

mechanism against the realm (just as you have no enforcement mechanism against the United States). However, a realm's compliance with its customer-service agreements is sure to be a matter of rather intense attention among residents and prospective residents. And thus among shareholders as well.

For example, I suspect that every customer-service agreement will include the right to remove oneself and one's assets from the realm, at any time, no questions asked, to any other realm that will accept the emigrant. Possibly with an exception for those involved in the criminal-justice process – but this may not even be needed. Who wants a criminal? Not another realm, surely.

Suppose a realm unilaterally abrogates this right of emigration? It has just converted its residents into what are, in a sense, slaves. It is no longer Disneyland. It is a plantation. If it's any good with cinderblocks, barbed-wire and minefields, there is no escape. What do you say if you're stuck on this farm? You say: "yes, Massa." A slave you are and a slave you will be forever.

This is terrible, of course. But again, the mechanism we rely on to prevent it is no implausible deus ex machina, no Indian rope-trick from the age of Voltaire, but the sound engineering principle of the profit motive. A realm that pulls this kind of crap cannot be trusted by anyone ever again. It is not even safe to visit. Tourism disappears. The potential real-estate bid from immigrants disappears. And, while your residents are indeed stuck, they are also remarkably sullen and

display no great interest in slaving for you. Which is a more valuable patch of real estate, today: South Korea, or North Korea? Yet before the war, the North was more industrialized and the South was more rural. Such are the profits of converting an entire country into a giant Gulag.

Is that all? Yes — that's all. Beyond the rational economic incentives of the Sovereign Corporation, controlled within a Patchwork-environment (of competition for human resources), there is nothing to which an appeal can be made. The end.

June 11, 2015

Geopolitical Arbitrage

Stross:

*… things will get **very** ugly in London when the Square Mile and investment banking sector ups and decamps for Frankfurt, leaving the service sector and multiethnic urban poor behind.*

The specifics of this prediction are nutty, if only because mainland Europe is going down the tubes much faster than the UK, but the *abstract anxiety* is spot on. The globalization of the right is entirely about geopolitical arbitrage (while that of the left is about homogenizing global governance). All the critical trends point towards the exacerbation of the 'problem'. The 21st century is the

epoch of fragmentation — unlike anything seen since the early modern period — shifting power to the footloose, and away from megapolitical systems of territorial dominion. *Being left behind* is the rising threat, and we can confidently expect to see it consolidating as the subtext of all leftist grievance. *You can't just leave*. Watch.

The obstacles to geopolitical arbitrage — i.e. spatial Exit pressure — are security constraints. It requires defensible off-shore bases (and Frankfurt most certainly isn't going to provide one). Eyes need to be fixed firmly on secessionary dynamics (fragmentation), techno-commercial decentralization of hard security, crypto-anonymization, artificial intelligence, and the emergence of capital outposts in the Western Pacific region. More exotic factors include opportunities for radical exodus (undersea, Antarctic, and off-planet), facilitated by *territorial production* (artificial islands). The machinery of capture needs to keep *all* of these escape routes firmly suppressed in order to perpetuate itself. That simply isn't going to happen.

Capital is learning faster than its adversaries, and has done so since it initially became self-propelling, roughly half a millennium ago. It's allergic to socialism (obviously), and tends to flee places where socialist influence is substantially greater than zero. Unless caged definitively, eventually it breaks out. Over the next few decades — despite ever deeper encryption — it should become unmistakable which way that's going.

January 18, 2016

Flea Politics

One time-tested way to shed parasites is to take a dip:

Foxes will actually take a stick when they have fleas and get into the water slowly. They let the water raise up to their necks and hold the stick up in the air. As the water goes higher up their face, the fleas will climb higher. Eventually the fox will just have it's nose out of the water while holding the stick. The fleas will climb up the stick and the fox will sink under the water and let the flea infested stick float down the river to the flea's watery grave.

As Balaji Srinivasan remarked (on Ultimate Exit): "… but the best part is this: the people who think this is weird, the people who sneer at the frontier, who hate technology — they won't follow you out there."

Did you really think it was going to be that easy?

Space de-colonization is already preparing to queer-up the escape trajectory:

As venture capitalist space entrepreneurs and aerospace contractors compete to profit from space exploration, we're running up against increasingly conflicting visions for human futures in outer space. Narratives of military tactical dominance alongside

"NewSpace" ventures like asteroid mining projects call for the defense, privatization, and commodification of space and other worlds, framing space as a resource-rich "frontier" to be "settled" in what amounts to a new era of colonization … […] we have to stake a claim in the territory of space programs now. We need to add our voices, perspectives, plans, our ***cares****. There isn't time to wait. We can't sit back and say: Space isn't urgently important, we should be looking at problems here on Earth. First of all, much of space science is looking at and working on problems here on Earth (from conflict, migration, and drought to climate change, deforestation, and more). Secondly, SpaceX, Boeing, and others are preparing new craft and taking humans into space* ***now*** *—and human technology is leaving the solar system. Perhaps it's not happening on the timeline you would prefer, but it's already happening and has been for decades, and they're* ***pretty much*** *doing it without us … So what's next? We—all us queer, trans, disabled, black, native, etc. folk and more—we need to fight back, take back, de-colonize and re-imagine our futures in outer space, we need to* ***pop up where they least expect us****.* (Emphasis in original.)

Leaving those 'cares' behind is going to take a colder exit.

ADDED: From VXXC on twitter — "In space no one can hear you whine."

January 29, 2016

Sentences (#55)

Collapse traps people:

You have to know when to leave.

Most don't, and won't, of course.

(Treat this as a promissory note on an installment of provocative skepticism viz the 'eventually its necessary to stand and fight, or even take things back' proposition that haunts NRx like a chain-rattling ghost, now more than ever, in the shadow of the impending Trumpenreich. Zombie-fighting-types can assume that the tacit XS stance ("flee you fools") is at least as infuriating as they would expect it to be.)

May 24, 2016

Ultimate Exit NY

Some chatter on various web channels about this event, which should be a great opportunity for exploring. To be clear about my participation (which has been open to confusion) — it consists of an intervention out of Cyberspace. (No chance of drinking dates in NY just yet, unfortunately.)

This is a nonlinear point, from my perspective, since the rapid development of telepresence is of obvious internal consequence to

the recent intensification of Exit-oriented and neo-secessionist discussion. (Balaji S. Srinivasan brought this out very clearly in his October 2013 talk on the subject, from which this event takes its title.) Exit in depth — i.e. into the crypto-thickened 'Net — is at the very least an important complement to more traditional notions of territorial flight. It also sustains a better purchase on the commercial principle which provides Exit with its fundamentalal model, and which can easily get lost among secessionist excitement and visions of technologically re-sculpted geographical space.

Some background to the event (and hints of choppy waters). Argument is, of course, the other side of the nonlinearity (a micro-enactment of the inclusive Democratic ideal), so it will be interesting to see whether on this occasion the controversy can remain productive in its own terms, rather than 'merely' stacking up the incentives to get Out.

December 6, 2014

Into the Dark

As the Occident subsides into an ocean of shadow, the FBI is noticing:

"We're seeing more and more cases where we believe significant evidence resides on a phone or a laptop, but we can't crack the

password," FBI Director Jim Comey said during a speech in Washington. "If this becomes the norm … justice may be denied." […] Specifically, Comey said he is "deeply concerned" about what's known as "going dark" — operating systems being developed by companies such as Apple and Google that automatically encrypt information on their devices. And that means even the companies themselves won't be able to unlock phones, laptops and other devices so law enforcement can access emails, photos or other evidence that could be crucial to a case …

Comey, however, didn't place full blame with companies like Apple and Google for creating devices with such encryption. They were "responding to what they perceive is a market demand" from the general public, which has grown "mistrustful of government" in the wake of Edward Snowden's disclosures of secret government surveillance. […] Encryption "is a marketing pitch," Comey said. "But it will have very serious consequences for law enforcement and national security agencies at all levels. Sophisticated criminals will come to count on these means of evading detection. It's the equivalent of a closet that can't be opened. A safe that can't be cracked. And my question is, at what cost?"

A process of Exit-in-place is underway, automatically, and it's not easy to imagine how it could be stopped. With message management disintegrating on one side, and the public sphere eroding into dark nets on the other, it must seem to the State in the age of Internet

runaway that the walls are closing in.

October 24, 2014

Buy Out

This (via Mangan) is such naked precious metals propaganda — and yet it's so right.

… markets are behaving exactly as one would expect at the end of a major economic era. That is, markets are totally divorced from the reality of what is going on both economically and geopolitically. Markets are now in a manic phase, driven by false hope and momentum. […] It clearly helps that many economic figures are manipulated and therefore totally inaccurate. If we add to this the most massive money creation in history, we can be certain that these are not normal times. […] We are experiencing the beginning of a hyperinflationary period, with hyperinflation, so far, being noticed only in financial markets, property markets, and other key assets such as art and classic cars. […] And currencies will continue their decline to zero. Continued money printing will guarantee this. And we have to remember that the major currencies don't have far to go since they are down between 97 and 99 percent in the last hundred years. As currencies start the next major phase of decline we will experience hyperinflation in all parts of the economy. This

hyperinflation will be happening in most major countries. …

It's not just that the analysis is solidly grounded in an obdurate realism (this is the raw economics of Gnon), it's also that:
(a) Gold is the traditional medium of economic-regime exit, and therefore
(b) This discourse is immediately anti-politics (or resistance).
It says: *Get out!* That's not a message to be easily decrypted for representational content, because it's a war cry.

How does a hyperinflationary collapse begin? With a flight to gold. *There's going to be hyperinflation — flee to gold*. It's a circuit. The Cathedral's economic authorities are entirely justified in considering such messaging aggressive (even 'terroristic'), in the specific mode of a self-fulfilling prophecy. If people listened, they'd bring everything crashing down.

It's no less crucial to understand that, by inversion, the voice of central monetary authority is equally incapable of isolating the communication of objective information from the continuous flow of psychological operations. When the state monetary apparatus speaks, it exercises effective power. It commands. The sole value of fiat currency lies in a popular habit of obedience, which the state money power systematically sustains. There is no other usage of macro-economic signs.

'Buy gold' is a counter-revolutionary instruction to participate in the destruction of the state money system.

(… and now we have Bitcoin too.)

August 22, 2014

CHAPTER TWO - WHAT IS GOING ON?

Go Scotland!

Tribal politics excites the autobiographical impulse, which I'll pander to for just a moment (without pretending to any particular excitement). My immediate ancestry is a quarter Scottish, and — here's the thing — those grandparents were Wallaces. Seriously, they were these guys:



… but it's my remaining three-quarters of mongrelized Brit that is leading this post to its destination. In particular, the 37.5% of English blood coursing through my veins is the part murmuring most enthusiastically for Scotland to vote 'Yes!' to departure this week.

Scotland is hugely over-represented in the UK Parliament, shifting the country's politics substantially to the Left. While Scottish

exit wouldn't necessarily ensure a permanent conservative government — electoral democracy simply doesn't work like that — it's hard to argue that the result could be anything other than an ideological rebound of sorts, with the rump UK's entire political spectrum shunting right. Since such an outcome would almost certainly prolong the viability of liberal democracy, perhaps even worldwide (due to contagion effects), it would be unseemly for any neoreactionary to get adrenalized about it. England would nevertheless undergo a minor restoration, conceivably broadening the political imagination in a modestly positive way.

Every increment of dynamic Anglo capitalism adds resources that will eventually be of great use — especially now, with public ledger crypto-commerce coming online. It is a grave error to become so fixated upon the death of the demotic power structure that positive techno-commercial advances are simply written off, or worse, derided as life-support apparatus for the enemy. Even a minor Anglo-capitalist revitalization would produce *some* deep value (as early, or creative destruction-phase Thatcherism did, amid its manifold failures).



Far more significantly, Scottish secession would mark a turning of the tide, with great exemplary potential. Beginning its new life as a hotbed of socialist lunacy, an independent Scotland would be forced — very rapidly — to grow up, which of course means moving sharply to the right. The more theatrical the transitional social crisis, the more thoroughly leftism-in-power would be humiliated. As everyone now knows, such lessons in the essentially incompetent nature of leftist social administration never have any more than a limited effect, since humans are congenitally stupid creatures who find profound learning next-to-impossible. Despite this, they are the only remotely effective lessons history offers. However pitiful mankind's political-economic education may be, it is owed entirely to the

disaster spectacle of leftism in power. A fresh lesson — the more brutally calamitous the better — should always be welcomed unambiguously. If wild-eyed socialists were to drive Scotland over a cliff, they would be presenting a precious gift to the world thereby. (Sadly, in the opinion of this blog, the probability of such an eventuality is relatively low — Scottish canniness can be expected to re-assert itself with remarkable speed once the Sassenach dupes are no longer subsidizing its disappearance.)

The secession of Scotland, from the perspective of the rump UK, is already a (relative) purge of leftist entropy. With the return of an independent Scotland to minimally-functional, and thus moderately right-corrected government, this purge becomes absolute. A quantum of leftist insanity will have been extinguished, since its condition of existence was a relation of political dependency. No one resorts to beggary when abandoned, solitary, upon a desert island. Compulsory self-reliance mandates adjustment to the right (whether preceded by collapse or not).

An independent Scotland would work, most probably quite quickly. It then lights a beacon of disintegration, first across the Anglosphere, and subsequently more widely. The time of fragmentation will have come. The present world epoch of democracy will then have arrived at its final stage — promoting the break-up of the states it has built (and with them, eventually, itself). Scotland could light the touch-paper. It would save everybody some

time if it did.

ADDED: What's the point of independence?

ADDED: *As Bremmer explained, Scottish independence would "tilt the entire U.K. political spectrum to the right." That would boost the odds of a conservative majority winning in 2015. […] … "If Scotland votes 'yes,' down the road would come the ultimate irony," Bremmer said. "The U.K. would be more likely to pull out of the E.U., while Scotland clamors to get in."*

September 8, 2014

Last Days of the UK?

Probably not, but the chance isn't negligible. There's a poll tracker for the final phase here. This historical overview of independence plebiscites is encouraging.

My favorite article on the topic so far is too odd too easily classify. Quality hedginess from Sailer, and (ratcheting down a few notches) David Miles at the *Huffington Post*.

Reason does the right thing. Steve Forbes makes an even stronger case for a break, while trying to do the opposite. Here's some deeply retarded propaganda, that happens to be pointing in the right direction. Round-up coverage from *The Scotsman*.

As should be expected, various flavors of hostility and

condescension to secession from the (smug–through-to-foaming) Left. (We splittists will take whatever we can get.) Paul Krugman, who has never been right about anything, is against independence, which should settle the question conclusively.

XS has already run up the saltire (or something).

George Friedman isn't thrilled about the modern nation state passing through the gates of disintegration, but he's probably right in suggesting that's the ultimate issue at stake: "I think that however the vote goes, unless the nationalists are surprised by an overwhelming defeat, the genie is out of the bottle, and not merely in Britain. The referendum will re-legitimize questions that have caused much strife throughout the European continent for centuries, including the 31-year war of the 20th century that left 80 million dead."

ADDED: The Bitcoin connection. (+ here.)

ADDED: The two Scotlands.

ADDED: "Under the SNP, the expression 'no true Scotsman' may change its meaning from a logical fallacy into a real question of identity."

ADDED: *Occidental Dissent* links an excellent RT video.

ADDED: "A friendly separation is possible, though — and in the longer term, for the best. My guess is that Scotland will, after all, vote against independence tomorrow, cowed by the risks and uncertainties and by the sudden force of international opinion telling

them to think again. If so, it will be a shame. A Scotland that stays in the union reluctantly will be of little use to itself or anybody else. Alongside childish simplicity on fiscal and monetary policy, peevish resentment of the English has been a persistent aspect of the independence campaign. The cure for both is to grow up and move on."

ADDED: Scotland carries the flag of global secession.

September 17, 2014

Dependency Culture …

… proves yet again that it's a reliable vote winner.



What the f…

September 19, 2014

Crack up

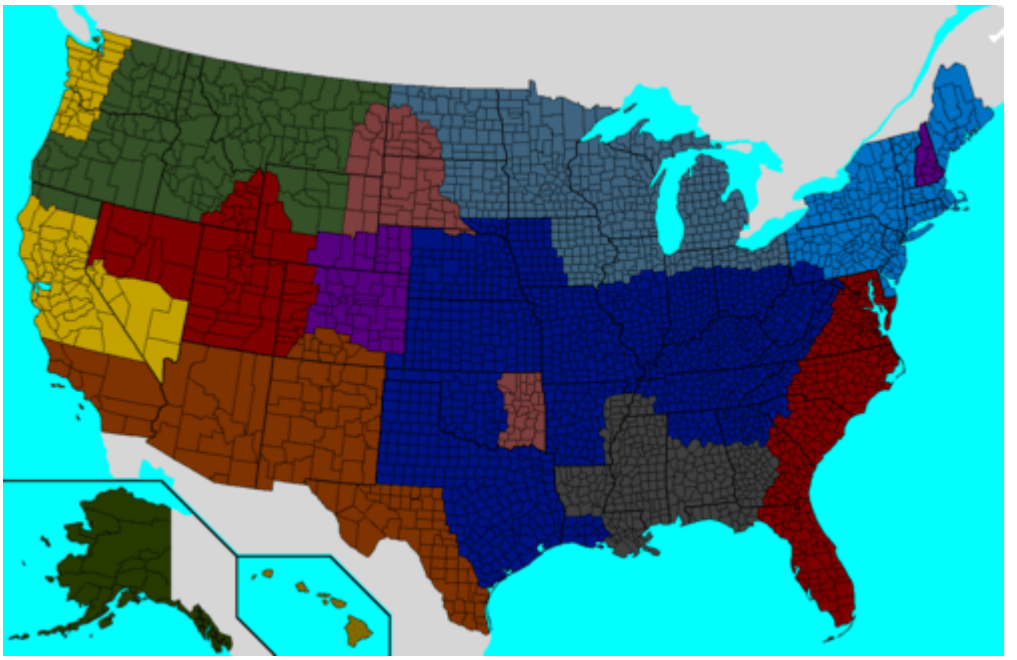
“Why oh why don’t those damned crackers just leave?”

If we’re already entering the ejection phase of neo-secessionism, it has to be a good thing, right?

December 9, 2014

Pan-Secessionism

Here's the All Nations Party vision of the American future:



Some background, and a discussion with Keith Preston on the topic.

The party-political strategy is clearly questionable, but it deserves more engagement than I've noticed in NRx circles. A path to Patchwork has to be something — and this is something.

(AnarchoAbsurdist is all over this at the moment, for e.g. linking to another ANP video.)

ADDED: A vehement critique of Preston from the far left that is well worth a read.

September 7, 2015

Brexit



Making the case for Brexit water-tight:

If the English vote to leave the EU, the Scots will vote to leave the UK. There will then be no Britain. Meanwhile, the shock of Brexit to a continent already staggering under many crises could spell the beginning of the end of the European Union.

ADDED: It's a trend.

February 22, 2016

Brexit Open Thread



For discussion of UK independence, UK fragmentation, EU

disintegration, Pan-secessionism, and catabolic geopolitics in general.

Here's Geert Wilders widening the conversation.

(Content coming later, probably in a subsequent post.)

ADDED: There's a *lot* of gravy. One little drip. Bye: "Prime Minister David Cameron, who had led the campaign to keep Britain in the EU, said he would resign by October and left it to his successor to decide when to invoke Article 50, which triggers a departure from European Union."

ADDED:

> A very clear indication of the cultural divide in the country, from Lord Ashcroft's poll. pic.twitter.com/cuNxeVMpzD
>
> — Jamie Bartlett (@JamieJBartlett) June 24, 2016

It just keeps getting better:

> This is absolutely the predictable outcome of #brexit https://t.co/S2m7X5ZmiG & this trend will accelerate to a federation of global cities
>
> — mikeeisenberg (@mikeeisenberg) June 24, 2016

ADDED: Open thread over at Briggs' place. ("Britain Free. France, Texas Next?")

June 24, 2016

Bluexit

Simply, yes:

Don't organize. Pack. […] Not literally, of course. Not even the good people of Canada should have to stomach a mass migration of moping American liberals mumbling, "Live locally … make art." What I mean is that it's time for blue states and cities to effectively abandon the American national enterprise, as it is currently constituted. Call it the New Federalism. Or Virtual Secession. Or Conscious Uncoupling — though that's already been used. Or maybe Bluexit.

March 9, 2017

CHAPTER THREE - IDENTITY, INDIVIDUALISM AND INDEPENDENCE

Identity Hunger

Handle has an excellent post up on this, referencing Nydwracu, who has made a momentous project out of it. It's huge, and old, and quite impossible to summarize persuasively. It's also impossible to avoid, especially for the Outer Right.

Steve Sailer told a joke that I'm going to mangle. A monstrous alien invasion assails the earth, and people have to decide how to respond. The conservatives say, "What's there to think about? We have to get together to defeat this thing." Liberals respond: "Wait! They probably have good reasons to hate us. It must be something we've done. Until we work out what that is, we should prostrate ourselves before their grievances." Finally the libertarians pipe up: "Do they believe in free markets?"

An obvious quibble arises with the libertarian punch-line: *if only*. Libertarians have predominantly demonstrated an enthusiasm for alien invasion that is totally detached from any market-oriented

qualification. As their argument goes — *the alien invasion is the free market*. (We'll need to return to this, indirectly.)

The appetite for identity seems to be hard-wired in the approximate manner of language, or religion. You have to have one (or several) but instinct doesn't provide it ready made. That's why identity corresponds to a hunger. It's something people need, instinctively, with an intensity that is difficult to exaggerate. Symbolically-satiable needs are political rocket fuel.

Providing an expedient plug for the aching identity socket is as close to politics-in-a-nutshell as anything is going to get. At the core of every ideology is a determination of the model identity — sect, class, race, gender, sexual-orientation … — and mass implementation of this 'consciousness' is already consummate triumph. After psychological latching onto the relevant 'thede' takes place, nothing except tactics remains.

Reaction seeks to defend the dying thedes among its *own people* — which is already a suggestive repetition. Neoreaction goes meta, in a world in which the proscription of certain thedes almost wholly defines concerted enemy action. For one reasonable construction of the reactionary mainstream (*ahem*), this is already to have arrived at a natural stopping point. *We want our thedes back*. Despite the evident obstacles, or obstacle (the Cathedral) in its path, this approach plays into the grain of human nature, and thus tends — understandably — to scare those it wants to scare. If it begins to

work, it will face a serious fight.

Outside in, whose mission is awkwardness, is determined to complicate things. Even the most resolute thedens will probably welcome the first appendix, which draws attention to the peculiar introduction of truly morbid *punitive identifications*. There's no reason to think this is new — Nietzsche denounced Christianity for doing it — but it rises to unmistakable prominence during the decadence of modernity. Primary identifications, for select — targeted — groups, cease to be positive thedes, except insofar as these have become radically negativized. What 'one' is, primarily, if not shielded by credible victimage, is some postmodern variant of the *sinner* (racist, cisgendered, oppressor). Such is the hunger for identity, that even these toxic formations of imposed psychic auto-destruction are *embraced*, creating a species of cringing guilt-consumed sacrificial animals, penned within the contours of 'our' old thedes. Redemption is promised to those who most fully resign themselves to their own identitarian toxicity, who thus attain a perverse superiority over those insufficiently convinced of the need for salvation through self-abolition. "We really, *really* deserve to die" beats out a weak "We really deserve to die," and anybody who still thinks that it's OK to live is simply *lost*. (Only *sinners* are included in this arms-race, and the Cathedral tells us clearly who they are.)

An additional complication will be far less digestible, which is precisely why I would like to align it with the *Outer Right*. Perhaps

escaping this structure of captivity cannot possibly take a reverse path, and a heading into dis-identifications, artificial identities, and identitarian short-circuits is 'our' real destiny. The identity-envy of the right — however deeply-rooted in an indisputable history of relentless Cathedralist aggression — cannot ever be anything but a weakness, given what we know about the political gradient of modern time. The fact it knows we want to be something, and *what it is we want to be*, is the alpha and omega of the Cathedral's political competence. It knows what its enemies would be, if they could be what they want to be. It does not take a deep immersion in Sunzi to realize the strategic hopelessness of that situation.

I want the Cathedral to be obliterated by monsters, which it does not recognize, understand, or possess antibodies against. There is an idiosyncratic element to that, admittedly. I identify far more with the East India Company that the United Kingdom, with the hybrid Singlosphere than the British people, with clubs and cults than nations and creeds, with Yog Sothoth than my ancestral religion, and with Pythia than the Human Security System. I think true cosmopolitans — such as the adventurers of late 19th century Shanghai (both English and Chinese) — are superior to the populist rabble from which nationalism draws its recruits. That's just me.

What isn't just me, is what the Cathedral knows how to beat. That, I strongly suspect, at least in the large majority of cases, is you.

September 25, 2013

Capitalism vs the Bourgeoisie

John Gray makes some telling observations about the debilitating practical paradoxes of the late-20th century right.

Summing up Thatcher's outlook, [Charles] *Moore writes of her "unusual mindset, which was both conservative and revolutionary." It is a shrewd observation, but Thatcher's reactionary nostalgia and revolutionary dynamism had something in common: the sturdy individualism to which she looked back was as much a fantasy as the renewed bourgeois life she projected into the future.*

Once 'sturdy individualism' is dismissed as a fantasy, a horror story of some kind is the only imaginable outcome. If people are really too pathetic to take responsibility for their lives, what else could we possibly expect?

It has surely to be granted that anybody useless enough to be inadequate to the basics of their own survival, is scarcely going to exhibit the altruistic surplus value required to effectively take care of anybody else. Maybe God will make good the deficit, or — to plunge fully into feel-good superstition — 'society'? The ultimate implication of Gray's argument is that humans aren't fit to live. (Which isn't to say

that he's wrong.)

The future belongs to frontier people. If no significant fraction of the human species is any longer capable of being that, then it's time for an evolutionary search for something that is. Don't expect it to be pretty.

August 24, 2013

INTJ

Everybody seems to be mad for this stuff, understandably. The craving to be told what you are will never die, until you do. (That's why it's called me-me-memetics.)



As for the wretched cases who can't quite claw their way into the INTJ master-race, there are numerous consolation positions

available among the NPCs.

Here's the obvious role model (but only because you begged):



Still my favorite:



February 6, 2015

Corrosive Individualism?

Everyone's seen this argument a million times: "So what's the problem with libertarianism? The problem is that if you put two groups one against another, the one who is best able to work together will overcome the group of individualists."

An example would be nice. Here are the major modern wars of necessity (or existential conflicts) the Anglosphere has been involved in ('win' here meaning 'came out on the winning side' — conniving to get others to do most of the dying is an Anglo-tradition in itself):

English Civil War (1642-1651) — Protestant individualists win.
War of the Spanish Succession (17012-1714) — Protestant individualists win.
Seven Years War (1756-1763) — Protestant individualists win.
American War of Independence (1775-1783) — Protestant individualists win.
Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) — Protestant individualists win.
American Civil War (1861-1865) — Protestant individualists win.
First World War (1914-1918) — Anglophone individualists win.
Second World War (1939-1945) — Anglophone individualists win.
Cold War (1947-1989) — Anglophone individualists win.

Have I missed any big ones? I'm simply not seeing the "history is the graveyard of failed individualist societies" picture that seems to be consolidating itself as a central alt-right myth.

This isn't a moral thing. I get (without great sympathy) the "organically cohesive societies *should* win" mantra. If there's any evidence at all that it's a judgment endorsed by Gnon, feel free to bring the relevant **facts** to the comment thread.

ADDED: "It's complicated." — You're saying that now?

November 5, 2015

The Atomization Trap

"Hands up everyone who hates atomization." That isn't a call for surrender (at least overtly), but merely an informal poll.

Now try it differently:

"Hands up everyone who hates atomization, but this time *without looking around*." Was the decision-process – perhaps ironically – a little slower this time? It's worth thinking about that. Taking a shortcut that bypasses the social process might be expected to speed things up. Yet on the other hand – introducing the delay – comes the hazy recognition: If you make the call privately, you're already complicit. A minor formal re-organization of the question transforms it insidiously. *What do you think of atomization, speaking atomistically?* It becomes a strange, or self-referential loop. Modern history has been like that.

First, though, a few terminological preliminaries. An 'atom' is

etymologically indistinct from an 'individual.' At the root, the words are almost perfectly interchangeable. Neither, relative to the other, carries any special semantic charge. So if 'atomization' sounds like a metaphor, it really isn't. There's nothing essentially derivative about the word's sociological application. If it appears to be a borrowing from physics, that might be due to any number of confusions, but not to a displacement from an original or natural terrain. Atoms and societies belong together primordially, though in tension. That's what being a social animal – rather than a fully 'eusocial' one (like an ant, or a mole-rat) – already indicates.

Individuals are hard to find. Nowhere are they simply and reliably *given*, least of all to themselves. They require historical work, and ultimately fabrication, even to float them as functional approximations. A process is involved. That's why the word 'atomization' is less prone to dupery than 'atom' itself is. Individuality is nothing outside a destiny (but this is to get ahead of ourselves).

It's difficult to know where to begin. (Did Athens sentence Socrates to death for being a social atomizer?) Individualism is stereotypically WEIRD (western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic), and so tends to lead into the labyrinth of comparative ethnography. It has been unevenly distributed, in roughly the same way that modernity has been. Since this is already to say almost everything on the topic, it merits some dismantling.

The work of Walter Russell Mead provides a useful relay station.

The historical questions he has engaged – which concern nothing less than *the outcome of the world* – have been embedded within an intellectual framework shaped by special attention to modern providential Christianity. What has been the source of the 'manifest destiny' which has placed the keys to global mastery in the hands of a progressively distilled social project, Protestant, then Puritan, then Yankee? If not exactly or straightforwardly 'God' (he is too subtle for that), it is at least something that the lineage of Reform Christianity has tapped with unique effectiveness. Protestantism sealed a pact with historical destiny – to all appearances defining a specifically modern global teleology – by consistently winning. Individualization of conscience – *atomization* – was made fate.

Six years after *Special Providence* (2001) came *God and Gold*, which reinforced the Anglo-American and capitalistic threads of the narrative. The boundaries between socio-economic and religious history were strategically melted, in a way pioneered by Max Weber, Werner Sombart, and – more critically – by numerous Catholic thinkers who have identified, and continue to identify, the essence of modernity as a hostile religious power. Eugene Michael Jones is Walter Russell Mead on the other side of the mirror. The story each is telling transforms without significant distortion into that of the other, once chilled below the threshold of moral agitation. Whatever it was that happened to Western Christianity in the Renaissance unleashed capitalism upon the world.

It is possible to be still cruder without sacrificing much reality. When considered as rigid designations, Atomization, Protestantism, Capitalism, and Modernity name exactly the same thing. In the domain of public policy (and beyond it), *privatization* addresses the same directory.

While any particular variant of implicit or explicit Protestantism has its distinctive theological (or atheological) features, just as any stage of capitalistic industrialization has its concrete characteristics, these serve as distractions more than as hand-holds in the big picture. The only truly big picture is *splitting*. The Reformation was not only a break, but still more importantly a normalization of breaking, an initially informal, but increasingly rigorized, protocol for social disintegration. The ultimate solution it offered in regard to all social questions was not argumentation, but exit. Chronic fission was installed as the core of historical process. Fundamentally, that is what atomization means.

Protestantism – *Real Abstract Protestantism* – which is ever more likely to identify itself as post-Christian, post-theistic, and post-Everything Else, is a self-propelling machine for incomprehensibly prolonged social disintegration, *and everyone knows it*. Atomization has become an autonomous, inhuman agency, or at least, something ever more autonomous, and ever more inhuman. It can only liquidate everything you've ever cared about, by its very nature, so – of course – no one likes it. Catholicism, socialism,

and nationalism have sought, in succession, coalition, or mutual competition, to rally the shards of violated community against it. The long string of defeat that ensued has been a rich source of cultural and political mythology. Because there is really no choice but to resist, battle has always been rejoined, but without any serious sign of any reversal of fortune.

Under current conditions, atomization serves – uniquely – as an inexhaustible tube of reactionary glue. Profound aversion to the process is the sole common denominator of our contemporary cultural opposition, stretching from traditionalist Catholicism to alt-right ethno-nationalism. "Whatever our preferred glue, can't we at least agree that things have become unglued – and are ever less glued?" That seems very far from an unreasonable aspiration. After all, if coalition building is the goal, what – imaginably – could provide a better rallying point than the very principle of social integrity, even if this is invoked purely, and negatively, by way of an anathematization directed at its fatal historic foe? Atomization, in this regard, brings people together, at least conversationally, though this works best when the conversation doesn't get very deep.

Scarcely anybody wants to be atomized (they say). Perhaps they read Michel Houellebecq's 1998 novel *Atomised* (or *Elementary Particles*), and nod along to it. How could one not? If that's where it ended, it would be hard to see the problem, or how there ever came to be a problem, but it doesn't end there, or anywhere close,

because atomization makes a mockery of words. Atomization was never good at parties, unsurprisingly. It's unpopular to the point of essence. There's the Puritan thing, and the Ayn Rand thing, and the nerd thing, and the trigger for Asperger's jokes – if that's actually a separate thing – and no doubt innumerable further social disabilities, each alone disqualifying, if receiving a 'like' in some collective medium is the goal, because nobody likes it, as we've heard (for half a millennium already). But what we've heard, and what we've seen, have been two very different things.

Atomization never tried to sell itself. Instead, it came free, with everything else that was sold. It was the formal implication of dissent, first of all, of methodical skepticism, or critical inquiry, which presupposed a bracketing of authority that proved irreversible, and then – equally implicit originally – the frame of the contractual relation, and every subsequent innovation in the realm of the private deal (there would be many, and we have scarcely started). "So what do *you* think (or want)?" That was quite enough. No articulate enthusiasm for atomization was ever necessary. The sorcery of revealed preference has done all the work, and there, too, we have scarcely started.

Atomization may have few friends, but it has no shortage of formidable allies. Even when people are readily persuaded that atomization is undesirable, they ultimately want to decide for themselves, and the more so as they think that it matters. Insofar

as atomization has become a *true horror*, it compels an intimate cognitive and moral relation with itself. No one who glimpses what it is can delegate relevant conclusions to any higher authority. Thus it wins. Every Catholic of intellectual seriousness has seen this, for centuries. Socialists have too, for decades. The moment of ethno-nationalist revelation cannot long be delayed. Under modern conditions, every authoritative moral community is held hostage to private decision, even when it is apparently affirmed, and especially when such affirmation is most vehemently asserted. (The most excitable elements within the world of Islam see this arriving, and are conspicuously unhappy about the fact.)

Substantially, if only notionally, freedom of conscience might tend to collectivity, but formally it locks-in individualism ever more tightly. It defies the authority of community at the very moment it offers explicit endorsement, by making community an urgent matter of private decision, and – at the very peak of its purported sacredness – of *shopping*. Religious traditionalists see themselves mirrored in whole-food markets, and are appalled, when not darkly amused. "Birkenstock Conservatives" was Rod Dreher's grimly ironic self-identification. Anti-consumerism becomes a consumer preference, the public cause a private enthusiasm. Intensification of collectivist sentiment only tightens the monkey-trap. It gets worse.

American history – at the global frontier of atomization – is thickly speckled with *elective communities*. From the Puritan

religious communities of the early colonial period, through to the 'hippy' communes of the previous century, and beyond, experiments in communal living under the auspices of radicalized private conscience have sought to ameliorate atomization in the way most consistent with its historical destiny. Such experiments reliably fail, which helps to crank the process forward, but that is not the main thing. What matters most about all of these co-ops, communes, and cults is the semi-formal contractual *option* that frames them. From the moment of their initiation – or even their conception – they confirm a sovereign atomization, and its reconstruction of the social world on the model of a menu. Dreher's much-discussed 'Benedict Option' is no exception to this. There is no withdrawal from the course of modernity, 'back' into community, that does not reinforce the pattern of dissent, schism, and exit from which atomization continually replenishes its momentum. As private conscience directs itself towards escape from the privatization of conscience, it regenerates that which it flees, ever more deeply within itself. Individuation, considered impersonally, likes it when you run.

As is well understood, 'atoms' are not atoms, and 'elements' are not elements. Elementary particles – if they exist at all – are at least two (deep) levels further down. Human individuals are certainly no less decomposable. Marvin Minsky's 'society of mind' is but one vivid indication of how historical sociology might tilt into the sub-atomic realm. Particle accelerators demonstrate that shattering entities

down to the smallest attainable pieces is a technological problem. The same holds in the social realm, though naturally with very different technologies.

To dismiss individuals as metaphysical figments, therefore, would be the most futile of diversions. Atomization has no constraining metaphysics, whether in particle physics or in the dynamic anthropological, socio-historical process. If it promises at times to tell you what you really are, such whispers will eventually cease, or come to deride themselves, or simply be forgotten. Protestantism, it has to be remembered, is only masked, momentarily, as a religion. What it is underneath, and enduringly, is a way of breaking things.

After so much has already been torn apart, with so many monstrosities spawned, it is no doubt exhausting to be told that while almost everything remains to be built, no less still waits to be broken. Atomization has already gone too far, we are incessantly told. If so, the future will be hard. There can be no realistic doubt that it will be extremely divided. The dynamo driving things tends irresistibly in that direction. Try to split, and it whirls faster.

"Hands up everyone who hates atomization." No, that isn't a question anymore. It would be a call for surrender, if surrender mattered, but it doesn't, as we've seen. Keep on fighting it, by all means. It likes that.

June 6, 2017

Against Universalism

There's a philosophical objection to any refusal of universalism that will be familiar from other uses (the denunciation of relativism, most typically). It requires only one step: *Isn't the denial of the universal itself a universalist claim?* It's a piece of malignant dialectics because it demands that we agree. We don't, and won't ever, agree. Agreement is the worst thing that could happen. Merely assent to its necessity, and global communism, or some close analog, is the implicit conclusion.

If there is a universal truth, it belongs only to Gnon, and Gnon is a dark (occulted) God. Traditional theists will be at least strongly inclined to disagree — *and that is excellent*. We disagree already, and we have scarcely begun.

There is no 'good life for man' (in general) — or if there is we know nothing of it, or not enough. Even those persuaded that they do, on the contrary, know what such a life should be, promote its universality only at the expense of being denied the opportunity to pursue it. If we need to agree on the broad contours of such a model for human existence, then reaching agreement will precede it — and 'reaching agreement' is politics. Some much wider world acquires a veto over the way of life you select, or accept, or inherit (the details need not detain us). We have seen how that works. Global communism is the inevitable destination.

The alternative to agreement is schism. Secession, geopolitical disintegration, fragmentation, splitting — disagreement escapes dialectics and separates in space. Anti-universalism, concretely, is not a philosophical position but an effectively defensible assertion of diversity. From the perspective of the universal (which belongs only to Gnon, and never to man), it is an experiment. The degree to which it believes in itself is of no concern that matters to anything beyond itself. It is not answerable to anything but Gnon. What anyone, anywhere, thinks about it counts for nothing. If it fails, it dies, *which should mean nothing to you*. If you are compelled to care about someone else's experiment, then a schism is missing. Of course, you are free to tell it that you think it will fail, if it is listening, but there is absolutely no need to reach agreement on the question. This is what, in the end, non-communism means.

Non-universalism is hygiene. It is practical avoidance of other people's stupid shit. There is no higher principle in political philosophy. Every attempt to install an alternative, and impose a universal, reverts to dialectics, communization, global evangelism, and totalitarian politics.

This is being said here now, because NRx is horribly bad at it, and degenerates into a clash of universalisms, as into an instinctive equilibrium. There are even those who confidently propose an 'NRx solution' for the world. Nothing could be more absurd. The world — as a whole — is an entropy bin. The most profoundly degraded

communism is its only possible 'universal consensus'. (Everyone knows this, when they permit themselves to think.)

All order is local — which is to say *the negation of the universal*. That is merely to re-state the second law of thermodynamics, which 'we' generally profess to accept. The only thing that could ever be universally and equally distributed is noise.

Kill the universalism in your soul and you are immediately (objectively) a neoreactionary. Protect it, and you are an obstacle to the escape of differences. That is communism — whether you recognize it, or not.

March 18, 2016

Against Universalism II

Preliminary throat-clearing (as in part one): In its most rigorous construction, 'universalism' is robust under conditions of rational argument (i.e. evidence-based logico-mathematical criticism). Mathematical theorems, in particular [sic], are universal truths. Any assertions that can be constructed to a comparable level of formal rigor (and ultimately *mechanization*) can lay claim to the same status. However, with the slightest departure from this — rigidly algorithmic — criterion, controversy rapidly begins. This is not the place and time to argue the case for transcendental philosophy (within which

praxeology in included), but such a case could be made. Ditto strictly proceduralized empirical science. All of this is a digression.

The question of universalism as it concerns us here is not a matter of meta-mathematics, epistemology, or the philosophy of science. It is rather directed at *the political scope of argument*. Is it mandatory to demand that argument, according to the highest principles of (logical) cognitive compulsion, be imposed globally? Does the quality of argument — however exalted — require its unrestricted application across space and time? It is the affirmative response to *this* question that defines universalism in its ideological sense. Pure Jacobinism, of course, answers *yes*. There is a universal duty to compel submission to the truth. This is the secular form of evangelical salvationism.

The contrary suggestion, here defended, is that — under real global conditions — universalism is a catastrophic mistake. The social scope of rational discussion is itself strictly bounded, and attempts to extend it (coercively) beyond such limits are politically disastrous. *Laissez-faire* envelops the sphere of imperative rationality, and respects its practical contour. Stupidity does not need to be hunted down and exterminated. All historical evidence indicates that it cannot be.

If the universal triumph of reason is an impractical goal, democratic globalism is exposed as a preposterous error. Minimizing the voice of stupidity is the realistic — and already extremely

challenging — alternative. Rare enclaves of rigorously self-critical realism have as their primary obligation the self-protection of their (evidently precarious) particularity. In the wider world, fanatical ignorance and grotesque cognitive malformation rage rampantly. Borders, filters, tests, and selection mechanisms of all kinds provide the only defenses against it.

The universalist (Jacobin) model is always a conversation. *You have to join together first, simply to talk, and after that reason will prevail*. That's the path of the *Zeitgeist* — Hegelianism at its most arcane, expedient progressivism at more common levels of popularity — with its twin-stroke motor of aggressive proselytization and mass embrace.

"Invade the world, invite the world" is the Sailer formula (quasi-random link). *Amalgamate, then elevate* (in the direction of ascending rationality). This isn't a (theoretically convincing) claim about the unique structure of mathematical proof, it's a (factually trashed) claim about the global uniformity of human brains. The 'universality' it invokes is that of convergence upon the authority of reason. In other words, it's a bizarre progressive myth that all self-protective sanity seeks to maximally distance itself from.

People learn, but only very rarely through sophisticated argument, or its 'cunning' socio-political avatars. They learn because they fail badly, and it hurts. 'Mankind' is a progressive myth, incapable of learning anything. When real cultures learn, it is

because they have been locked in intimate particularity, such that the consequences of their own cognitive processes impact intensely upon them. Anything that separates an individual, or a group, from the results of its own thoughts, is an apparatus of anti-learning. Progressive universalism is precisely this.

Dis-amalgamation — isolation — is the way to learn. It's how speciation happens, long before learning becomes neurological. Individuation (at whatever scale) establishes the foundation for trade, communication, and intellectual exchange. Micro-states commercialize. Macro-states decay into political resource allocation, and entropic sludge. Protect your own patch if you want to have anything to talk about.

There's going to be a lot of talk about 'universalism' rolling in:

> Apparently it's a neocon evil to say that Western Civilization is based in universalism. Funny. I thought it was Jeffersonian.
>
> — John Podhoretz (@jpodhoretz) April 27, 2016

It's a suicidal ideology in its death-spasm phase, but it won't die quietly.

ADDED:

> Imperialism is the necessary logical consequence of universalism…
>
> – Huntington pic.twitter.com/u4TWycpPeu

— Spatel (@Rjrasva) May 15, 2015

If the West could still do imperialism, that would be one thing, but it can't (and can't even stop doing the opposite).

April 28, 2016

Independence

The philosophical antonym to 'universality' is 'particularity'. Its broader, ideological antonym is something closer to *independence*.

This isn't a word greatly emphasized by NRx up to this point, or — for that matter — one figuring prominently in contemporary discussions of any kind. That's strange, because it orchestrates an extraordinary set of conceptual connections.

Independence is a rough synonym for *sovereignty*, to begin with. The profound association between these terms bears quite extreme analytical pressure. The sovereign is that instance capable of independent decision. An independent state is indistinguishable from a sovereign one, and to impugn its real sovereignty is to question its effective independence. Secession is a process of independence. A (Moldbuggian) Patchwork is a network of independent geopolitical entities. All relevant trends to geopolitical fragmentation are independence-oriented. Each executed *Exit*

option (even on a shopping expedition) is an implicit declaration of independence, at least in miniature. (The relations between *independence* and *connectivity* are subtle and complex.)

Remaining (for a moment) in the narrowest NRx channel, the entire passivism discussion is independence related. Protest ('activism') is disdained on account of its fundamental dependency (upon sympathetic political toleration). No social process genuinely directed towards independence would fall within the scope of this criticism. (The 'Benedict Option' is one obvious example.) 'Build something' epitomizes independence process.

Cannot the entire range of contentions over the individualism / collectivism dyad be recast in terms of independence? Dependency exists on a spectrum, but the defining attitude towards it tends to polarization. Is dependence to be embraced, or configured as a problem to be worked against? This blog is highly tempted to project the Left / Right or 'principal political' dimension along the axis these distinct responses define. The Left is *enthused* by inter-dependency, and (to a greater or lesser extent) *accepts* comparative independence, while for the Right this attitudinal system is exactly reversed. (The most fundamental tensions within the reactosphere are clearly related to this articulation.)

One inevitable point of contention — honed over decades of objection to libertarianism — is captured by the question: *Are not children essentially dependents?* Yes, of course they are, but is

growing up anything other than a process of independence? From one perspective, a family can be interpreted as a model of inter-dependence (without obvious inaccuracy). Yet, from another, a family is an independence-production unit, both in its comparative autonomy in respect to the wider society, and as a child-rearing matrix. Families are loci of independence struggle (to which the Left response is: *They shouldn't have to be*). Dependency culture is the Left heartland.

Independence and autonomy are very closely related terms. All discussions of autonomy, and even of automation, click quite neatly onto this template, but this is a point exceeding the ambitions of the present post.

Abstraction, too, is a topic the tantalizingly overlaps independence. Whether cognitive independence *entirely accommodates intelligence optimization* is also a question for another occasion.

NRx, XS tentatively proposes, is *a political philosophy oriented to the promotion of independence*. (Much pushback is, naturally, expected.)

May 3, 2016

Independence Games

North Korea's nuclear test on September 3 was registered as a rare literal geopolitical earthquake. Some public uncertainty persists about the scale and significance of the tremor. It has been reported in a range of magnitudes from 6.1 to 6.3 (or even higher), on the logarithmic Richter Scale. An event of this size suggests an explosion of several hundred kilotons of TNT, and is consistent with the detonation of a thermonuclear device. North Korean confirmation of exactly this occurrence has been received with unprecedented seriousness.

Nuclear non-proliferation is more idea than reality. Its only substance is a comparative sluggishness when estimated against the benchmark of some generally unstated nightmare scenario. According to such counter-factual consideration, nuclear weapons *might* have been more widespread than they are by now. But exponential processes look like this. They start small, and don't seem to be going anywhere dramatic for a while. As the celebrated fable of exponentiation shows, a modest bowl of rice gets you quite a long way into the chess board. The supposedly common-sense assumption that *uncontrollable nuclear proliferation isn't yet happening* requires an argument. (This short essay makes the other argument.)

The nuclear 'club' is too unwieldy to share any kind of seriously

constraining principle. There is nothing identifiable that entitles a nation to membership, beyond naked possession of doomsday-tier military capability. The club was trans-ideological from the start, and quite soon afterwards highly multicultural. Among members, reciprocal distrust and even hostility is the norm, which – given the runaway action-reaction process that settled the membership roster – could scarcely be unexpected. The behavior of members is controlled by nothing beyond game theory. It's also very much worth mentioning that nobody who manages to get into the club can, in any practical way, be thrown out.

The United States detonated the world's first thermonuclear, two-stage, fusion, or (Teller-Ulam design) 'hydrogen' bomb at Enewetak Atoll on November 1, 1952. The Soviet Union responded less than a year later, testing its own H-bomb on August 12, 1953. Tests – or demonstrations – followed in succession from The United Kingdom (November 1957), China (June 17, 1967), and France (August 1968). Israel is thought to have conducted a joint test with the Republic of South Africa – the so-called 'Vela Incident' – in September 22, 1979. In 1991 the South African government claimed to have assembled, and later unilaterally dismantled, six nuclear devices. India expanded the spiral of thermonuclear proliferation into South Asia with a test in May 1998. Pakistan is not known to have tested anything beyond 'boosted fission' devices, but it formidable nuclear capability is not in question. (A longer essay

would have found space at this point to acknowledge Pakistani Abdul Qadeer Khan's disproportionate contribution to the global proliferation dynamic.) Saudi nuclear cooperation with Pakistan can be expected to accelerate the spread of nuclear weaponry into the Arabian Peninsula, once Iranian progress in the military application of the technology triggers the long-anticipated Sunni-Shia arms-race in weapons of mass destruction. Hence the chain of proliferation steadily lengthens on its main axis, through Cold War superpower rivalry, into Chinese triangulation, a responsive Indian bomb, and then into the fractured world of Islam, via Pakistan (with unreciprocated Israeli nuclear prowess as additional prompt, and pretext).

The one-dimensional character of this narrative is an artifact of its immaturity. The under-development of the proliferation process appears to present the 'international community' with no more than a single crisis at any time. Things will not look this way for long. There is nothing essentially mono-linear about the dynamic of cross-escalation. Increasing momentum is already taking it off the tracks. As Richard Fernandez notes, lines of nuclear escape are occurring in several directions at once:

> In security affairs the old East-West game payoff matrix has been replaced by a multidimensional array of new players many of them sub-national, some of them unknown. The big

> wild card is technology. Disruptive technological change and new modes of warfare associated with them have upset the old calculus. North Korea, Iran are not outlier threats but leading indicators of the changed dynamic. They are the first samples of a new threat coming onstream.

North Korea claims to have tested thermonuclear weapons in January 2016, following fission device tests in 2006, 2009, and 2013). Whether as a matter of analytical realism, or of strategically motivated public skepticism, the claim was met by orchestrated Western disparagement. The 2017 test shattered this wall of denial. In the words of Scott D. Sagan, writing at Foreign Affairs: "North Korea no longer poses a nonproliferation problem; it poses a nuclear deterrence problem"

While, if traced as a simple historically consistent curve, it is not yet impossible to see a process of deceleration in this time-line, such an optic is ceasing to convince. It seems to be part of a collapsing world order, which is taking its structures of perception down with it. The assumption of continuity, for instance, now seems reckless in the extreme. Historical *discontinuity* in the proliferation dynamic has been especially notable over recent decades, due to a hardening pattern whose incentive effects could not easily be more ominous. The surrender of thermonuclear ambitions has acquired a stark correlation with subsequent regime destruction, unlike anything

seen in the previous era of Cold War superpower patronage.

Ukraine voluntarily surrendered its nuclear arsenal to Russia upon the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In the Gorbachev era, this decision no doubt appeared rational – and even prudent. Subsequent regional developments make it far harder to excuse. It remains to be seen whether Ukrainian national independence will have finally been sacrificed to this high-minded call, but rudimentary geopolitical and domestic security already has been.

The prevailing racial hysteria of our age hazes any analysis of South African regime change in comparable terms, as it already hazed the process itself. Future historians will have clearer eyes. It certainly *seems* to fit the pattern. No less than with Juche, the experience of apartheid is that sensitivity to international 'polite opinion' is vastly increased by the absence of nukes.

The Libyan lesson has been the most lurid to date. Libyan denuclearization "was peacefully resolved on December 2003" Wikipedia explains. In a separate article it adds the appendix (more helpfully still) that "Muammar Gaddafi, the deposed leader of Libya, was captured and killed on 20 October 2011 during the Battle of Sirte. … videos of his last moments show rebel fighters beating him and one of them sodomizing him with a bayonet before he was shot several times as he shouted for his life." It would be difficult to devise a more graphic educational resource *against* international WMD non-proliferation compliance.

This is the background against which North Korean nuclear obstreperousness is to be gauged. The regime had, in any case, already made obnoxiousness into a local specialism. Its delinquent international behavior has long been the stuff of dark comedy. The country's cultivated image takes *prickly* into territory the zoological porcupine lineage has yet to explore.

In respect to strategic fundamentals, however, the regime's feral punk-performance attitude to diplomatic conduct is not the principal issue. Bad attitude makes for stimulating diplomatic theater, but it decorates the fundamentals of threat. *Focus on capabilities, not motivations*, is a strategic principle that cannot be over-stressed. In the case of North Korea, and others no doubt soon to follow, however, it is a principle that requires complete inversion. A definite *incapacity* rises, instead, to strategic prominence.

The extremity of the emerging North Korean threat is a function of weakness, in many respects, but most centrally regarding its new responsibilities for deterrence management. Insecure nuclear arsenals are destabilizing, since they incline to first use, on the *use-it-or-lose-it* principle. Vulnerability to a first-strike is a continuous prompt to pre-emption.

North Korea is a geographically small nation, with crude command-control structures, very limited early warning capabilities, and an exclusive reliance on exposed land-based ballistic missile platforms for warhead delivery. In other words, it is destined to

remain on a hair-trigger from the moment it crosses the deterrence threshold. Rather than being a splitting headache to the world order by relentless, malignant initiative, it will henceforth be one by simple strategic default. The world will have become a city built under Vesuvius, quite regardless of any planning decisions or philosophies of risk. An epoch of peril is opening.

Under these conditions, mere 'capability' becomes extraordinarily provocative, and incompetence is automatically terrorizing. Yet, while this dilemma is not difficult to understand, it is perhaps a little *too* difficult to be captured by any public debate conducted at a realistically imaginable level of sophistication. Insofar as there is anything like a court of global mass opinion, it can be confidently expected to miss the strategic essentials and lose itself in multilateral theater performances. Geostrategic realities and mass perceptions are on diverging trajectories.

The prevalent delusions tend to be simplifying, and retarded (in the strict sense). They lag the diffusive trend, and thus invoke unrealistically economical structures of agency, drawn back towards the long-lost ideal of bipolarity. The age of superpowers still dominates the nuclear imagination.

Because there is no road through Pyongyang that doesn't end in a pit full of diplomatic punji sticks, the temptation is to fantasize a road through Beijing. No such thoroughfare exists. Relations between China and the North Korean regime have reached their lowest point

since the Korean War, and are now frankly hostile. The Kim Jong-un regime has sought to extirpate Chinese influence from its leadership, with spectacular ruthlessness. Targeting of Chinese urban centers by the North Korean arsenal is no longer unimaginable, or, in China, unimagined. After all, the natural target of a deterrent is the greatest threat to the wielding nation's sovereignty. It is near-inevitable that China will occupy this role in the North Korean case. Chinese impotence in respect to North Korea is what the North Korean nuclear arsenal is largely – and perhaps even primarily – about.

Tyler Cowen describes Robert Heinlein's (1966) The Moon is a Harsh Mistress as "perhaps the best novel for understanding the logic of a future conflict with North Korea." He then adds: "furthermore Catalonians should read it too. Most of all, I recall upon my reread that this book was my very first exposure to game-theoretic reasoning." Not only exotic bombardment (by "electronic catapult"), independence struggle, and games, but also a world order reconstructed by the rise of China, and even a "malicious AI" who acquires strategic agency. Evidently, already half a century ago, Heinlein is exploring a durable cluster of concerns. At the very core: *There can be no question of achieving or maintaining independence without the capacity to inflict serious harm upon those who might seek to prevent it*.

Independence, in its geopolitical sense, fuses liberty and security indissociably. Autonomy – which is exactly *sovereignty* – requires

insensitivity to coercion, and is thus the negative of foreign compelling threats. The analytical equivalence between reciprocal independence and a 'balance of terror' submits national autonomy to a geopolitical form of general relativity. Since no such thing as *absolute security* is realistic, sovereignty exists only in degrees, within tense networks. The tension is the game.

Thomas Schelling's pioneering application of game theory to nuclear strategy remains the point of ingress into this world. The core reality of MAD games is easily misunderstood. Massive (or non-reiterating) retaliation is – *at the stage it comes due* – by immediate estimation irrational. It is then *too late* to contribute anything but compounded harm, regardless of its occasion. Under hypothetical conditions of amnesia and unconstrained action, it can never make sense. Yet, paradoxically, the ability to make credible retaliatory threats is the basic underpinning of rationality during prior negotiation games. Without it, there can be no *reason* for competitor restraint. The requirement, then, is for a future agent to be firmly committed to a conditional course of action that – at the potential point of execution – will be non-compelling.

Mutual assured destruction has been derided for its madness, but it is no less an outer-limit of sanity. Its logic is as rigorously implacable as any found within the social and historical sciences. The extreme moral disturbance that it arouses speaks in favor of its uncompromised rationality. Anguished intuition counts for nothing

in its cold calculus, unless as a technical obstacle. The fact that people find this logic of inherited fatal commitments intolerable, as dramatized with exceptional vividness in the opening sequences of the 1983 movie *WarGames*, is *our* problem. The process is re-routed by our squeamishness, but not at all derailed. It has long been suspected that humans are too weak for MAD.

As an expression of absolute commitment, suicide terrorism appears to provide MAD with a microscopic model, but it is a weak and misleading one. Beyond difference in scale, suicide terrorism fails through execution. It communicates through actualization – or demonstration of will – which is the negative of deterrence. (Or perhaps, deterrence of a kind, expensively purchased.) The terror at the edge of the present, and of the future, has different models. Among these, civilization-scale 'quantum suicide' is perhaps the most exotic philosophical and ideological conception on its way to us. Given the assumption of a (Level-3 or higher) multiverse, comprehensive apocalypse is rationalized as the pruning of sub-optimal branches. It operates as reality editing. The game theoretic consequences of such a perspective are intriguing. It increases the credibility of threats (if accepted as a serious intellectual commitment), while adapting the pay-off matrix in a fashion that can only be considered destabilizing. Classic MAD works best among those who envisage an outcome as the worst thing in the world, yet commit to it anyway.

We approach here one of the very deepest problems in social and institutional engineering. It might be called the *Odysseus Problem*. In sailing past the Sirens, Odysseus anticipated the subversion of commitment, and thus put in place a socio-technical mechanism to bind his own future action. The structure is that of a 'chicken game' – a mutant variant of prisoner's dilemma, in which *the player who swerves loses*. If you *could* back down, you *might*. In both Odysseus' dilemma and that of the chicken player, the elimination of future discretion figures as a strategic resource. The requirement for self-binding inclines to a technological freezing of decision. Strategic problems of the 'chicken game' type thus tend inexorably to automation.

If AI is brought into play by the intrinsic dynamics of nuclear confrontation, it does not stop there. AI has a WMD potentiality proper to itself. There is no obvious horizon to what an algorithm could do. The same capabilities that enable algorithmic control of WMD arsenals equally enable such arsenals to be swapped-out for AI itself. An enemy arsenal under algorithmic control is only 'theirs' by contingencies of software dominance. From the military perspective – among others oriented to negative capability – the potential destructiveness of the technology is without determinable limit. Anything under software control falls into its realm. Which is to say that, asymptotically, everything does. But it doesn't end there. AI also promotes an advance into virtuality.

Nuclear weaponry cuts a convergent path into purity of conception. No hydrogen bomb has yet been used against an enemy (or "in anger" as the singularly inappropriate expression goes). Thermonuclear warheads remain among a select category of virtual weapons, alongside a variety of chemical and biological agents, whose usage has been exclusively diplomatic, or even philosophical. The value of this military machinery is strictly counter-factual. Those 'possible worlds' in which they have been operationalized support little, if any, value of any kind. Weaponry supporting their potentiality floats the ontological option of extreme negative utility. They are – in the most rigorous sense – *nightmare generators*.

There is no reason (at all), then, to think that nuclear weapons are the last word in mass destruction. Nor can it be assumed that mass destruction is the ultimate criterion for deterrent weaponry. It is not only that high-energy physics opens a vast, rambling bestiary of virtual catastrophes which we have scarcely begun to peruse (although this is true). Physics has no monopoly on disaster, regardless of what its recent privileges might suggest.

It can never be a virtue for a weapon to be indiscriminate, which is to say *imprecise*. Turned around, we can say without hesitation or reservation that it is meritorious in any weapon, however absolutely devastating, for the greatest possible proportion of the damage it produces to be inflicted upon the enemy. In other words, a good weapon discriminates specifically against enemy interests. It *hunts*.

There can be no serious doubt that the genomic biosciences and software engineering have more to contribute to this pursuit than physics possibly could.

Stuart Russell describes autonomous weapons as a "new, scalable class of WMDs." The systems he is considering would be exemplified by drone swarms, "hunting in packs like wolves" (as one DARPA employee was indiscreet enough to reveal). Given enormous industrial production runs, performance specifications unshackled from human limitation, and targeting algorithms set for indiscriminate lethality, the devastating potential of such weapons would be hard to exaggerate. Their key, confidently predicted vulnerabilities, however, are at least as significant.

As Russell emphasizes, autonomous weapons could be subverted by a hostile "software update." They could be hacked. Behind the menace of the hacker lies that of advanced artificial intelligence, mustering superior powers of cryptographic lock-picking and soft intrusion. Autonomous weaponry is therefore nested into a more profound threat.

AI designates a culmination of sorts. Nowhere else does *destructive capability* and *rigid commitment* promise to intersect more dynamically. Nothing separates the weapon from the game. It also counts, potentially, as an escalation.

Much criticism of the Cold War nuclear arms race already configured it as an *existential risk*, before the term had been coined.

Between an *X-risk* and an extreme *deterrent* there no definite boundary. The difference is technical. Deterrence is a mode of employment. It uses negative utility. In this respect anything bad could be useful, were it not that a deterrent requires a trigger, under the control of the negotiating agent (at the point of negotiation). To threaten a potential aggressor with an asteroid strike makes no sense, unless an asteroid strike can be delivered. The same holds for geological disasters in general. All of which means that the acquisition of engineering capabilities on the largest scales, such as geo-engineering, weather control, climate regulation, and asteroid defenses – perhaps developed explicitly to avert potential existential risks – will inevitably expand the domain of deterrence options. In other words, techno-economic progress and the escalation of deterrence infrastructure are only formally differentiated. There is no materially persuasive way to improve the world that does not – on its occult side – widen the horizons of geopolitical horror.

Beside what could be had, there is the question of who has it. Beside the qualities of WMD-armed antagonists, their mere number is a source of terror, itself. It is only natural that multilateral deterrence should be found more threatening than its bilateral ideal, and now distant predecessor. Complexity scales nonlinearly in networks, and quickly becomes mathematically intractable. No one has any idea how massively distributed networks of insecurity would work. It is quite probably impossible to know. Deterrence is about to

change phase.

Toothpaste doesn't return to the tube just because it makes a mess. Once it is out, inconvenience has ceased to be any kind of argument against it. The dangers of a world in which ubiquitous deterrence capacity reigns are both obvious and immense. This is nevertheless the world we are entering. The trends driving it, from both the geopolitical and the techno-economic sides, are by any realistic estimation irresistible. Cheaper and more diverse nightmare weaponry is becoming available within an increasingly disintegrated international order. A variety of self-reinforcing dynamics – including but not restricted to those of the arms-race type – are further stimulating the process. Cascading acceleration is all but inevitable.

When conceived with maximal cynicism (i.e. realism), geostrategic independence is a direct function of deterrence capability. *Don't tread on me* is the colloquial statement, whose perfect applicability is commonly under-estimated. The rattlesnake, combining fearsome weaponry with signaling, makes for a natural totem of deterrence. Neither venom, nor rattle, is dispensable. "Diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments," runs the famous analogy, attributed to Frederick the Great. Game theory recognizes military capability as a communication medium.

It is not only that robust independence depends upon deterrence. Reciprocally, geostrategic liberty necessarily tends to the production

of deterrence capability. An alien freedom, which *could do anything*, is – ineliminably – a threat. It provides the comprehensive model of the military threat. Whether 'they hate us for our freedom' or not, they have no choice but to fear us for it, and inversely. Geopolitics has no other origin. Any state without the will to scare also lacks the will to exist.

It's all far more basic than we've been led to believe. As Niall Ferguson writes (realistically):

> In the final analysis, borders are a function of power. If you can't defend them, they are just dotted lines. The Kim dynasty's calculation has been that nukes are the ultimate border guards. We shall soon find out if that calculation was correct. If so, many more states will want them.

Every geopolitical entity that is serious about sovereignty will want them, or something of at least equivalent deterrent credibility. The only alternative is naked dependency, made ever more uncomfortable by increasing global multipolarity, among the stark wreckage of any 'world order' or 'international community' grounded in the collective fantasy of miraculously authorized super-national norms. *Explosive proliferation* will be something the world has not seen before, even if it has already actually been there to see. We can be confident that the geopolitical order will be reconfigured

by it.

What does explosive proliferation mean? Potentially, many things. For instance, vectors of technological – and thus economic – development are certain to be, to some significant degree, oriented by it. As artificial intelligence is factored into policy decision-making not only as an essential contributor to command, control, communications and intelligence (C^3I), but as an intrinsic weapon of mass destruction, its prominence will be still further elevated.

WMD proliferation implies a multiplication of real geopolitical agencies. It is rigorously indistinguishable – in both directions – from a disintegrated world. Established relations of dependency are broken, releasing unanticipated – and evidently hazardous – freedoms. Whether or not this is the world we want, it looks increasingly inevitable that it is the world we are to have.

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