

THE DEMISE OF TRADITIONAL CONSERVATISM IN AMERICA:
A REFLECTION ON ITS NECESSARY REVIVAL IN THE AMERICAN POLITY

by

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For my Mom, Heather Jarman.

She put up with a lot from me over the years.

For that, and all else, I thank her.

ABSTRACT

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Bachelor of Arts

Conservative Americans are now having an increasingly difficult time defining what their ideology means. The Republican Party seems in an inner struggle to understand itself and then to communicate this to the American electorate. Republicans ask themselves questions about how to get elected, what policies and programs to adopt to appeal to segments of the electorate lost to them. They seem willing to advocate any movement or plans that might bolster "electability." Thus, American conservatives are engaged in a psychological as well as a practical struggle. In response to these crises, conservatism has increasingly become more progressive in attempts to redefine their political ideology and maintain relevancy and legitimacy amongst the general public. When both parties use progressive tactics to accomplish their ends, which for both are now merely winning elections, real politics fade into appeasement of social rather than political demands and desires. All politics become movement politics. This essay discusses the necessity to the American polity of a politically effective classical conservatism. Without conservatism's

reliance upon traditional values, political systems become easily hijacked by demagoguery and other extreme elements. Maintaining political balance between effectively different and viable alternatives is the key to political stability and the pursuit of truly political ends, being human happiness. This is the argument put forward in this paper.

As a political ideology, liberalism is to be seen in this essay as essentially progressive, as are all ideologies by definition as they inform and inspire social groups toward mass movement-oriented political change. Thus, true conservatism is not an ideology, but rejects the political legitimacy of all ideologies entirely. Ideological change is greater change and occurs at faster rates than typical of traditional political evolution. Ideologies—blueprints for change—enable speedy and radical overhauls of politics and government according to prescribed patterns of mass appeal. Thus, all ideological movements tend toward destabilized societies and politics.

I argue that conservatism is necessary within modern society, especially within American society because its founding remains at least partially rooted in the classical past, and classical societies believed strongly in maintaining an active political community. Mine is a conservative appeal to the past for the sake of conservatism in the present. Ultimately, my conservative appeal for conservatism is intended to serve the end of political balance—I advocate the necessity of true conservatism within a polity not because I hold conservative tenets to be true, or because I am a conservative,

but because I maintain that a sufficient element of society must be truly conservative for balance to be maintained, for political stability and the health of the polity. Ultimately it is balance or moderation that is my cause and for which I argue here.

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PROLOGUE

Conservative Americans are now having an increasingly difficult time defining what their ideology means. The Republican Party seems at odds with itself, in an inner struggle to understand itself and then somehow communicate this to the American electorate. Republicans ask themselves questions about how to get elected, what policies and programs to adopt to appeal to segments of the electorate lost to them. They seem willing to advocate any movement or plans that might bolster “electability.” This is not a problem unique to conservatism, though, but is something that American liberals also face, though to a lesser degree and to be dealt with in ways that are quite appropriate to them, though these same methods are supposed to be foreign to conservatives. Thus, American conservatives are engaged in a psychological as well as a practical struggle, leaving the Democrats only dealing with pragmatic problems typical of them. In response to its own crises, conservatism has increasingly become more progressive in attempts to redefine its political ideology and maintain relevancy and legitimacy amongst the general public. Liberals swaying more toward progressivism is not shocking; it is to some extent expected. However, when both parties use progressive tactics to accomplish their ends, which for both are now merely winning elections, instability ensues within the polity. It is necessary that multiple parties within a polity espouse different political beliefs. This essay discusses the necessity of maintaining within any polity and particularly the American polity a

politically effective classical conservatism as defined in Chapter One below.

Without conservatism's reliance upon traditional values, political systems become easily hijacked by demagoguery and other extreme elements.

Similarly, though, if conservatism predominates in ways that totally outweigh progressive elements in a society, social and political action does not respond well to changing phenomena and citizens become restless. Maintaining political balance between effectively different and viable alternatives is the key to political stability and the pursuit of truly political ends, being human happiness. This is the argument put forward in this paper.

To prevent the destabilization of politics, conservatives provide a necessary balance to liberal and other movement-oriented actors. As a political ideology, liberalism is to be seen in this essay as essentially progressive, as are all ideologies by definition as they inform and inspire social groups toward mass movement-oriented political change. Thus, true conservatism is not an ideology, but rejects the political legitimacy of all ideologies entirely. Their plans for change are progressive, their prescriptive nature being an aspect of their definition and in the pace of the change they inspire being characteristic of ideologies; ideological change is greater change and occurs at faster rates than typical of traditional political evolution. Ideologies—blueprints for change—enable speedy and radical overhauls of politics and government according to prescribed patterns of mass appeal. Thus, all ideological movements tend toward destabilized societies and

politics.

In Chapter One, I discuss the definition of conservatism, providing philosophical definitions and historical examples of illustration. After outlining definitions, the chapter proceeds to deal with progressive elements that have seeped into the American conservative establishment. These elements have gradually turned parts of conservatism into movement politics, rather than politics that conservatism originally espoused, that of gradual political and social change.

In Chapter Two I draw upon the Hegelian idea of the end of history through Francis Fukuyama's adoption of Hegel's idea in defining the post-Soviet period of American history. I use Fukuyama because he popularized the relatively unknown and complex idea and gave it an especially American twist. Thus, the idea is most popular and well known in America as Fukuyama's version of Hegel's ideal. This version of the argument holds that the Soviet Union's collapse revealed that the liberal conception of politics has been proven by history to be correct and true. Liberal Democracy has triumphed and now principles of freedom will dissipate throughout the world without any viable competition left from out of the Western tradition of liberal democracy. Although not all countries will immediately adhere to liberalism, the end of history holds that liberalism will eventually triumph everywhere that people are reasonable—which means everywhere eventually, since reason is universal to human being. This chapter engages this argument with

true conservatism and reveals contemporary liberalism's false sense of security as dangerous, and the total practical accomplishment of its ideals impossible and even undesirable. Thus, the theory is faulty, at least as presented by Fukuyama. The significance of conservatism is, thus, developed within a contemporary American context.

Having established in the first two chapters problematic phenomena now characterizing American politics and explaining how we arrived in these conditions, I turn to the writings of German thinkers, namely Hannah Arendt, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Carl Schmitt, to illustrate how some of their ideas can provide helpful understanding of the nature and depth of America's political situation. Each of these thinkers discusses the necessity of maintaining the political distinction within the modern state, as opposed to focusing upon the state as only a social institution that serves the demands and conflicts emerging from social issues. Truly conservative elements within a society help to keep the political alive and distinct from the social.

Chapter Three examines the writings of political thinker Hannah Arendt, who is famous for her writings on precisely this issue, the necessity of maintaining the political arena lively with the rise of modern society. The definition between political and social affairs are discussed in this chapter, with relative agreement given to the central argument of Arendt's political theory. Arendt relies upon classical political philosophy to stress the importance of maintaining the political elements in society, giving us some

ground to which we might appeal to assess and perhaps improve the condition of American conservatism.

In Chapter Four, I build upon Arendt's theory of the political by using Nietzsche's writings to assert the necessity of statesmen within a political setting. Democracy, because it is ruled by the masses, usually prevents true statesmen or citizens of genius from rising to leadership. Extraordinary people usually are ostracized within democracies because they defy normalcy. If they are not ostracized, their extraordinary abilities may be redirected through rewards or punishments. The point is that democracies tend toward politics and leadership that resemble themselves as the masses. "Ordinary" people, or those who can appear ordinary, rise to power in democracies because they insist upon being able to "relate to" their leaders. Without allowing great ones to rise to positions of power, however, politics becomes about the ordinary concerns of ordinary people, with leaders filling roles of management that are intricately intertwined with bureaucracy. Those who appear to us as 'great men' and leaders really are ordinary 'men in suits' ready to take on the 'business' of 'politics'.

Chapter Five takes us into Carl Schmitt's book *The Concept of the Political*, in which he discusses more specifically how societies can go about reviving the political for and alongside themselves. Schmitt wants human beings to rise above the mundane aspects of ordinary democratic life, asking them to elevate their thinking and actions a little higher. The realm of politics

is where men can engage in higher affairs. According to Schmitt, modern societies have all but destroyed the true nature of politics, or at least our understanding of it. I argue that conservatism is necessary within modern society and especially within the American polity because its founding remains at least partially rooted in the classical past, and classical societies believed strongly in maintaining an active political community. Mine is a conservative appeal to the past, alongside Schmitt's, for the sake of conservatism in the present. But, ultimately, my conservative appeal for conservatism is intended to serve the end of political balance—I advocate the necessity of true conservatism within a polity not because I hold conservative tenets to be true, or because I am a conservative, but because I maintain that a sufficient element of society must be truly conservative for balance to be maintained, for political stability and the health of the polity. Ultimately it is balance or moderation that is my cause and for which I argue here.

In order to prevent the polity from becoming fiercely ideological, there needs to exist differing political thought. Without this diversity of thought, the polity gradually and without the awareness of its populous becomes more authoritarian in nature. Tyranny of the majority becomes a real and lasting phenomenon when it takes hold of the state through persistent government domination, leaving little or no room for a pausing and assessment of our circumstance. At present, American political science should perform such an assessment on behalf of the American people. Government should be forced

into openness and the American people must become self-consciously aware of their political condition for the sake of liberty and equality, both of which rest upon the balance of political order. The American nation will soon realize the consequences of our change if we do not pause—and think—to conserve the traditions of the past and decidedly build upon them for the future.

CHAPTER ONE: CONSERVATISM AND MOVEMENT POLITICS

Russell Kirk and other key political thinkers argue that conservatism did not exist in theory prior to Edmund Burke's book *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Others may look to Hobbes or Hegel for conservative foundations, but there really is not a comprehensive understanding of conservatism without Burke's treatise. Burke offers insight into both the Revolution specifically and the ramifications of such movements generally. In other words, he uses the occasion of his commentary on the French Revolution to create a more universal political theory, this being his foundational consideration of modern conservatism. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* Burke asserts the necessity for conservatism within any polity, arguing that without it chaos and instability ensue within any political system. This statement is a central consideration of this essay. I intend to develop and explain this assertion in relationship with modern American conservatism within the context of America's liberalism and its accompanying politics, with hopes of determining important problematic dynamics that have arisen between society and politics, not only in America, but more generally for liberal democracy everywhere in the modern world.

Conservatism involves a gradualist approach toward governing politics. Burke emphasizes the good of conservatism by contrasting it with the fatal consequences of liberalism in the French Revolution. Implicit in this argument is the denunciation of all movement politics and, ultimately, of modern

ideologies upon which such politics depend. In the heat of ideological passion, people are prone to enveloping their entire lives, not only their politics, in frenzy instead of building and rebuilding governments and political institutions patiently and with proper reason. While the French Revolution tends to be associated with the triumph of rational liberty over traditional oppression, Burke views this event tragically, from a different vantage point than that of most modern rationalists and ideologues. While espousing liberty, the French Revolutionaries actually gave way to a despotic reign as new rulers, such as Robespierre for instance, adopted similar elitist attitudes to those of the monarchy they had just overthrown. Burke realized that liberty, in order to truly take root within society, could not be rendered through ideological revolution—or any such sudden change or movement. Liberty, rather, could only be born through the gradual evolution of social norms and institutions through time. As Burke notes, when liberty is born of passion, there is little time for society's ideas and practices to ferment and important matters and decisions are made by political orators and radical actors who thereby capture political systems entirely, armed with their persuasive rhetoric rather than abiding caution and wisdom. Such caution and wisdom characterize conservatism as a response to these modern politics of foundation shaking movement.

Containing only progressive liberals or movement and planning oriented conservatives, who might as well be called progressive

conservatives, within any society is bound to yield social and political instability. While not discussing modern definitions of conservative, liberal, or progressive political philosophies per se, Aristotle's *Politics* does explain the desirability and the necessity for stability of balance within a polity between competing governing philosophies. In addressing the components of the best democracy, he states that one composed mainly of Agrarians is most favorable, stating that "having no great abundance of possessions, they are kept busy and rarely attend the assembly; and since they lack the necessities of life; they are constantly at work in the fields...they find more satisfaction in working on the land than in ruling and engaging in political affairs..."

(Aristotle 368). In order to have balance within a democracy, then, there also must be some persons who are not involved in politics, those who are not continuously promoting change and movement but, rather, are content to remain where they are at, so to speak. Agrarians, in Aristotle's example, as long as they are economically content and possess the means wherewith to work and make their living, are unlikely to be active politically or to promote political change. If they and their families' needs are met and their wants addressed as considerations within the political status quo, then change becomes a hindrance to them rather than a benefit. These would be those whose character is naturally conservative. Though they need not be agrarian, particularly so in modern societies, without a socially stationary group of citizens balancing against those who may be more politically active and

movement oriented, a polity eventually loses cohesiveness. The predominance of political movement eventually erupts into disarray, with various members and factions competing for power to force and control change one way or another.

In terms of organizing a legislative body, Aristotle believes in a system wherein some are elected and others are appointed to that body. In this way different interests are represented legislatively and balance emerges toward stability for the regime. The American Constitution originally fashions an American government that imitates this Aristotelian model, in that the most important branch of the national government was comprised of elected Representatives and appointed Senators operating together in a bicameral legislature. Now, however, since Senators are elected rather than appointed, we have a legislature that is entirely elected, defeating at least in part the purpose of having a bicameral legislature. Later in his *Politics*, Aristotle discusses the importance of having citizens hold positions in political office rotating by election, rather than those positions being filled by appointment, indicating his approval of both elected and appointed representation, indeed the need for both. Without both, there exists the chance, even the likelihood, that a particular interest or thought will gain more lasting power or a persistently louder voice above all others, rendering the maintenance of democracy tenuous and its longevity susceptible to those who clamor for movement and 'progress', ending eventually in instability and chaos that

render democracies ripe for the appearance of tyranny. In such cases, we find that certain elites may gain preeminence in government decisions and it follows that legislation will be skewed increasingly in favor of this governing elite. Thus, with the greater portion of citizens lacking representation of their voices or their interests in government decisions, political instability eventually ensues from this lack of balance between citizens and their leaders in government.

When liberalism prevails through its ideological persuasion of shared interests amongst the elites and the masses, the wealthy and the poor, as in the prevalence of the American Dream for instance, stability no longer rests upon the balance of elite and mass interests, for they seem to become similar, if not singular. In this case, political stability has come to rest upon the balance of power between liberals and conservatives, a dynamic of equal influence upon government policy, at least in the long term. With this, we find movement politics to be relatively rare and unsuccessful except in extreme cases usually associated with political or social crises. Political movements are not the norm throughout most of the history of American politics and are usually denounced as troublesome, as was abolitionism originally for example, or even un-American, as in the case of socialism or communism. However, if and when one force or movement becomes politically more predominant than others, then the polity is moved as it heavily tilts to one side—opening it up to legislative movements and eventual anarchy and even tyranny if the forces of

liberalism and conservatism are not brought back into balance. Without conservatism effectively balancing liberal movements, they become 'progressive' in an unchecked aggressive reiteration of American politics according to the accomplishment or fulfillment of their movements. America itself is even liable to redefinition according to these new politics.

Just as having different forms of political thought present in a polity is essential to stability and well-being, the potential for assessing the world from different vantage points, or perspectives, is necessary as well. Without a balance in both thought and politics, individuals combined into one mass, especially one mass movement, become asymmetrical in their judgment and values. Prominent political philosopher Ernst Cassirer divides thought into several categories, namely art, history, science, religion, myth, and technology. Through these varying forms of representing and understanding the world, individuals perceive and experience life with a sense of objectivity by balancing their apprehension of experience and, thus, their judgment, amongst the different forms of thought. This same balance in the mind translates to a certain objectivity within the polity, as life is experienced and understood, and judgments made, through the various forms of thought in a balanced way that we refer to as "objective." Objectivity, then, is a certain sort of balanced thought or action. When within an individual one form of thought becomes predominant, though, the others gradually diminish and lose their grip on reality, so that such an individual becomes unbalanced and

objectivity is lost. We reject the judgment of such persons out of hand as lacking objectivity and as dangerous. So it is, or should be, with groups of individuals as societies or polities.

Beginning with the Renaissance, modern individuals have increasingly emphasized rational 'scientific' and technological thinking as the only legitimate public thought, enabling social movements to become increasingly persuasive through limiting the standards by which they are judged. They have become less objective in their appeals, but have been able to do this because modern society has gradually absorbed this same rationality and technical thought into every form of thinking. If all thought is reduced to the logical schematics of technology, humanity becomes deprived of its fundamental emotions and attitudes, losing mythic and religious sensibilities and with them objectivity in their apprehension of the world around them. Objectivity is lost in judgment, individually, socially, and politically, as individuals morph into something akin to automatons directed by the imperatives of technology, the prime imperative being efficiency. Indeed, it becomes efficient to think of ourselves this way in such a condition, so much so that serious philosophers have prescribed for us the abandonment of the idea or category of "human" being and, instead, the understanding of ourselves as cyborgs so that we might fashion ourselves individually in the most desirable ways possible and socially in the most efficient ways for peaceful coexistence.

Regarding conservatism, a problem arises if this same technical thought is absorbed by all members of modern societies, so that efficiency comes to demand political tactics from conservatives even that are more movement-oriented and, thus, appealing to the electorate including its naturally conservative element. Over time, if society loses self-consciousness of the necessity for political balance, the social singularity of the American Dream, for instance, comes to dominate politically in a singular way as well. Thus, as one way of thinking becomes ingrained amongst the entire citizenry, differing political parties become one in a sense, in that they are absorbed in the same technological thought. Efficiency in all things and, thus, improvement, comes to dominate politics and from this come demands for social and political progress. All politics become progressive in one way or another with the loss of any true or natural conservatism.

While politically, American liberalism and so-called conservatism may appear to be different and to be represented by different political parties, in actuality they are very similar in their demands and expectations and their parties are even more similar in their political tactics and strategies. For example, liberals are most often associated with movement-oriented tactics or policies intended to inspire hope and change amongst the people. Such politics are witnessed in the implementation of Roosevelt's New Deal, Johnson's Great Society, Clinton's New Covenant, and Obama's Hope and Change. These movements seem benign or good to many, but if the impetus

for political movement is not balanced by other perspectives and politics, namely true conservatism in the American case, then movement becomes increasingly and endlessly progressive and, thus, dangerous. These same tactics become revolutionary when liberal movements are more social, as in antiwar protests and the continuing advocacy of feminism and struggles over reproduction issues more generally.

At present, so-called conservatives are adopting progressive tactics in politics, advocating political and social movement as much as do their liberal adversaries. Instead of advocating or accepting gradual change that suits the natural or true conservative, America's conservative party, the Republicans, looks to compete with the Democrats by also advocating political movement. Extreme examples of this can be seen in political figureheads such as Glen Beck and in the recent Republican Tea Party Movement. More moderate and significant are the matching movements of Republicans and Democrats—advocating health care changes, financing social programs through huge deficits, maintaining foreign policies that are not noticeably different to the average American's understanding, pronouncing upon issues of gun violence, pretenses to representation of "middle-class Americans" and "Main Street" rather than "Wall Street," and so on. Progressive politics themselves may not be problematic. What is disconcerting is that both parties now are progressive and true conservatism is not balancing movement oriented politics in America. Progressivism has lost its attachment to a specific

movement or party and has now become the technological ways and means of dealing with any situation politically. This exacerbates the movement of modern politics and society both into technological thinking as the only legitimate thought, turning every issue into a problem that must be, and can be, solved, rather than human interactions that may or may not be resolved. Politics loses its bearings and purpose now, only to be debased into public administration of the social—witness the increase in public administration programs and emphases within political science departments across America, notably at the cost of political philosophy studies and critical thinking about politics itself. Citizens everywhere are using the same ways and means to achieve their ends, hence everybody is moving in the same direction, that of technological progressivism. Because individuals incline toward imbalance according to their inheritance of liberalism, which is now more or less a total absorption, if politics do not respond with a correcting balance or lacks accordingly mindful policy stances, which is to say truly conservative alternatives, technological progressivism becomes the mainstay of the public square and the diversification of individual thought diminishes significantly.

For a truly conservative perspective on politics we can turn to prominent political theorist Michael Oakeshott, who espouses the basic tenets of Burkeanism and expands upon them for the 20th Century. In his “Rationalism in Politics,” Oakeshott discusses how liberals and progressives, those whom he finds oriented toward rapid political change, use government as a means to

incite people to action, simultaneously expressing and legislating their passions into action. In contrast, conservatives use government as a means to moderate and subvert the passions and desires of citizens. Government should not be used as the conduit through which we make others submit to our own dreams but, rather, as an instrument by which to maintain stability within the polity. Policy makers who submit others to their own perceived ideals and expectations through legislation work to deprive others of their own liberties. For Oakeshott, government should be a neutral arbiter between citizens, rather than taking up the cause of some players against that of others. When government opens its power to availability for those who would warrant it to heavy investments in influencing citizens' social life, it is more susceptible to different forms of despotism. These may range from soft despotism as noted by Tocqueville as a propensity in America, all the way to subtle yet thorough totalitarianism well beyond the clumsy totalitarian regimes of the past—their violence is evidence of their clumsiness and lack of thorough totalitarianism. As Oakeshott states, “an ‘umpire’ who at the same time is one of the players is no umpire; ‘rules’ about which we are not disposed to be conservative are not rules but incitements to disorder; the conjunction of dreaming and ruling generates tyranny” (Oakeshott 98).

Conservatism does not equate with stagnation within political affairs but, rather, is characteristic of those people who Oakeshott says “do have something to do and something to think about.” Conservatism carries with it

an assumption that those who are passionate and stirred to participate in political affairs will naturally become involved in government affairs and policy making. Hence, governments do not need to serve as catalysts for political action, do not need to ignite passions within individuals and groups of citizens. This is supposed to happen naturally, without government originating demands upon itself but, rather, responding to citizens and their demands and conflicts. Conservative government allows individualism to prosper through its respect for limited government interference in the affairs of its people, and because persons are not persuaded or forced into partisan government policies or ideals. People will behave as they see fit, not as government deems best.

Because conservatives are characterized as disassociated from political action, a common misconception is held that conservatives are opposed to all change. Conservatives are not universally opposed to change. As Oakeshott argues, they merely look at change with more wariness. Conservatives seek assurance of purposeful change and that, if enacted by government, it will improve upon present circumstances or practices. If there exists any questions or hesitation, though, then conservatives are much less likely than are their liberal counterparts to enact change. If individuals are content or if institutions are functioning fairly well within current circumstances, conservatives will resist change and ask why change is required. Invoking change for the sake of change alone, that is to mollify demands for progress or to satisfy citizens with

sensibilities that they have an active government accomplishing 'things', calls for resistance by conservatives who find change unnecessary and undesirable when circumstances are good. Rather than perceiving the conservative temperament as somewhat stodgy or timid, Oakeshott maintains that we should view conservatives as acting with "rational prudence," a positive contribution to the future of any society, rather than a negative handicap to some hoped for change.

Another characteristic associated with conservatism is a propensity to look toward the past, appearing somewhat nostalgic and overly reflective upon significant events that have long since transpired; whereas, liberals are more associated with a progressive nature and an emphasis upon future events and improvements that move beyond and away from past accomplishments. At times, conservatives' emphasis on past circumstances and historical figures has been to their detriment in the public eye, as these attributes or tendencies have been caricatured and mocked. Yet, conservative attachment to the past is really an attachment to that part of the past that is lively, or should be lively, in the present. It is an appreciation of the gifts of tradition. This focus upon stable ground has provided a necessary balance against the more progressively liberal actors and politicians, particularly the aggressive ones. As Edmund Burke states in his *Reflection on the Revolution in France*, "...those who are attached to the constitution of this kingdom, will take good care how they are involved with persons who, under the pretext of

zeal toward the Revolution and Constitution, too frequently wander from their true principles; and are ready on every occasion to depart from the firm but cautious and deliberate spirit which produced the one, which presides over the other” (Burke 5). Conservatives rely faithfully upon the past, but not because of any inherently “stodgy,” “slow,” or “stubborn” nature. Instead, they perceive dangers and are afraid of unintended consequences that come with implementing ideological patterns and blueprints for government and the good society. They see that too readily abandoning principles acquired and lessons learned from the past is costly regardless of outcomes and especially costly when outcomes are bad. If a polity bases its anticipated success entirely upon an imagined future that is supposed to be realized technically from some plan or ideological prescription, radically changing social or political institutions or practices by abandoning reliance upon what has been learned from the past, in both failures and successes, the likelihood of catastrophic political consequences emerging from that change is increased to almost certainty and the subsequent anarchy that can be expected increases the chances of tyranny as the ultimate outcome dramatically.

Both liberals and conservatives strive for the acquisition and establishment of liberty within any polity. The means through which both parties achieve these ends differ extremely. In fact, due to apparent incongruities between these political types, it appears at times that each group aims at different ends. In addressing the conservative perspective on

liberty and the purpose of democracy, Edmund Burke provides a substantial definition of how political affairs should be conducted, stating:

I flatter myself that I love a manly, moral regulated liberty...but I cannot stand forward or give praise or give blame to anything which relates to human actions and human concerns, on a simple view of the object as it stands stripped of every relation, in the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction (Burke 8).

To be conservative does not necessarily equate with being aristocratic or being continuously bogged down in traditions of the past either. However, conservatism does have a different and competing outlook versus liberalism and other ideologies that, when effective, ensures that government might not tend to veer too far one way or the other. Assuming that conservatism exists in balance with other philosophies, conservatism's political purpose seems to be to strive to make both citizens and politicians alike reflect upon and appropriately question the foundations of government and the roots of liberty. To do so, it is assumed by conservatives, is to renew those foundations and strengthen those roots with waters of respect and reverence. This is to look to the future with wiser eyes and realistic expectations gleaned from past experience, and to know that one day others will look to us as their past and, thus, to instill within us the desire for responsibility and a legacy for ourselves worthy of respect. It is to respond in a lively way to past and future generations. This is how conservative politics are informed and stationed toward change and real progress.

In his seminal book, *The Idea of Conservatism*, Russell Kirk offers six

canons of conservative thought, to be described briefly below. The first underlying belief of conservatism is that political problems are due to moral and religious inconsistencies (Kirk 8). As commonly witnessed in America, legislative matters often are discussed with moral or religious overtones when being voiced by a conservative. Secondly, conservatives have an “affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of human existence” (8), meaning that conservatives possess a particular fondness for life and respect for its inherent value. Thirdly, conservatives believe that order and class distinctions are inherent components of civilized society. While humanity might not always judge a man’s character correctly, ultimately God distinguishes between the truly just and unjust. Fourthly, another integral component of the conservative psyche is the linkage between freedom and property. If individuals cannot possess their own property in a particular society, that society is deemed tyrannical. Fifthly, constructing society upon abstract ideas is dangerous. If society does not grow naturally from deep roots that breed fruits of familiarity with the past, a tendency toward irrational or abstract ideas and politics are born, making society susceptible to imbalance and disorder. Finally, the idea that “hasty innovation may be devouring conflagration” (9), warns us that change is not always to be sought and, when pursued, must be nurtured carefully.

Combining Kirk’s plain principles with Oakehsott’s explanation of conservative attitudes and being and continuing our awareness of Burke’s

contributions of warning and reverence for tradition, makes it fairly possible to distinguish between that which is and is not conservative. We gain a general sensibility toward conservatism, rather than a discrete definition of the conservative. A political or social movement of rapid change of any type is easily rejected by us as not being conservative; conservatives believe that good change is a gradual endeavor. As a clarifying example, we can look at McCarthyism as part of America's anticommunist movement during the 1950s. Being a movement against suspected communists and Soviet sympathizers, McCarthyism should not be characterized as conservative according to the above criteria. The "revolutionizing" of the American government and forced controls of social structures through arresting, firing, and jailing suspected American dissidents bears no resemblance to conservative practice. That McCarthyism is associated with the Republican Party and that the Republican Party is known as being conservative, means that something must be incongruent with American Republicanism and its association with conservatism. A conservative party would not enact or espouse these rash measures against its own populous in such a rapid and immediate manner. A truly conservative approach to the Red Scare problem would have involved much more "rational prudence," to adopt the terminology of Edmund Burke. A conservative would not necessarily be excessively slow but, rather, would be reflective and contemplative of the situation, without enacting abrupt measures with little regard to their consequence.

While Kirk attempts to provide an explicit definition of conservatism, William F. Buckley's *Keeping the Tablets* addresses the issue of conservatism differently. Buckley's purpose is not necessarily to define the intricacies of conservatism. He recognizes that the philosophy has evolved throughout the ages and is more complex than simple statements will permit. Buckley admits that "yes I feel I know, if not what conservatism is, at least who a conservative is" (Buckley 21), and "I am asked most frequently what conservatism is...preferably in one sentence... on which occasions I have replied I could not give you a definition of Christianity in one sentence, but that does not mean that Christianity is undefinable" (20). Buckley understands that some of the traits a conservative may be identified and described, but he also indicates that it requires extensive time—in some cases a lifetime—to arrive at a fuller understanding of conservatism.

Perhaps in assessing the nature of conservatism, authors Kirk and Buckley more or less agree upon what is conservatism, but disagree upon how one approaches the issue. Yes, there are differences between the two on some issues of method but, for the most part, Kirk and Buckley are far from being diametrically opposed. Kirk claims that a conservative must have some sort of religious foundation, whereas Buckley believes that one can be both a conservative and an atheist. However, for Buckley still, a conservative cannot properly hate individuals who believe in God. He states that "the reason why Christian conservatives can associate with atheists is because we hold that

above all, faith is a gift and that therefore there is no accounting for the bad fortune that has befallen those who do" not believe in God (Buckley 29). So, while religion is an integral component of most conservatives' sensibilities, attachment to it is not a necessary condition for conservatism. The core of American conservatism lies not in its religiosity, but in its conception of governments' role within the state. With a conservative state being one of limited government, governments, then, should play the most possibly limited role surrounding the affairs of the people.

While conservatives hold this assertion as a dear value, they struggle with its expression. As Buckley notes, it was only with the publication of Kirk's book that American conservatives realized they had a philosophical pedigree and a theoretical basis for their political existence (Buckley 38). Although conservatives adhere to a Burkean philosophy, they nonetheless struggle with how to implement it within American culture because Americans do not have "ancient class structures" or "noble families" and an "established church" as do the British (38). In other words, America lacks any depth of tradition, especially early on, having rejected all (at least implicitly all) in revolution. The question arises of what exactly American conservatives can conserve if they have, in a fairly real sense, nothing to conserve. Americans suddenly became unlike the British, who are based in ancient tradition and long established institutions.

Offering some insight into this problem of how conservatives should

conserve and, thus, salvage a philosophy for themselves, Harry Jaffa—a prominent professor and former student of Leo Strauss—believes that conservatism’s survival is inexorably connected with its ability to establish and communicate conservatism’s connection with America’s founding. Jaffa states that “if the conservative enterprise is to have any meaning at all, it must be grounded in the tradition of Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison and Lincoln—who are united by their recognition of the self-evident truth, ‘that all men are created equal’” (Jaffa 41). Because the inherent nature of conservatism is based in conserving traditions of the past, if there is no past upon which to build then there is nothing to conserve. Jaffa gives us our own past from which we have built and, thus, a past to conserve, even if it is an ideal rather than institutions and traditions. These we will build and conserve and have done so and, through Jaffa, may recognize this and conserve it—even if Jaffa’s philosophy is a late contribution to conservative thought.

According to Kirk, American conservatives grappled most with just this dilemma—that of lacking a past to conserve—between 1865 and 1918, the crucial years following the Civil War. The South, obviously having been economically, socially, and politically ravished, was in a state of chaos following the collapse of their political ideals and institutions, and of their economic infrastructure. Because America’s conservative base had been primarily in the South, the state of conservatism in America was thrown into disarray, as well. Hence, the South’s demise was directly connected with the

diminishment and to some extent the demise of American conservatism for a good length of time. Lacking national cohesion now, conservatives were handicapped in providing leadership for the country. Kirk asserts that “even had conservatives been able to command any substantial body of public opinion, they scarcely would have known what way to lead the nation” (Kirk 373), because their very foundations and traditions were obliterated. It seems that the South’s decimation was perhaps the first domino of several to fall in the devaluing of American conservatism. Throughout following decades, progress and technology, Positivism and Darwinism, together with the rise of Progressivism and the onslaught of engagements in international wars, along with the Great Depression, seemed to bring conservatism to its knees (373). American conservatism gradually became associated with “little circles of stubborn men who refused to be caught up in the expansive lust of their epoch” (373).

Although American conservatism has been tried severely, it nonetheless has maintained its legitimacy alongside other movements that may have come and gone. Certain aspects of conservatism, though, have been discarded at times perhaps for political purposes and accommodations. However, Kirk argues that what conservatives “have retained, in Britain and America, remains greater than what they have forfeited” (Kirk 459). We might wonder, however, what Kirk might say now were he to witness the transformation of conservatism in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. During

the past fifty years, conservatism has become more movement-oriented than ever in times past. Conservatism, once gradualist in its attitudes toward change, has become as movement-oriented of late as is its political counterpart in liberal progressivism. Questions as to whether or not conservatism truly adheres to the politics of the 'little platoon' and of the individual are being raised more frequently all the time now, as so-called conservative leaders advance movement-based legislation and blueprint solutions for the country's problems.

In further articulating the difference between liberals and conservatives, Fredrick Hayek states that a conservative "finds the essence of freedom in the spontaneity and the absence of coercion, the other believes it to be realized only in the pursuit and attainment of an absolute collective purpose" (Kirk 164). Essentially, conservatives view the attainment of liberty as arriving at a condition wherein one is not being coerced by others; whereas, modern liberals view liberty in a more collective context of empowerment of individuals toward freedom of action, being liberated from non-coercive limitations upon their being. The obtainment of liberty, in this case, is only possible within a collective context and goes beyond individual pursuits.

Along with liberty, modern individuals and states pursue equality as a high order social and political good. As individual pursuit of equality is amalgamated into a collective goal, though, such a polity becomes more susceptible to the development of a strong centralized government. As

Tocqueville warned, “men who live in times of equality naturally love the central power and willingly extend its prerogatives” (Tocqueville 679). The reasoning behind this seems counterintuitive at first. Further reflection, however, helps us to make sense of the matter. Political scientists usually associate a strong or authoritarian unitary government with tendencies toward centralization and, thus, declines in levels of political equality. However, when an entire polity pursues one specific end, with its people understanding or assuming that everyone believes in and desires this same end, citizens become more trustworthy of one another individually and collectively, making and establishing ties amongst each other within the context of an overall general understanding and acceptance of the larger good. As individuals continually develop stronger connections with one another socially, they gradually establish a more cohesive and coherent, thus increasingly stronger foundation beneath the centralizing power of the state. There may be nothing inherently wrong with trusting in and establishing centralized power. In fact, in any state the existence of a strong central government, at least in some regards, is necessary to the political maintenance of the polity, even if only against foreign threats and enemies.

However, a unified mass democracy tends to become extremely susceptible toward becoming engulfed within their own ends when they are unified and singular politically, with all citizens desiring and focusing upon this same objective—namely equality. Tocqueville tells us that “there is hardly

a limit to the confidence they will repose in it, for they feel that everything they give it is given to themselves" (678). Liberals and especially progressives view the obtainment of equality as a collective endeavor. Because all citizens are striving for universal equality, as Tocqueville predicts, they eventually become too trusting and too dependent upon the collective will and its expression through the central government. Thus democracies' drive toward equality is a drive toward strong central governments, which may or may not become authoritarian. Whether or not they do become authoritarian or even totalitarian, is dependent upon cultural and historical circumstances, with the outcome left by the people to chance because they have made a fetish of equality.

In order to prevent such gradual centralization of power in a democracy, there needs be at least two political groups or parties of thought effectively represented politically. It is expected that diverse groups, even if remaining democratically focused upon equality, will tend to view equality differently and, thus, disrupt the singularity of the political will and inhibit the tendency toward reliance upon and strengthening of the central government as the clear and unified expression of the collective will. In America, history has given us, more or less, two main expressions of the democratic will for equality—conservatism and liberalism. Conservatism is the necessary counterpart to liberalism and to the singularity of the democratic will in America, then, and tends toward the same potential within any polity, for

various reasons unique to each. In America, conservatism views equality through a different lens than does liberalism, providing the necessary diversity for inhibiting democratic authoritarianism through a strong central government operating upon a singular vision of the will of the people. Conservatives tend to place their focus upon the achievement of equality at the level of local and state governments, rather than upon the national government, because conservatives have different understandings of equality and see this diversity best expressed thusly. This may be an accident of British and American history, a gift of tradition for conservatives. Nevertheless, this alternative focus with different understandings of equality creates a political balance between the views of and demands for equality. Without the presence of conservatism here, then, the polity would have an inherent liability for destabilization by mass movements aimed at the central government for increasingly stronger and clearer definition of a singular vision of and will to equality, a liability toward unitary and authoritarian government with little reason not to become totalitarian, at least ultimately even if as soft despotism or benign tyranny. It is worth noting here that, if conservatism were to prevail singularly instead, then its views of equality could lead to such decentralization through its dominant philosophy that increasingly weaker governments could lead the state into forms of anarchy. We can judge this for ourselves from America's experience under The Articles of Confederation. Thus, we must see the need for balance amongst alternative views or

ideologies when it comes to the matter of equality within a democratic polity. Taken to extremes, liberty with conservative equality carries susceptibilities toward anarchy, while liberal progressivism sways equality more toward varying forms of authoritarianism and ultimately totalitarianism.

The Founding Fathers understood the importance of federalism, which is allocating power in specific ways amongst the state and federal components of government. The Founders recognized that if everyone consistently pursued national ends, a strong central government would eventually overpower individualism or the rights of smaller parties. Hence, in order to combat complete nationalization, significant power was given to state and local governments. Without this distribution of power, it seemed eventual that America would suffer the same fate as failed democracies preceding her. The Founders studied hundreds of previous examples of democracies and republics throughout history in order to discover precisely what not to do. In discussing the integration and the division of national and state interests, with each interest to possess appropriate powers distinct one from the other, Ralph Hancock tells us that, regarding federalism, "Tocqueville's purpose is to call our attention to the possibility of bringing together the small state's 'Provincial selfishness' and reliance upon the precedent with the nation's passion for innovation and 'general ideas'" (Hancock 160). Essentially, Tocqueville's purpose is to discuss the necessity of federalism in America, for without it democracy in the United States was bound to evolve into another

version of the post-Revolutionary French government, an evolution that Tocqueville feared, to say the least. Therein, the loudest or most compelling voice rules and rational reflection is disregarded or denounced as heretical.

We might all agree that some form or recognition of equality should be an element within any polity. However, equality is never the truly political end or goal of any polity, even of democracies. Equality is one facet of the good polity even within liberalism which values liberty above equality. Liberty, equality, and even stability, are means that serve the true end of politics, which is happiness. Each is a necessary but not sufficient achievement on the way to happiness, and so each is a lesser political good than is the higher political good of human happiness. When governments make any one of these lesser goods the end of the state, they cater to the greater clamor of collective desires rather than to individual needs. Democratic governments may do so implicitly because their power rests upon their response to the majority. Thus, the majority comes to be seen as the collective of the whole of the people—witness how electoral maps of the United States show red and blue states, even red and blue counties, when all should be purple. Such maps show our implicit recognition of the majority as the collective of the whole and we conduct our politics accordingly, campaigning in red and blue states and counties, and legislators voting in Congress as if representing their constituencies as all Republican or all Democrat, with little or no thought given to huge numbers of their constituents who fall into the other camp than

the one which they choose to consider only.

This problem is exacerbated when equality comes to rest as the political end, even above liberty in America. Our irrepressible democratic sensibilities have persistently pushed equality to the fore throughout American history, though fruition of that push has not always been accomplished. Democratic forces unleashed by the American Revolution were subsequently harnessed within the new Constitution, as such sensibilities were recognized and accommodated with liberty and stability. However, again Tocqueville tells us that “every central power which follows its natural instincts loves equality and favors it. For equality singularly facilitates, extends and secures its influence... the central government worships uniformity” (673). Only after Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg address did equality become the main focus of the American regime, an address that rendered the idea that America had always focused upon equality as its end and happiness. This assertion is a fallacy, Lincoln’s Address a “sleight of hand” as he picked the pockets of America’s citizens of their preeminent love of liberty (Wills 38). In “The Quest for Tradition,” Harvey Mansfield tells us that “nothing in our Pre-Revolutionary past, or in the constitution-building period of the revolutionary generation, justified making Equality the end goal to be secured by the American regime...” (88). Still, though not the main goal of American, or any, politics, equality remains a lesser order good and a necessary element in the goodness of any polity, especially of any democracy.

Again, it is when equality is made the sole political focus that problems arise, as other vital principles are overshadowed or become liminal to the polity. Thus, striking a balance between differing philosophies about equality itself and about its relationship to other lesser order political goods is necessary to the good of the polity.

Currently the tenets of conservatism and particularly the politics of so-called conservatives are not being questioned as much as they should be. While some scholars and politicians are starting to recognize conservatisms' divergence into movement-based politics, this transition has been subtle and hardly noticeable amongst most citizens. Because conservatives heavily emphasize their connections with and reliance upon the past, especially in reference to America's Founding, they are able to mount a façade of traditional conservative values while simultaneously using it to fuel the engine of political movement amongst their political supporters. If the keystone of conservatism, though, is that of moderating the masses rather than inflaming them, then most conservative politicians' use of the Founding is disingenuous and unfaithful to the inherent nature of conservatism. Instead, they use the past and their so-called conservatism as just one more deceptive tactic in American politics generally to acquire supporters and to solicit votes. There is an instrumental use of the past to move politics in directions similar, however slightly different, to the directions of their political opponents—all rely upon the same populace and turn to the same voters now, being the undecided

middle in the American electorate. Many truly conservative citizens are being deceived into thinking that they are connecting with traditions of the past through a conservative party in the Republicans, when in reality the party has turned the Founding into a political myth and its use into a political technique.

Interlude No. 1

Great men who are moderate are rare, and as it is always easier to follow one's strength [force] than to arrest it, within the class of superior people, one may perhaps with greater facility find people extremely virtuous than men extremely wise. The soul tastes so much delight in dominating other souls; even those who love the good themselves so strongly that there is no one who is not so unfortunate as to still have reason to doubt his own good intentions and in truth, our actions depend on so many things that it is a thousand times easier to do good than to do it well.

-Montesquieu

Modern technological development has reduced critical thinking in America to groupthink amongst the populous and its leaders. With new discoveries and inventions achieved at an insurmountable rate, however, people have become easily fooled into believing that we have achieved the apex of human development. Rather than pursuing the greater good and doing as the ancients did in reaching beyond themselves toward transcendent goods, modern society is content to maintain its current trajectory of rational development. Moderns use rational processes as did the ancients. However, unlike the ancients we have made rationality the cumulus of truth rather than recognizing it as one of several ways of striving toward knowledge of absolute truth and, thus, wisdom. As with other moderns, an absence of deep thought and reflection upon humanity's nature and purposes has reduced the American capacity for achieving political greatness. This is reflected throughout all aspects of both private and public life. In order to fully understand how this came about, one must first understand the premises upon which Americans act and that they assume are correct, one of which is

that correctness equals truth.

Another main assumption regards America's inability to value the fantastic or divine, at least in public, which weakens the political by reducing the populous to the animals of Aristotle's mere life, or Glaucon's city of sows in Plato's *Republic*. Lost to us are aspirations traditionally associated with human being through the virtues and their proximity to The Good. Aristotle famously explained that the political community is conjured to create noble people and to foster noble acts, brining the best out of humanity. On the contrary, today one finds that modern politics masquerade as something Aristotelian, mirrored in political speeches and campaigns, but in reality are far from it. Achieving what is posited as "the good" now involves mere procedure, akin to managing the economy efficiently, or creating and implementing more social and educational programs. In focusing upon processes rather than pursuing greater and more transcendent goals, America has forgotten what the political is and why it is important for it to be maintained. Emphasizing this phenomenon, most citizens are entirely unfamiliar with what the political truly entails. In our modern age, the social and political have merged into one experience, having become indistinguishable from each other. Political issues have devolved into the peoples' social problems, eliminating the true meaning of politics and its practical definition.

Being truly political involves aspirations to participation in something

greater than one's own private life, in practical experience taking care of and administering to the needs of the greater whole, for instance. One pursues virtue for the benefit and betterment of the polis, rather than focusing upon selfish narrow agendas. Essentially, the aim of politics is one of bettering humanity's condition through participating in public life. On the contrary, current public figures, rather than pursuing absolute truth, perpetuate economic orders and ultimately superficial social conditions through mere labor, rather than through courageous acts and innovative thought as the Greeks originally understood politics to inspire. If individuals are unwilling to look to the past to understand what politics once meant, then it is impossible to reclaim original political principles or to redefine for us the political once more and truly again. Conservative segments of a population are typically the ones most likely to remember and perpetuate the past. If the conservative element is removed from a society, it becomes nearly impossible for that society to remember its original roots and purposes, to regain the ground and meaning of the political. Conservatives are not innately better than their liberal counterparts by nature but, rather, they provide a necessary role in any balanced political system. If either one, the liberal or conservative faction, dies out, then the polis becomes social and easily polarized in one predominant direction, as dictated by social concerns and needs, usually economics and security.

Hierarchy and traditionalism characterize conservatism. These key

aspects of conservative thought are missing, however, from the current Republican Party in the United States. While Republicans consistently argue that they are traditionalists, persistently citing the Founding Fathers as their reference point on all political matters, their words are hardly reflected in their actions. Their political language results in social action, just as does their opponents'. This is particularly unsettling because losing political differentiation in thought and action results in detrimental consequences for a republic. If there are not strong enough concurrent majorities, then opposing ideals of either side become homogenous and, unopposed, dominate. If a radical ideological introduction of difference occurred, the people could be attracted to a heavily movement-oriented regime, such as fascism or communism in the past, something new in the present perhaps, and a once stable constitutional system could become vulnerable to instability and un-Constitutional change, if not immediate insurrection and revolt. Certainly, the populous would not have measure to withstand subtle or sudden regime changes in the long run. Over time, as social values change the meaning behind words, any system of government would change dramatically, in the case of democracies changing toward more social dominance and rule and the further burial of the political deep beneath social structures emerging as tombstones over truly human values found only in political contexts.

The advent of modernism in America has been completely changing the definition and meaning of American conservatism. As noted above, in order to

adapt to the changing social order, American conservatives have had to become more progressive in nature to maintain their social legitimacy. In changing, however, the original definition of conservatism came to lose what always had been its meaning. Conservatism is no longer defined as it was originally. It once was something else entirely. Because American conservatism's evolution happened so gradually, it went unawares, seeming to be natural in American eyes, even seen as necessary developments in the battle against opposing liberals by becoming more like them and appearing to be with the times. Because of such false expectations, little attention has been given to this important development. Conservatism has become a relativistic phenomenon, its new definition making it an oxymoron as conservatism persists in changing with the times, rather than fulfilling its original meaning and political purpose of preventing change, at least progressive and radical change. Ultimately, true conservatism in America has become null and void, disappearing in its redefinition that has ensured the poor maintenance of anything truly resembling conservative politics for an extensive period of time. With many classical conservatives being dead or gone, true conservatism has become almost a near absent voice in America. As important as it is, in and of itself and for the balance of the American polity, conservatism should never have become so malleable and inconsistent. True conservatism's nature and purpose are far too valuable in the maintenance of a stable polity.

CHAPTER TWO: A REMNANT OF HISTORY

It is reasonable to wonder whether all people will believe that the kinds of struggles and sacrifices possible in a self-satisfied and prosperous liberal democracy are sufficient to call forth what is highest in man... in particular, the virtues and ambitions called for by war are unlikely to find expression in liberal democracies. . . . There will be plenty of metaphorical wars—corporate lawyers specializing in hostile takeovers who think of themselves as sharks or gunslingers, and bond traders who imagine, as in Tom Wolfe’s novel The Bonfire of the Vanities, that they are “masters of the universe” ...how long [they will persist] with metaphors and symbolic victories is an open question. They will deliberately seek discomfort and sacrifice, because the pain will be the only way they have of proving definitely that they can think well of themselves, that they remain human beings.

-Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*

As time is beginning to reveal, Francis Fukuyama’s announcement that the world has reached the end of history is premature, if not wrong altogether. Liberal democracy has not triumphed over the globe quite yet, practically or theoretically. Yes, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, democracy has appeared as the only feasibly legitimate form of government, thus giving liberalism its strongest foothold ever within the global community. In fact, “even tyrants felt compelled to call their rule ‘democratic’” (Gourevitch 215). In the 21st century there are still many obstacles facing the spread of liberalism, however it appears as if liberalism may eventually triumph practically. Hence, liberal societies behave as if Fukuyama’s claims are correct—the end of history, while perhaps not quite yet accomplished, nonetheless is upon us. Gone is the age of ideological warfare based on ideas and theories whose potential to spark the fires of global wars focused upon spreading their practices and institutions. Instead adherents to liberalism expect a continuing

and relatively pacific evolution now into global liberal democracy; something akin to Kant's "perpetual peace" is upon us. Victor Gourevitch tells us that this type for the millennial state is what the end of history truly means:

For Hegel and Kojeve, "history" in the strong sense they attach to the word, refers to the millennial struggle to achieve political modes and orders that secure everyone's recognition as free and equal...there would be no political obstacles left to negate. And hence no more ideas (or ideologies) worth dying or living for. Everyone would be satisfied (221).

As the Western world continues to make freedom and equality its primary objectives, its citizens have no reason to doubt that mankind is getting closer to achieving the end of history as popularized by Fukuyama's modeling of the idea into a simplified and Americanized version of Kojeve's rather singular and controversial redaction of some implications in Hegel's complex thought. If mankind's ultimate aim is the political achievement of universal equality and freedom, then the peaceful society follows naturally as not only included in that grouping of objectives, but as the truly ultimate aim and good of politics. Thus, the end of history becomes the end of politics, in both meanings of the word "end" (Fukuyama). However the accomplishment of Kant's vision of global peace through worldwide equality and freedom cannot be realized practically through politics, meaning that this is not a truly political or universal ideal, given Kant's argument that what is true in theory must be true in practice. Achieving peace may seem a noble objective, but for politics peace is never sought for the sake of some universal peace but for the sake of a better peace for particular polities, an inherently unequal peace for

different societies protected by particular politics and political institutions, so long as possible. Wars continue to break out for the sake of a better peace for one or another polity, continuing the practical pursuit of unequal standing among nations, being the stuff of politics rather than of some grand universal society living under a universal and homogenous state that exists merely for the service of social needs since all political goals—equality, liberty, peace—are accomplished. While peace may be a social good, its universal accomplishment as some version of the end of history means the end of politics, meaning the end of humanity's striving toward its potential for greatness in the political virtues—the cardinal virtues for the ancients. Thus, the end of man is thought to be social, reducing human beings to living in pleasure, rather than living well and continually striving toward our true political end, which is happiness (Aristotle). Pleasure, being contentment in peace, is the social good, insufficient for the realization of happiness in that it stifles ambition and movement toward the true good which is realized through life in the virtues, which are political. Politics is necessary to living well and, thus, to happiness, our true end. Again, as Gourevitch states above, “there would be no political obstacles left to negate. And hence no more ideas (or ideologies) worth dying or living—for.” A world without the political would be one in which individuals could not truly fulfill themselves and become self-actualized beings, self-sufficient in their happiness (Aristotle). This aim toward the social good is “utopian” precisely because man is the “political

animal” and will not be satisfied with everlasting pleasure, perpetual peace, but will be driven by passions and selfish desires toward happiness instead. Politics will emerge, for better or for worse, from any supposed stasis of peace. The overly simplified dialectical reasoning that some suppose from Hegel to argue the inevitability of the end of history is inherently flawed because men are not governed by their reason alone, nor should they be, particularly by this modern rationality that claims preeminence over all forms of thought and knowledge. This modern rationality is logic, logical reasoning as scientific and technological ‘truth’ that is taken as the whole of Truth (Oakeshott, “Rationalism in Politics”). While men do improve their conditions over time by observing and correcting mistakes of the past, it is an illusion to think that a full understanding and knowledge of mankind’s historical errors and successes will autonomously emerge and direct society to an eventual end wherein we will forever remain content with equality, freedom and peace. It is an ideology—after all, Kojeve was a Marxist Hegelian, and so Fukuyama’s adoption and Americanization of Kojeve’s theory is a statement of the practical realization by American liberalism of the end of Kojeve’s Marxism, a state wherein politics withers away and happiness prevails as pleasure. But, pleasure is not happiness and social stasis is not the true end of politics and so is not the end of history, though ideological arguments may persuade us that the world is so and, in that way, stifle politics as much or as long as is possible, but not perpetually. Man remains the “political animal” and must

reveal himself as such eventually, if we are to escape the illusions of ideology and rise above the fictions and sophistry of modern reason, the illusions of a universal and homogenous state that is mistaken for the end of politics, the end of history.

We must consider that, currently, mankind does operate according to a technological imperative by which we constantly pursue and strive to maintain the affairs of society most efficiently, with little or no regard given to politics truly, to the life of political virtues let alone those of the philosophical or of the good life. However, eventually this type of living collapses in upon itself, society disintegrates because it is not self-sustaining beyond the technical and physical matters of its own proper concern. Without any political impulses or forces external to the maintenance of pleasuring peace governing it, society becomes solipsistic, selfishly obsessed with itself, with its members alike navel gazing in an increasing narcissism, or akin to Nietzsche's grazing herd if you will, having lost any sense of higher goods, let alone their pursuit. Hence, society should not be seduced by its limited goods into an entirely forced technical and rational world, even one in which the hope and promise are of perpetual peace and social welfare at the scale of global 'politics'.

It is part of the role of politics to help a people withstand such seduction into pleasure as the good and peace as the highest political good. As people focus solely upon their own social issues, other greater and nobler quests are undermined and the virtues attached to them and accrued in their pursuit are

ignored, renounced, or forgotten. A modern society can survive and function for a while sequestered in limited economic realms, facing only maintenance problems and technical issues to be solved, rather than human relations to be resolved, but no society can continue this way for long, certainly not forever. The chimera of perpetual peace is a siren's song. Mankind needs to have opposition in all things. This is the ground from which politics arise and out of this elevation of our sights are born the virtues and, thus, human being. To think that humanity will eventually overcome all conflict is not only absurd, but it is beneath the desires of human being proper; again, it is to debase ourselves to life in a city of sows, according to Glaucon's lament in Plato's *Republic*, Book II. Political life is the platform upon which conflicts emerge that create societies and their cohesion in the first instance. Politics is fundamental to human being and, further, to human society. Within politics, we find friend and enemy distinctions emerging, calling for knowledge, co-operation, competition, and conflict, directed toward improvement through peace for particular political societies. To rest upon any one accomplished peace as though this is the end of politics, to thus let political life dwindle and suffocate under the deluge of the rising celebration of society only as the best of human life, is to be swallowed up by social interests and concerns to the demise of the human quest for the truly good life. Sadly, the practical reality of this becomes increasingly more likely:

In short (society) depends upon on technology for survival and for material well-being. Nations are therefore so to speak, forced to

submit to the “logic of modern advanced civilization” which in turn forces them to adopt economic liberalism or capitalism...by and by the “rational” structures and practices of economic and political liberalism weaken national, religious and cultural divisions and gradually but inexorably economic and political liberalism becomes a world-wide phenomenon (Gourevitch 217).

With this drive to rationally eliminate national, religious, and cultural cleavages, reliance upon guidance external to social phenomena is lost as irrelevant to public life, whether one speaks of philosophical absolutes or divinely inspired truths. Thus, society becomes despotic in its rule of itself according to its own desires and passions unchecked; humanity becomes numb to its own inner humaneness. Such social despotism begins as relatively benign, a soft despotism that is more overwhelming than the tyranny of the majority spoken of by Tocqueville, in that this more advanced despotism is equipped with and directed by modern technology. Eventually, this must become totalitarian.

Historically, totalitarianism was characterized by forceful control and staggering death tolls, the sheer numbers of which made the totalitarian state seem successful in its assertion of power, seeming total indeed. However, rather than the demonstration of raw power, the truly successful totalitarian society is power made invisible, administered in more subtle and psychological ways. With this, society controls the state with its demands for social goods that are then administered for society technologically, so that social goods are dominant in private and public life, totally consuming what once was political dialogue and practice. The social totally consumes itself,

persuading, cajoling, and seducing peace across all social cleavages, creating a society not only unified by the state as in fascism, but permeating all parts of society with its object of peace through technical administration, through process rather than through politics. Procedural justice and procedural 'republics' replace justice and republics with their attendant virtues, these being sacrificed on the altar of self-interest as selfish passion, desire, and pleasure. Political virtue is lost as 'politics' is reduced to procedure, and justice to fairness, and happiness becomes an impossible good. The true end of human being now is mistaken for fleeting pleasures that must be reproduced continually so as to appear to have constancy in their accomplishment.

It is the perfection of this continual oppression of the human soul through pleasure and the satisfaction of desires that now characterize totalitarianism. In fact, this accomplishment always has been the goal of totalitarian societies, so that totalitarianism cannot be understood or its accomplishments discerned through simple analyses of its early historical manifestations—Nazi labor camps, Stalin's massacres, architectural demolition, fear and trembling, and all other physical manifestations of totalitarian power demonstrate totalitarianism in the making, imperfect and incomplete totalitarianism, relying upon power and violence in place of the socialization of desire and its satisfaction.

True insight and yet, to some extent, only a thoroughly mediocre understanding of totalitarianism can and must be gleaned through analyses of

the nonmaterial events, people, and places that exist in the ideological world of modern society. Totalitarianism begins to emerge when the values of a given polity begin to change, merging first with social values amidst a people remaining completely unaware of this inception. As citizens gradually become incepted with new ideals replacing their former traditions, a welcoming of these new values occurs as they merge with social passions and desires. Over time, it becomes easier, even unnoticeable, for individuals to merge their selfish interests into the realization of a society that devolves from politics and the pursuit of the good into a society dank with groupthink, as social values become universal and homogenous and thoroughly dominant as such. This is modern totalitarianism, often spoken of as soft despotism or benevolent tyranny in order to avoid the stigma associated with its historical origins and evolution. Part of its very success is to be misunderstood, to misguide understanding and have itself seen as social progress and the advancement of human being to higher states of peace and security as the new supposed 'political' goods.

When people willingly sacrifice the essence of their humanity to global peace for all humanity as though it is one large society of equal interests and virtues, politics die as the end of history emerges as an idea of equality and freedom achieved. Again, however, this accomplishment is one in theory alone and not in practice. Still, sacrifice for the idea is a practical reality for people convinced to give up freedom for equality as sameness, which is an

achievable, if undesirable, fact of this new totalitarianism, and with it the promise of the elimination of all conflict.

Liberal societies may no longer be confronted with physical warfare, but as groupthink becomes the norm for their citizens, these human beings must struggle with internal tensions doing battle within. The notion that modern equality as sameness and liberal freedom as the security of rights can coexist perfectly and perpetually is first a farce and then a tragedy. Human beings are by nature diverse and unique. Some imagined global society in which people are perfectly equal because they are forced into sameness, or persuaded into thinking such is their true state, must burst from within according to the expressions of diverse desires, passions, abilities, and powers. Homogeneity is not intrinsically human and, once accomplished politically and then given over to the social, must give way to the heterogeneity of human being. Social powers and institutions cannot contain or 'manage' human heterogeneity—that is the task of politics, now forsaken once heterogeneity is supposed to be perfectly conquered by politics having achieved its supposed end.

Totalitarianism integrates these two concepts, freedom and equality, through social institutions and practices infiltrating and then dominating the state, in place of the state's political guidance. Trying to maintain its supposed perfect accomplishments of coherent homogeneity and freedom, the state must become totalistic in its approach toward maintenance. Equipped

with modern technology, the totalistic sensibility becomes totalitarian once fully entrenched within the state and the state within society, so that technical maintenance of peace and security becomes the prime imperative of state and society together. All goods and virtues are sacrificed to the hope and promise of peaceful satisfactions of desire, so that a willing citizenry embraces its benign tyranny over itself as society through the state directs itself toward its own goods of peaceful pleasure without measures or restrictions of any standards beyond themselves and their own experience. Experience, living in the 'now', becomes the whole of life and the celebration of the social system that eventually must implode, must crash upon the rocks of inherent human tensions, within individuals themselves, and between society and politics, as the political always will remain, however subdued, awaiting its opportunities for expression and action.

Humans will never reach the end of history, nor should they want to, because it means a chimerical end of politics and political conflict, to be replaced by the social force of mass equality as homogeneity and the protection of liberty defined by a state of social rather than political concerns and ends—together, these constitute the truly successful and efficient accomplishment of totalitarianism and the legitimization of the totalitarian state.

So where does this drive for the end of history leave Americans at present? Society can be prevented from becoming lured into liberalism's

seeming utopia only through a resurgence of conservative ideals and tenets, that is to say a resurgence of politics. Because conservatism is by its very nature a preserving element in society, it strives to hold onto traditions and hierarchies, conflicts and competitions, that are the stuff of politics. The preservation of politics is an intrinsic prevention of any social submergence into global sameness, into the homogeneity of modern totalitarianism. Now, a resurgence of conservatism does not mean a reconstitution of the past or the entire demise of liberal ideals. Rather, a conservative revival brings back to us a war of words, reviving debate, conflict, and competition, at its best being akin to those of the Lincoln Douglas debates concerning moral issues and the preservation of social integrity, rather than homogeneity, and this through politics, through human struggle and talent, through compromise and negotiation, through politics in other words, rather than through technical management of social factions and cleavages into homogenous masses. True conservatism is the only avenue to politics in the modern liberal state, the only legitimate alternative to the illusory seduction and mechanical management of the end of history, the end of politics, and the end of human being. True conservatism is the only ground upon which we might stand to judge and harken our pacified society toward the political and, thus, toward salvation from the totalitarian state of technological reason and the tyranny of ourselves against ourselves through the institutionalization of our desires and passions within the modern liberal state.

Interlude No. 2

We require values, which in turn require a peculiar human creativity that is drying up and in any event has no cosmic support. Scientific analysis itself concludes that reason is powerless, while dissolving the protective horizon within which men can value

-Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*

This essay is not meant to promote radical ideological change but, rather, to revive the tension that once existed between two opposing ideals in America, namely conservatism and liberalism. Without the survival of this tension, destabilization ultimately ensues as one realm of thought becomes predominant over the other. This dynamic in the United States has been one of liberalism overpowering conservatism by absorbing the American people in supposed political change, labeled by many as “Progressivism.” The appeal of constantly ‘upgrading’ through progressive change has forced both major political parties in America to become “progressive.” This means that any authentic American conservatism is dying out and, with this, the tension between liberalism and conservatism is lost.

Further, the West’s obsession with some version of the Hegelian theory of the end of history is diminishing conservatism’s role within society. The end of history is a complex philosophical ideal of phenomenological historicism. Nevertheless, its central hopes have been assimilated into the minds of most Americans in one way or another, whether or not they are conscious of this. The idea was popularized by Francis Fukuyama, in his book *The End of History*, published after the fall of the Soviet Union. This book explains how

modern society has reached the end of history, in that global warfare and conflict have been overcome historically, in theory and in practice, so that there no longer needs be any global conflict. The absence of conflict will signal the triumph of liberalism over all political alternatives, thereby making equality and freedom revered tenets worldwide.

American citizens tend to behave as if all things pertaining to liberalism are innately good, doing so to their own detriment since they automatically discount the good of any opposing school of thought. This may be because of some subconscious sense of American liberalism as the end of history. As well, two World Wars and now the ravages of terrorism have made people afraid of what might be unleashed by any political alternatives. With this, any authentic conservatism also has become discounted generally. Conservatism is a pivotal crux in keeping Aristotelian politics alive in any society. However, modern liberalism intends to eliminate politics from society in order to usher in a new global utopian era as the end of history. With this accomplished, apparently, conservatism would no longer matter. Social equilibrium is supposed to be accomplished with the end of history, being also the end of politics, making conservatism as irrelevant as all other alternatives, all politics. This makes the end of history's peaceful society far more alluring than living in a political world in which conflict and strife, for good or for evil, can open Pandora's box many times over, each new opening releasing all sorts of political horrors that were unimaginable before the rise of modern technology.

Contentment and security foster residency in the end of history, an apolitical citizenship of social well-being. Yet, this desire for, and imagined accomplishment of, imagined social utopias will become the United States' undoing, rather than its social salvation from politics.

In order to demonstrate the meaning of this, one must appreciate the importance of politics for human beings and, therefore, the importance of politics within American society. In order to explain this, we move now to considerations of the political and social realms of human being in light of three German thinkers: Hannah Arendt, Fredrick Nietzsche, and Carl Schmitt. I choose these thinkers because each relies heavily upon Greco-Roman thought and tradition in order to understand and assess by contrast key problems of the modern age. Also significant is the fact that authentic American conservatism is inexorably linked with Greco-Roman origins of the American Founding and its inherent sensibility of preservation toward the traditional past. Given that ancient political thought and philosophy have tended to become archaic, being consulted rarely other than as historical phenomena, it now becomes incumbent upon us, whether or not we are conservative, to revive them in order to enliven American conservatism and, thereby, to rescue American politics from its degradation to the mundane. Allan Bloom laments this decline as he explains that

...Greek scholarship retired to the universities, where it was again a dead piece of learning, unable itself to inspire or produce a compelling vision that could transform men, it became studied by bourgeois professors who educated bourgeois men, for whom as

The Greek splendor, which had formed such heroic figures just a half century earlier, became a mystery (*Closing of the American Mind* 307).

If American conservatism is to be revived then, there must be a concomitant revival of ancient ideals as well. Without a serious turning to the ancient past to rediscover the essence of human being, we will sink as in quicksand further and further into liberalism's triumphant status quo. Without a moral center or stabilizing external force restraining mankind's celebration of its utopian dream, liberalism's salvation of the social from the political ultimately overwhelms the very stuff of liberalism in the first place, its political tenets of liberty and the sanctity of the individual. Here, only old ideals can save us from the new.

CHAPTER THREE: HANNAH ARENDT AND THE PROMISE OF POLITICS

Since then common sense has been bound and nourished by tradition, so that when traditional standards cease to make sense and no longer serve as general rules under which all or most particular instances can be subsumed, common sense unavoidably atrophies.

-Hannah Arendt

The modern age has confused the definition of the political. Politics, in the common vernacular, often connotes a necessary evil that merely requires toleration. However, by its very nature, politics is a two-edged sword. Though often used to control and manipulate “the masses,” the existence of politics is a necessary good as well, according to Hannah Arendt. She finds that “the answer to the question of the meaning of politics is so simple and conclusive that one might think that all the other answers are beside the point. The answer of politics is freedom” (TPOP 108). In both *The Human Condition* and *The Promise of Politics*, Arendt reminds her readers of a former understanding of the meaning of politics, while also attempting a revival of its principles. Although Arendt is skeptical of success for this political revival, considering the corruption that has consumed the political arena in modernity, she nonetheless aspires to reinvigorate modern politics with some original meaning and understanding. The realm of politics, she argues, originally provided for the highest form of human self-actualization, but has since been perverted by the merging of mankind's political and social lives. Private life and public life used to be practically distinct, one from another. Household matters, enlarged and made public as social matters in modernity, were dealt

with within the private life of the home. This is no longer true. Indeed, as Arendt notes, "in the modern world, the two realms indeed constantly flow into each other like waves in the never-resting stream of the life process itself. The disappearance of the gulf that the ancients had to cross daily to transcend the narrow realm of the household and 'rise' into the realm of politics is an essentially modern phenomena"(Human Condition 33). This entails the demise of the essence of politics, according to Arendt, a human tragedy scarcely noticed because of its gradual erosion over time.

In ancient Greece, private life was not considered as any high or noble affair, but was seen as "mere life" because it entails merely taking care of one's own biological requirements. This is a life bound to the necessities of nature. Caring for necessities is not bad or course, given that human beings are animals who need to eat, sleep, labor, and so forth. However, to be driven solely by such necessities is to make humanity animalistic. Arendt notes that "the distinctive trait of the household was that in it men lived together because they were driven there by their wants and needs" (Human Condition 40). Men labor to provide shelter and nourishment, while women labor in giving birth. These are natural activities of necessity for individuals and for the species. Contrarily, in the public life of the polis, every participant "knew only equals" freed from such labor, unbound from laboring for necessities in the household by its very success which was dependent upon its being "the center of the strictest inequality" (32). Only with the leisure accompanying the

freedom of household success, which is to say economic success, could a man become a participant in the political life wherein individuals could begin to understand and achieve the good life. Unlike mere life, this was a life that could “overcome the innate urges of all living creatures for their own survival” (37). This was freedom, and freedom was characteristic of human being over animal being and its biological contingencies. Given such freedom, political life becomes the selfless life of the virtues, while social life remains selfish as it emerges in modernity as a gross expansion of mere life and its necessity. The ultimate merger of these two realms confuses mankind as to what constitutes the good life—the pursuit of private interest becomes public, the social becomes political, and politics become selfishly vacant of once characteristically political virtues.

We in the modern age can only imagine, as best we can from the texts that are left to us, how those who lived in ancient Greece understood properly the separation between the political and the private spheres of life, what these looked or felt like in their living together while remaining distinct. Mankind now is used to subsisting in a world where social issues, once private, are now foremost in our public realms. These now are political, in our modern sense of politics, homogenizing our cultural details from above under the auspices of government and state powers, so that the public now determines meaning for private life. Public power becomes the generator of private morality, as the social and political are confused. We live as though in a closed

loop wherein properly private matters feed our politics, becoming public concerns as they are amalgamated and homogenized. These, then, come back to us in a sort of feedback system that imposes as law the now politicized homogenous outcome of private concerns. Private life is subjected to public opinion with the weight of the state behind it; politics enter the household of necessity from which man once escaped into the freedom of the political, binding us once again to these original concerns. The realm of freedom is lost to us, as the political and social become confused as one in their merging. Human being “unavoidably atrophies,” resulting in constant questioning and the lack of any inner assurance of what we are about; are we political or social, private or public? Modern life lacks definition as we slip back into mere life, the life of necessity prevailing over the life of freedom that comes with original politics.

An antidote to this degeneration was found early in the history of philosophy and attempted as prevention, where now Arendt attempts a cure. Ancient philosophers tried to teach people *how* to think properly and individually, so as to *avoid* the snare of public opinion and the fall into purposeless actions and the self-destructive behavior of becoming social, becoming members of a large household with only the common concerns of others to guide them in what should properly be their own individual matters. Thus, philosophers did not teach *what* to think. Further, an understanding of *how* humans shape themselves internally through their thoughts and

externally by their actions was addressed anciently by the discipline of political philosophy. Political philosophy was a learning process of how individuals could ascertain what the good entailed and how it could be applied within the polis.

In *The Promise of Politics*, Arendt discusses how philosophy is inexorably connected with politics, being the study of human existence and our values. That the study of the two has become separated into philosophy and political philosophy historically has resulted in the further denigration of the politics in modernity. She reminds us that "...the Greeks saw this danger in Philosophy. Philosophy, the concern with truth regardless of the realm of human affairs—and not love of the beautiful, which everywhere was represented in the polis..." separates itself from its original concerns of political philosophy (*The Promise of Politics* 10). As part of the political world, persons are more prone to embrace the pursuit of truth, to enhance their citizenship and their freedom, in other words their human being.

However, the majority of people are not part of, nor do they have the desire or leisure to become part of, the political (in the classical Greek sense of the word). Most remain content within, or bound by, their pursuits of mere life, even as it becomes public within modern mass society. Therefore, the pursuit of truth becomes rather a threat to most, instead of something welcome to them because of their mundane concerns. The political philosopher's search for truth threatens society because society, given its inherent nature, is

focused upon its world of needs, having no inclination for discovering truths that distract from and may interfere with its own pursuits. Hence, if some philosopher here or there pursues and bears witness of truth and human reality, enticing us to freedom beyond the social world of necessity, he or she threatens what society deems to be of paramount concern. Therefore, as a matter of necessity, society ignores them or drives them out as a matter of self-preservation. The true political philosopher is a social disturbance and must be dealt with accordingly, as we remain bound to the confused realm of public and private, unyielding to any realm of true freedom, of true politics, beyond.

Given that the modern age is the culmination of this political and social merger, the needs aspect of the many has naturally overwhelmed the altruistic political pursuits of a few. Truth becomes lost to the needs of the masses, as is manifested by their public concern and constant obsession with their economic well-being. Arendt notes that “as soon as the philosopher submitted his truth...it lost its distinguishing quality, for there is no visible hallmark which marks off truth from opinion” (12). Over time, the truth and the actuality of the good life and what politics are originally supposed to be about becomes lost. Society, as an overwhelming household turned political, now pursues equality and friendship between its members, finally supposing to achieve this perfectly in modernity, thus setting its household in order. The politicization of the household, both large as society and small as the family, forces the public equality of citizenship into the private realm of the family and its members.

Everyone, everywhere, is supposed to be equal. However, Arendt argues that “the equalization in friendship does not mean that the friends become the same or equal to each other, but rather that they become equal partners in a common world—that they together constitute a community” (17). Because the idea of equality has been distorted and manipulated throughout history, the truth of what equality is has become lost. The notion of equality has become a tool used for political agendas to garner votes, denigrated into a marker of all types of belonging rather than serving as an indicator of those who have achieved self-actualization, those who have become truly political. Equality comes with friendship, which is a political matter in the realm of freedom. However, this truth, like many others, has declined into yet another opinion amongst thousands in the confused public realm which is no longer free. We become brothers and sisters of necessity, rather than friends through politics of freedom, which is nearly impossible to find—or even to believe in.

Truth will never be found as long as the political is driven by “mere life” problems of mass society—the biological wants and needs of peoples everywhere. These needs, again, are necessary for man’s survival, but should not be the cornerstone or governing force of humanity. To be so is to re-animalize human being, rendering a mass of barbarians living together in society but without true politics by which we can order and govern ourselves. The opinion of the masses almost always drives out truth because, as Arendt states, “truth can therefore destroy *doxa* (opinion); it can destroy the specific

political reality of the citizens” (25). Once people become attached to, or even comfortable with, their established norms it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to reform them in how they have always done things. In other words, tradition becomes entrenched and resistant to any truths beyond its own supposed truths, whatever these may be. Hence, even when some specific truths may be discovered or pronounced, however beneficent these may or may not be, the chances for any social populous changing its supposed political course are unlikely.

Even true or original politics is not the purest method through which mankind can discover truth. Political philosophers acknowledge this: “In Aristotelian terms, politics is a means to an end; it has no end in and of itself” (82). Politics should not be eliminated or forgone, though, because it is the only way people can collaborate and work together on a myriad of issues beyond those of the household; “Politics deals with the coexistence an association of different men. Men organize themselves politically according to certain essential commodities found within or abstracted from an absolute chaos of difference” (93). This is the original realm of freedom. While many people may lament what supposed politics has done to the world, they misdirect their anger at politics, rather than directing it where it should be, namely at the people who misused the institution of politics. In making snap judgments, however, most people being opinionated rather than educated politically, they want to create a world wherein the political does not exist. But this is

impossible—given that an invisible hand cannot govern from the skies. There will always be governing structures in mortality as long as there are men living on earth, whether these structures are visible or not. Thus, we have made politics invisible by confusing it with the social, with the household and the realm of necessity. Politics do not go away, but freedom is lost as the public and private coalesce in the minds of modern peoples.

Interlude No. 3

Nietzsche had intimations about the demise of politics in the 19th century previous but similar to those of Hannah Arendt. While Arendt's ideas and Nietzsche's are not entirely consonant with one another, each philosopher decries the advent of modernism destruction of former political and hierarchical orders. Although Nietzsche does not experience the full breadth of 20th Century terror and the totalitarian rise of utopian ideals, he is a visionary in that he anticipates these developments in his early sense of the unraveling of modern ideals. He attributes this eventual demise to the loss of traditional ideals that espouse age-old virtues of heroism, friendship, loyalty, magnanimity, and others. Arendt witnessed the almost entire upheaval of the world political systems during World War II, as the fruition of the rise of modern ideology. Because of this, she can more fully articulate why the modern citizen comes to abhor politics and embrace the social in its place more completely. Regardless of individual circumstance, the overall emergence of anti-political and anti-traditional sentiments is the most important observation to take note of in each of these thinkers studies. During Nietzsche's life, religious values had already infused political virtues with social meaning, making political affairs akin to Aristotle's household affairs. During Arendt's lifetime, dire circumstances rendered by two world wars drove the political and social systems further together, fostering aggressive attempts to create earthly utopias. Both thinkers observed how society's

problems of the day contributed to and eventually welcomed political decline in their respective time frames and circumstances.

Where the two thinkers differ is in their approaches to dealing with this mutual observation. Nietzsche implies a specific solution to deal with the decline of politics. He suggests that only the strongest and the most genius can emerge from society with any relevant legitimacy to true governance. These are his ubermen. Society's sole purpose, for Nietzsche, is to serve the uberman's purposes and accomplishments (Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*). Widely rejected at first, Nietzsche's solution is viewed as preposterous and megalomaniacal, then later as apolitical and aesthetic. Subsequently, the politics of his thought are disregarded entirely, other than the short-lived Nazi misunderstanding and slavish appropriation of his ideas in ways diametrically opposed to his meaning and intent. However, Nietzsche's observations on social and political degeneration are apt even though his solutions are controversial. We can learn from his description even while rejecting his limited and mostly implicit prescriptions.

CHAPTER FOUR: NIETZSCHE AND THE DEMISE OF POLITICS

Nietzsche explains that the slavish mentality of the masses brought down higher forms of thought amongst the elite, as well as the politics associated with such thought. This degradation of thought not only binds the masses to further slavishness, but also hinders any further growth or elevation of politics from within overall society. Great minds are prevented from rising to higher echelons and revealing humanity's greatness. In order to further mankind's growth in all areas of development, whether intellectual, emotional, or spiritual, the masses have to allow those who are more capable to rise above common or social affairs. A natural hierarchy of human beings and of values must be recognized and even nurtured, despite the natural abhorrence of such to those lesser men who comprise mass society. For them, each individual possesses equal value to the next, making all values equal and rendering social values preeminent due to the sheer numbers who value them. These masses are democratic and eschew hierarchies. However, it is natural and obvious that each person does not possess abilities equal to every other person. Because all men are not endowed with equal talents or gifts, nor with equal predispositions to action, pretending that all possess equal potential actually prevents individuals from bettering their own specific skills, whatever they may be. When equality becomes about making everyone the same in order to appease the homogeneity of the masses, all growth in every capacity is stunted. The modern age forces homogeneity as equalization upon peoples

though, because it believes that sameness rids the world of conflict and strife. Thus, equality comes to dominate the liberal project, in place of liberty as its highest value. Conflict cannot be entirely eradicated though, and achieving worldwide utopia is a pipe dream (Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*). Yet, because society has come to value this sameness, traditional political values are being destroyed subsequent to the abolishment of any form of hierarchy, or at least the attempt to do so. Hierarchy is necessary to politics though, and therefore to the pursuit of higher values and to notions of the good by which we might be governed well. Instead, hierarchical structure is typically associated with man's abuse of power and governments', rather than recognized for its inherent good in maintaining traditional values. Although political establishments can be lethal potentially, this does not mean that we should be rid of them entirely. Abolishing truly political systems does not cure the human race of its ills, it aggravates them. Over time, social forms of hierarchy have emerged, based upon degree rather than upon kind. New politics based upon social differences supersede former political systems, posing even greater totalitarian threats than any previous system of politics, since the relevance of these social differences is one of intensity of commitment to homogeneity, rather than expressions of heterogeneity.

Nietzsche recognizes how humanity has betrayed its former traditional and hierarchical values, in part through worshiping the practice of labor. Labor is merely cyclical and repetitive, associated with necessity and nature. There

is nothing unique or fantastic about it but, rather, its celebration is just a means to justify a necessary disgrace. Instead of recognizing its proximity to the animal in us, we have extolled labor as something dignified in order to bear its lowly place in human being. Labor is a necessary disgrace, men needing to labor in order to survive. Without laboring for food and shelter, or in the procreation of the species, humanity would languish toward extinction. Thus, labor is natural, something all animals must do. In order to elevate their own meaning and significance, laborers revalue labor to rest amongst the highest of values, along with equality, thus elevating and justifying their own significance.

While labor is necessary, though, this does not mean that the values of the laborer should become those of all peoples in any given polity. Yet the insistence of equality forces the values of labor not only upon the common man, but also upon those who would belong to higher echelons and, therefore, would be political rather than social. When the masses impose their values upon the ruling class, politics is degraded to social concerns. Eventually, the laborers' values, which are primarily economic and transactional in nature, become those that infuse whole political systems. The authentic pursuit of politics striving for higher goods gives way to the base in us, as politics becomes more about managing social systems than building upon them. In his essay "On the Greek State," Nietzsche emphasizes this point by discussing how, rather than being governed by geniuses of our time, the common man

has made his laboring values the general conception or notion of the good for society, with no need or desire for higher goods and, thus, no need or desire for politics rightly understood.

There are only a few who are true creators and rulers though, and these individuals should be allowed to rule guided by a higher good or will. Politics should not be dictated by slavish thought. A consideration of Nietzsche's belief of how this laboring mentality consumes the upper echelons of society, forcing them to integrate into a society that values laboring, is called for here. Nietzsche believes that politics becomes degraded when rulers begin to praise the value of labor for labor's sake, maintaining social systems rather than bettering them through politics. The majority of peoples are essentially slavish in their behavior. Forcing a baser mentality upon those of higher ability merely holds down those capable of achieving higher goods, thereby preventing the human race in general from progressing, even though progress is the expressed goal of social being, or from greatness, the true goal of political being. Great leaders should be sought out to govern as statesmen, free to make decisions in pursuit of higher and nobler goods, rather than being constantly dictated to by the masses to thwart their abilities and energies. When governments are consumed by managing the economy, their leaders focus upon filling their citizenry's pockets with money, rather than in filling their heads with knowledge. They talk about jobs rather than justice, or more precisely they revalue justice as equal and thus full employment. Essentially,

the art of politics has been eliminated, replaced by economic management of the public realm. There is no longer any tension or relationship between the political and the social sectors of humanity. Rather, they have merged into one and the same. A tension between the immediately practical and the political is a necessary tension that should be maintained within any polity. Without this tension, governments become vapid in thought and automatons to labor. The ancient virtue of justice becomes all about the equal distribution of wealth, with redistribution of resources from upper to lower classes, rather than the pursuit of any higher understanding of what justice means to man, what politics means to society.

Without contests and tensions amongst ourselves, humanity degenerates into its basest and most animalistic state. In "Homer's Contest," Nietzsche combats the flabby concept of modern humanity and glories in the Greeks' warlike and competitive nature, opposing their greatness to the banal and slavish nature of present-day society. Nietzsche, at first glance, may be repulsive in what he suggests, advocating the rise of ubermenschen who brutally war against each other to achieve glory in gladiator-like ways. However, his claim that modern civilization has become a mere shadow of its former self is astute and worthy of considerable contemplation. For, while his response in advocating a rise of Greco-type contests for determining who is worthy of glory verges on megalomaniacal insanity, he is yet profoundly perceptive in recognizing humanity's degeneration through the loss of any such aspirations.

Humanity has become degenerative because our recognition of any capacity for greatness is overpowered by our simultaneously being terrified of any few becoming godlike, first because we do not want to anger or make the gods jealous of us, later because we do not want to submit to the will of any other. Hence, humanity retreats from contest and competition, in other words from politics, and we become pale shadows of our former selves.

The difference between men and animals lies in our ability to further ourselves and our species through contests and competition, to learn from our struggles one with another. Whether or not the contests concern art, politics, or strength in any other field of action is of little consequence. The central point of Nietzsche's contests is pitting one capacity against that of another toward the actualization of these capacities. Through distinguishing which individual is greater, the greatness of the whole of society increases, as particular actualisations of human greatness are universalized. Humanity becomes stronger, wiser, faster and more artistic, as geniuses are recognized and brought to the forefront of our experience and imagination. When genius is not recognized nor aimed for, the result is human degradation. With no one striving for anything higher and with no motivation to pit oneself against another, greatness cannot emerge from society's permeation by common baseness. As the Greeks held contests and recognized the best of men, they inspired themselves and others to aim for active goals. Grecians were instilled with the motivation to compete, thereby bringing glory not only to themselves

but also to their cities, as Nietzsche shows.

Modern society does not glory in any action to the extent that the Greeks did in glorious competition. With this, society abhors tension or conflict not only between persons, but also between opposing realms of thought. Moderns do not want a healthy tension between the political and the social but, rather, an elimination entirely of any potentiality for conflict. Healthy competition is a good thing. Yet in modern society, humility and the recognition of equality between potential foes and selves are expected automatically before and after any match. Any hint of one being potentially better than the other is discarded, because this thought is dangerous to equality and homogeneity and, therefore, threatens instability. Hence, when winners glory in their accomplishments it seems distasteful to the general public—victorious athletes give honor to their organizations in the end and to God along the way. Nevertheless, Nietzsche is correct when he asserts the necessity of glorifying in real accomplishments. Without broadcasting and reveling in greatness when shown, individuals cannot better others, individually or socially, especially when they are continuously scolded to project a meek and humble persona, to be seen as team players and thereby inspire people to stay within and play their social roles well and submissively. Eventually, this outward projection of meekness becomes an inner governing force, eliminating all ambitions for greatness. In fact, we should learn from the Greeks, “the most humane men of ancient times, [who] have a trait of cruelty,

a tigerish lust to annihilate. . . For in that world the extraordinary artistic precision, calm, and purity of the lines raise us above the mere contents” (Nietzsche, “Homer’s Contest”).

When we eliminate the human urge to compete, to distinguish amongst our fellow citizenry who is better and who is worse, peoples’ sights are set low upon themselves and, in time, we begin to degenerate. Because, as Nietzsche notes, “struggle and the joy of victory were recognized—and nothing distinguishes the Greek world from ours as much as the coloring, so derived, of individual ethical concepts, for example, Egis [‘Discord’] and envy” (“Homer’s Contest”). Without social recognition of what is better and what is worse, in whatever capacity, society stunts its growth and subsequently its potential not only remains unrealized, but eventually is lost entirely. Discord should be welcomed in society, for it is through tension that greater deeds can be born. From the seeds of tribulation grow the actions of greatness. This is politics, implicitly for Nietzsche, explicitly for Carl Schmitt, as will be seen in the following chapter. When there is continuous harmony, apolitical societies become stagnant. Nietzsche argues that “infinity impedes us now because our aims and goals are impractical. Only conquests make one into something as a proof that without envy, jealousy, and competing ambition the Hellenic State is like the Hellenic man. He becomes bad and cruel, thirsting for revenge, and godless...” (“Homer’s Contest”). Political action and true success can never be achieved when socialization continuously brainwashes us into flattering our

lowest common denominator.

This kind of socialization has brought a slavish mentality to rest among the people of contemporary liberal societies, so that social virtues are governing society, rather than our being governed by human genius. The common majority over time has justified their labors as something greater than they are, creating a false consciousness among democratic majorities that they themselves are greater than they truly are. National wealth is not the measure of true virtue and laboring for such wealth is not in and of itself truly virtuous. Again, the process of labor is merely a cyclical phenomenon that all men repeat of necessity throughout history. True progress and political action are born in the idea that man can rise above mere laboring and pursue greater, perhaps eternal goods. This might sound extreme in its expectation that society must foster the pursuit of political and philosophical ends but, when society fails to do so, it becomes lost in extreme solipsism, unable to find or act upon any meaning or purpose beyond itself; apolitical societies have no virtue, no redeeming qualities.

Presently, mankind places too much emphasis upon the value of labor. Irrelevant are the artists and thinkers who escape the natural cycles of labor and endeavor to make civilization better. Creative minds may improve civilization because they do not subject themselves to an eternity of labor, they do not sacrifice genius or greatness for economic well-being or social security. There is little difference between those who labored in farm fields in past

societies and modern citizens today who labor in cubicles for corporations and governments. This more modern labor appears more valuable to society, though, because it is rational and technological. Yet, it is just another version of labor. Necessity has been replaced by efficiency as the standard for modern labor. However, when labor takes on its new face, it does not shed the very essence of labor, nor does it alter its true value—an endless daily repetition for the maintenance of mere life. For any political revival, society needs to place emphasis upon the achievement of higher goods and virtues beyond laboring and mere life, rather than just perpetuating itself in different forms, but never bettering itself, never achieving any higher level of civilization.

Because individuals place such a high value upon their own labor, the ideas of truly great men are dismissed, discounted, or ignored, because they do not have tangible evidence of their value. Political action cannot be measured by economic standards, or by technological standards of efficiency and the satisfaction of base desires. With labor, people easily see a task performed, if it is successful or not, its costs and benefits—in a building built, a pastry baked, or in tax returns completed, the value of labor appears to be self-evident. If value is constantly placed upon such tangible processes, genius may never be praised or respected. Societies' measure of success and dignity remains based upon production, whether a building is built or a pastry baked—or a thousand pastries made for that matter.

The purpose of my own argument is not to praise the virtues of the

political to the extent that, if given the chance, the political would suppress the social, or the values of labor entirely. However, when household matters become the sole determinant of how national, supposedly “political,” policy is created and upheld, it must be that over time society becomes hollow, vacant of meaning and purpose as it focuses entirely upon its own inherent problems, rather than being guided by reflection upon standards and principles beyond itself and its own immediate interests. Whether focusing upon transcendent issues, such as the composition of the good life, or paying attention to ideas and events occurring beyond one’s own borders, the significance of life beyond oneself and beyond the social is crucial for the maintenance of any long lasting polity. What thought associated with labor does not realize as it values labor above all else is that, by giving these values sole governing power and dismissing virtuous political pursuits as impractical and therefore irrelevant, society actually diminishes intrinsic human value. Spirituality is devalued by creating a society based entirely upon rational, technological, and transactional terms. Because society does not value actual ideals of justice as much as it values fair legal processes and equal distribution of resources, when confronted with a situation in which its citizens want to be viewed humanely, they will find themselves viewed as merely functional, labor being a cog in a wheel of a great machine. The “political” system will attribute social values, standards of economy and efficiency, to its citizens, rather than the values of virtue, chiefly justice were it a truly political setting. Hence,

advocating a resurgence of the political from within society is not an elitist call to overhaul government and infuse it with only political and philosophical aims but, rather, it is itself a political action on behalf of society and human being for their salvation *right now*, given how far we have gone from any reliance upon traditional virtues. It is a call to recover what once was conserved. This is the only form of true conservatism left to us in the modern age.

Interlude No. 4

In order to further illustrate what the loss of the political looks like and means, I choose to use the writings of Carl Schmitt, an internationally well-known and prominently respected German thinker during the 1920s and 1930s. Schmitt provides us with a modern account of how politics, in the classical sense of the word, has become eradicated in the modern age, having been overwhelmed by social, rather than political, concerns and phenomena. When the political realm does not aim at achieving higher goods than those deemed to be social goods but, rather, focuses upon managing the economy and private social issues, then the art of politics becomes mundane rather than noble and vibrant. Politics proper become lost to us in the fray of social conflicts and needs, particularly in the overarching democratic desire and movement toward resolving such conflict. It is very difficult within the modern age, then, to imagine a time when politics and political thinking, even political science, have not been concerned simply with the creation of the best forms of bureaucratic management of social concerns. Therefore, currently it is hard for citizens and even political scientists to relate themselves with any talk about the self-actualizing nature of participation in politics and our elevation toward The Good that once characterized ancient politics.

My use here of Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of The Political* as a primary resource to revive the meaning of the political in no way entails support of Schmitt's personal political views. Having later become a prominent thinker in

Germany's Nazi Party in the 1930s and 40s, Schmitt was a vehement anti-Semite and an ardent supporter of Adolf Hitler. Although he was later renounced by the Nazis, Schmitt resisted all postwar attempts at denazification throughout the rest of his life. Given Schmitt's personal history, it may be difficult for some Western thinkers to take seriously and especially to revive some of Schmitt's most important political ideas. However, the ideas within Schmitt's particular conception of the political are valid and insightful, even proving him to have been prophetic, especially regarding later periods of the modern age. Thus, Schmitt's thoughts here should be taken seriously and carefully analyzed, as they have been in a late and ongoing revival of interest in all of Schmitt's thought. This revival was initiated by, and centers upon, the translation into English and re-publication of *The Concept of The Political*.

Schmitt's work does not so much provide an alternative to modern liberalism as it does a critique of the West's adoption of an entirely liberal mentality. Liberalism has elevated mundane natural concerns of necessity, belonging to the realm of the social, and transformed them into public political issues at the expense of driving truly political matters to the margins of modern life. This brings into question the entire current trajectory of mankind's historical development in both thought and action. While liberalism's tenets inspire greater cooperation amongst and between peoples, they also simultaneously cripple mankind's ability to rise above our mortal human condition. Having overcome arbitrary authority in its rise to prominence,

liberalism now dominates our public realms with its interest in pacific order. Conflict is pacified but, ironically, freedom is lost to the public realm. While Schmitt explains how liberalism has mitigated politics' existentialist role within the modern state, he also decries the loss of humanity's desire for purposes and goods greater than one's self interest and self-preservation. For Schmitt, politics properly provides for these greater purposes and higher goods.

CHAPTER FIVE: CARL SCHMITT AND *THE CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL*

Schmitt's motivation in pointing to the desire for something greater than humanity's terrestrial existence is a restoration of a driving desire in mankind that is common to humanity throughout every age of history, whether realized in religion or in government. It is a desire for the restoration of something transcendent to the public realm, a restoration of freedom to humanity. For Schmitt, this involves an original drive for obtaining something of the divine. This is seen as necessary for the survival of human being as such. Liberalism drives the fulfillment of this desire out of the public realm, replacing it with desires originally private, rendering originally public desires to the private. This signals the dying out of any transcendent life for mankind and, thus, the death of human being—we are re-animalized as the public realm of the political again becomes the "city of sows" of Plato's *Republic*. Whether or not one agrees with Schmitt's political prescription for the salvation of man, the overall feeling inspired by his argument is palpable in a world wherein everyone now lives practical technical lives that lack any transcendent or divine purpose. Schmitt's argument becomes attractive and applicable to a world of disenchantment in which there is nothing to live for beyond one's own experience, meaning immediately selfish interests.

In such apolitical societies, citizens transform and subject their once political aims to goals of mutual appeasement and making amends one to another for private wrongs now made public, foregoing their human potential

for greatness. Striving for agreement and compromise purely for the sake of a cumulative perpetual peace prevents humanity from achieving greater aims, higher goods that lay beyond our current capacities. Peace is, of course, not inherently bad. However, when pursued at the expense of everything else, this one human good becomes a social vice, for Schmitt. The goods that may be achieved through political conflict are obscured by social goods of more immediate necessity. Once basic social goods are thus secured locally, modern societies strive to better secure them by eliminating external conflicts. As well, social goods are made universal and homogenous to all modern states. Countering this modern tendency, Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* defines what it means to be political and explains how the political as he understands it has become lost to modern societies. Schmitt blames liberalism and its portrayal of politics as evil, even if a necessary evil, since politics is characteristically a realm of conflict. For Schmitt, the essence of politics is the making of friend and enemy distinctions between different states or polities. True politics is not an internal conflict or household squabble as witnessed in, for example, domestic party rivalry as we now see between Republicans and Democrats in the United States. Rather, politics as Schmitt sees it, is the potential for conflict or its actualization as witnessed in ancient Greece between Athens and Sparta, for instance. If the governments do not have foreign foes, their polities devolve into baseness eventually, lacking the opposition that gives birth to and polishes the virtues that are given by

politics. The striving for any great accomplishment, in this account of politics, naturally meets with resistance, with 'enemies' of one form or another. The lack of any significant opposition to one's action or cause becomes an indication of such cause's irrelevance or lack of monumentality.

This essay supports Schmitt's definition of politics, being that of the friend-enemy distinction. Regardless of Schmitt's personal politics and his later affiliation with the National Socialist Party in Germany, his earlier argument in *The Concept of the Political* accomplishes an overall intellectual derailment of globalized mass homogeneity and rejection of its subsequent utopian end. His argument is cogent and valid and, therefore, deserves our attention and analysis. A truly political environment should foster a willingness amongst its citizenry to give up one's life for a cause greater than oneself. With this, there needs to be a definitive definition of what comprises the good and the bad. Without an established standard there is no heroism, courage or virtue apparent within society. While this essay at hand is not a rousing call to battle or militarism, American politics now is in a sorry state. Not only has it been reduced to the social, with endless gridlock about economic matters and an overbearing fixation upon "national security," politics have been debased even in the traditional stronghold of such amongst conservatives. American conservatives are floundering within a political party that has become as social and debased as the rest of American politics. With this, conservatives have become marginalized within a foray of social and

progressive movement toward “achieving our country” (Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*). My call is to the remembrance and recognition of the political and with it to the struggle for political goods and, ultimately, toward The Good.

Mankind cannot achieve a *worthwhile* eternally peaceful utopia on earth. Schmitt notes that being anti-political is inherently contradictory to humanity's nature. Civilizations should not fear differences over real matters or potential animosity in the struggle for the higher goods. It is in such struggles, within politics that is to say, that greater accomplishments are realized and the virtues are present and vital. As Winston Churchill once stated, “You have enemies? Good. That means you’ve stood up for something sometime in your life.” Churchill’s sentiment is one that has died out in the modern age. Advocating a particular belief because of its inherent goodness or virtue alone is foreign to our current politics.

Becoming political once was the supreme aspiration of the most virtuous members of any given society. It meant being involved in and devoting oneself to something other than basic and necessary needs (Arendt, *The Human Condition*). Today, politics has been reduced to a category amongst other categories of social concern, equivalent with economic, cultural, and legal elements that exist within and serve the ends of modern society. Anciently, the Greeks viewed politics as involving the noblest of all pursuits, being outwardly motivated for the individual rather than selfishly motivated by base interests. Only within the political realm could the most

virtuous individuals display themselves and through them the highest virtues of humanity, as relative to The Good.

A key part of Schmitt's argument hinges upon how he distinguishes the politics of the ancients from contemporary 'politics' of present-day citizenries. Modern society has muddled any original sense of politics with base motives and concerns, losing its Aristotelian meaning of striving for the good life of the virtues as opposed to pursuing mere life of "household activities," economics as the concern of the mass majority (*The Human Condition*). The good life's aims for higher otherworldly goals are neither immediate nor tangible, but are visible in the appearance of the virtues displayed and enjoyed in its pursuit. Oppositely, the mere life's concerns with economic well-being and maintenance can be felt and measured tangibly, are more immediate and concrete and, thus, more compelling for average persons, the bulk of mass society.

In modern governments, these concerns lend themselves to technical and bureaucratic management, leading to the creation and maintenance of various government departments concerned solely with the administration and maintenance of portions of mere life. As a whole, modern governments come to be the sum of its parts, becoming the administration of mere life, lacking any vision of, let alone aims at, greater political goods. Governments are deemed good as they maintain a prosperous and successful status quo, with their bureaucratic departments rewarded with enhancements of their

various programs of instrumental maintenance. Department improvements in the agricultural, economic, or educational realms, to name a few, focus upon process in and of itself, striving to make their industry more effective, efficient and productive, rather than better in any sense relative to nobler goals and goods. Practical establishments are hallmarks of well-functioning liberal democracies. However, when process overshadows the higher pursuits of politics, societies begin to degenerate into perpetual replications of themselves, they stall and fizzle in a status quo that longs for progress but finds none because real purpose is lost.

This does not mean that there is no change, no movement, but only that all movement toward the Good is illusory. Social “politics” is about progressive change without real direction beyond desire and necessity. Government institutions maintain the pretense of adherence to greater virtues but, because there exists no universal acceptance of any specified good or bad in society, it is impossible for such institutions, let alone any real politics, to represent or instill the virtues of the Good into society. Institutions do so in name only, but not in practice. Modern society takes comfort in maintaining day-to-day goods, though, rather than taking on the burdens of pursuing any greater purposes or aims that would drive authentic change in their systems of governance. Of course, citizens may ponder particular purposes and reflect upon taking noble actions, but little if any act upon these thoughts and the technical satisfactions of modernism enable a sort of laziness that is especially

profound within the setting of established liberalism. Like all earlier political movements, momentum is slowed and finally lost upon the accomplishment of the general principles of inspiration that moved them in the first instance.

Polities that presently wage wars outwardly and move politically within are ones that are not “comfortable” yet, economically and socially, and so struggle for real change for their societies through politics. Ultimately, any nation without an overall political aim, as Schmitt explains in his definition of authentic politics, eventually devolves into obscurity, as witnessed prematurely in smaller rising polities and, at the other extreme, the ultimate fall of the Roman Empire (*The Concept of the Political*).

Modern liberal societies, though, constantly reiterate through their citizenry's daily lives that the elimination of politics is not a sign of ruin but, rather, is a sign of “political” (but truly social) progress. Schmitt notes that liberalism has made the affairs of state and society merge into one, amalgamating and conglomerating mass interests into so-called political institutions and policies, eliminating previous distinctions of necessity and convention, nature and politics. Schmitt states that “the equation state = politics becomes erroneous and deceptive at exactly the moment when state and society penetrate each other. What had been up to that point affairs of state become thereby social matters, and, vice versa, what had been purely social matters become affairs of state” (22). Because the state becomes so heavily integrated with the affairs of society, any overall political sensibility or

objective is lost, with every social, religious, and economic concern now becoming a potential category of state concern and, thus, potentially 'political'—but each of these realms of human concern has its own agenda, agendas that are not political in essence or in effect. Because there has been a collision between the “private household” and the “political community” everything has potentially become political. The actual political community is overcome by the amorphous social being of human being and is, thus, lost to us. We no longer are the “political animals” of Aristotle's *Politics*, but have become the social bees of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. This only confuses the state's ability to pursue unifying goals and standards toward any achievement of the higher good. When the necessities of private life, being economics and culture, become 'political' mash in the public sphere of 'politics', all focus upon enlightenment and unselfish service, all exemplary virtue, is hard to untangle from overall social aims and efforts. Should modern citizenry focus solely upon economics, needs, and desires, as the primary enlightenment of man, all political virtues are lost. We no longer dwell as human beings, but as glorified animals in social contracts like unto Hobbes's protection of everyone against everyone through instrumental means and technique. This is the nature of the modern liberal state.

Essentially, one unifying state objective or purpose, or the concept of the political, is lost. Concrete examples of Schmitt's meaning when he states that everything social becomes potentially political are observed in America's

bureaucracy, in the U.S. Department of Labor for example, wherein specific social agendas dominate the machinery of government, or in our Department of Education in which, again, objectives specific to social needs dominate state concerns of the executive branch, the actual operative branch, of government; state action is social rather than political. The relations that exist between various government departments and political parties are relaxations of Schmitt's true friend-enemy distinction, becoming unifying components within the state, rather than confronters and confronted between the demands of the political and the social from without the state. In these various economic and social relations, there are no enemies but, rather, "only competitors." This is an important distinction being made. Competitors are not enemies and have no potential to become so in a liberal state. They are parts of a system of rational co-operation toward goods relative to necessity.

A true friend-enemy distinction exists when "the political is the most extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend-enemy grouping." True politics are understood to exist when a potentiality of struggle exists, rather than competition, struggle that may ultimately lead to fighting to the death, though such fight need not occur. This idea might seem odd to those of us who dwell in the social being of the modern liberal state. We carry within us presumptions under which moderns are to operate. Political struggle is unseemly to us and war has become an evil to be avoided

at all costs—not only the costs of human life but, more importantly for liberal states, the costs of social disruption. Our refusal or inability toward such struggle and strife, our apolitical existence, limits our potential and innate human ability to advance toward higher goods, to express the virtues, because all conditions for their appearance are removed or avoided. The demands of the social prevail over the political, life over sacrifice, necessity over virtue, baseness rising to prominence above any awareness of, let alone concerns for, the Good.

Ancient politics implied standing for and even fighting for the values of the state. This was natural and accepted; “household” social and cultural values did not directly affect those of the state. Political and social spheres were separate, naturally so according to the earliest political philosophy. Because in the modern age the social and the political realms have merged, citizens no longer can determine their proper duties to the state and their private duties to religion and culture. The lines of theoretical definition and practical demarcation are blurred. All values and notions of distinction have been amassed into one great “blob,” as an interpreter of Hannah Arendt regards it. Hence, the friend and enemy distinction that once gave birth to politics is something to which moderns now rarely, if ever, give any thought at all. We have moved beyond politics, but this does not signal that we have moved above. Our thought is debased to social concerns and we now dwell below the political potential that is the essence of human being. The state

now is society—and the society is the state. Subsequently the concept of politics is difficult for us to understand, even being undesirable to us who have been raised in environments in which the social and the political clashed long ago, ending in liberalism as the historical successor to politics. We now know nothing else.

So it is that people do not have a correct understanding of politics, according to Schmitt, because liberal ideals have blurred the lines of society and politics. Liberal political tenets so essential to the rise of liberalism have coincided with those of now accomplished liberal society, particularly pluralism—the essential antithesis of the friend-enemy distinction of politics properly understood.

Liberalism is now traditionally viewed as freedom's defender and humanity's chosen political order. As Fukuyama suggests in *The End of History*, liberal ideals have triumphed and, while there will always be small anachronistic regimes fighting against democracy, the world recognizes that all will eventually succumb to liberal governance. Again, there is not an inherent wrong in advocating cooperation, peace, and freedom. These are properly celebrated and espoused tenets of accomplished liberal society. However, there is a profound human problem in making these the *telos* of all governments, of all humanity. Of such stuff are born utopian fantasies in which no standards prevail and no values rule; social movements respond to desires, rather than goods, as liberalism must give way to democracy through such

movements that are at the very essence of its triumph. We find ourselves moving full circle in our 'progressive' movements, toward the democracy that ends in anarchy as the end of debased politics well understood by the ancients.

As explained above, human beings are creatures of individual motivation first and foremost, moved by their own predispositions and the effects of influences that become assumptions. Thus, to a certain extent, we are quite Hobbesian in nature, wary of binding together for base purposes of necessity. Only politics, the direction of our souls to higher meanings and purposes, can unite mankind in movements toward higher goods. Yet, modernity has hijacked that movement for the sake of social unity that seemed unnatural to us originally, ending history in a new 'natural' state of sociability that forms "blobs" of all peoples. We have gone from a natural state of fear and antagonism, through politics that organizes that to purpose, only to end in an apolitical state, modern society, in which all fear and antagonism is supposed to have been eliminated or is moderated in peaceful ways, as politics gives way to the liberal state, having served its purpose in creating that state through history. Ultimately, though, it is these cultural, social, economic, and legal differences amongst humanity that are the very characteristics that give birth to politics and drive nations to war and move history. Liberalism as the end of history is a façade that cannot last, that cannot contain the human striving that gave birth to politics and from which politics will emerge once

more. Trying to homogenize political values as liberal agreements throughout nations and across the worldwide populous is not only impossible, it should not be desired. Pluralism becomes the very aspect of human being that will undo society as the end of man and liberalism's very purpose of globalized peace and, more importantly, individual freedom. Otherwise, this pluralism becomes not only homogenous under the actualization of liberal theory but, ultimately, a totalitarian debasing of human being. As Schmitt states:

A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without distinction between friend and enemy and hence a world without politics... it is conceivable that such a world might contain very interesting antitheses and contrasts...but there would not be a meaningful antitheses whereby men could be required to sacrifice life... (34).

Such is liberal society, without meaning and higher purpose above those base animal instincts of survival and security, if not comfort. This is being without politics, which is no longer truly human being. As Aristotle says at the origins of political science, man is the "political animal" and to live without politics is to be either a beast or a god. We are no gods.

EPILOGUE

America has avoided class conflict, for the most part, with its existence within of many crosscutting cleavages, but also through the persistence of the American Dream as a vision that has united rich and poor in one interest for most of our history. Rather than being carried away with extremely progressive movements unleashed by such unity, however, the balance between liberals and conservatives has ensured political stability in the United States, a balance that has been lost fairly quickly in recent generations by 'conservative' movements. For much of American history, political movements have not been the norm; now, political movements are normal and expected from both parties, liberal and 'conservative'. We no longer have a truly conservative party, as Democrats and Republicans for the most part are progressive in one way or another.

Without the necessary balance between conservative and liberal ideas, both actively engaging each other within the polity, the political sphere becomes easily dominated by a homogenous mentality. True conservatives should provide a necessary balancing power against movement politics. This balancing power that keeps the political stable upon its fulcrum is the naturally conservative mass of society, those who for the majority of the time are mostly apolitical. The sheer weight of their social conservatism slows progress to a reasonable pace, so long as they are not moved, persuaded by ideology to plans of action and progressive politics themselves (Oakeshott).

Because true conservatism involves a sensibility that favors gradual change and the slow experiments of trial and error, from a conservative point of view all movement politics are suspect, if not illegitimate, as are modern ideologies with their blueprints for political change. Conservatives fear the unintended consequences of unrestricted reason, particularly when it comes to political change because of the violence that is possible in passionate transformations of radical upheavals

However, once technical thought permeates conservatives along with others within society, then efficiency and technological demands for improvements of 'mere life' dominate all 'politics', as 'conservative' politicians must appeal to the tastes of the masses for election to office. Thus, Republicans too must become progressive to some extent, at least; historically, they have become so to a great extent. True or natural conservatism has become a small, but to us an extremely important, faction within their party, a party that clamors for votes on the moderate left and on the far right and finds never enough in the conservative middle, in the center of their party.

Progressivism is not a political problem in and of itself, though. Often, change is needed and needed quickly. We would be hard put to denounce the American Revolution, the Civil War, the Civil Rights movement, and so on, simply because they were progressive and change came quickly, even if too quickly for many conservatives. However, when we have developed a permanent imbalance of power in which progressive politics move unopposed,

for all intents and purposes, then we have a problem. This problem arises when both parties and the majority of society move according to technological standards for the 'better' life of contentment, at the expense of politics and the pursuit of the truly good.

The problem with unrestricted and unchecked progressivism is its unrelenting drive and desire toward an apolitical world once liberalism has accomplished its political program of action. Liberals expect and celebrate the end of politics and so pursue a constant progressive evolution, to us a revolution, that now dominates the ground once held by political argument, having been given up to social accommodation for the sake of a peaceful society, even if such peace is shallow and forced.

Liberals desire to bring about the end of history because they believe that the end of man is social, that economics and security of prosperity from within and without, are the proper, indeed the only, functions of the state. Social goods consist of the pleasant, contentment, and peaceful. However, social contentment leads to complacency and stifles political action toward the true good. Therefore, political action should remain alive and a consistent part of society. Politics is for the sake of living well, not merely living, and so is necessary to our true end of happiness.

At present, Americans move within the currents of technological efficiency, our new standard of 'goodness' and judge of the social pleasure that we constantly desire. Therefore, the progressive appeal in making the

purpose of man's existence a social one is appealing to the masses. To maintain that pleasure becomes the prime imperative of the state, as it serves a society that has become despotic in the satisfaction of its desires and passions.

When equality becomes sameness so that mass society's homogeneity is emphasized to the point of ridiculous extremes, our true human capacities are stunted, prevented by society and the state from expressing themselves in unique or exceptional ways. Modern 'politics' forces homogeneity upon us for the sake of "sameness" that is supposed to end all social conflict—again, peace and the goods of 'mere life' are mistaken as the highest goods.

Once again, we must recognize that most citizens remain content within, or bound by, their pursuits of mere life, even as it becomes public within modern mass society. Therefore, the pursuit of truth becomes rather a threat to most, instead of something welcome to them because of their mundane concerns. Authentic politics becomes replaced by 'politics' that are more about managing social systems rather than about building upon them toward the good.

At present, authentic politics are gradually becoming overpowered by dialogue upon social issues. For example, both parties talk about jobs, the economy, the price of gas or a gallon of milk, revealing themselves committed to social concerns of 'mere life'. Justice is gone from our public dialogue, or at least it has been redefined as social justice. As explained above, this does not

mean that there is no change, no movement, but only that all movement toward the Good is illusory. Social “politics” is about progressive change without real direction beyond desire and necessity.

RESTATEMENT:

Preserving the political is to prevent the decline into sameness and, ultimately, into modern totalitarianism. For over time, without the presence of the political in society, the integration of freedom and equality by the state amounts to totalitarianism, as social institutions moderate this integration in every part of life. With the technical maintenance of state and society together, political virtues are lost to the hope and promise of peace and the continuing expectations and predictability of the satisfaction of desire. In this way, we see that citizens may well embrace a benign tyranny as society governs itself through the state and directs its power toward itself and its own goods of peaceful pleasure.

Instead of being a violent display of political power, totalitarianism as a fully developed form of government makes its power invisible, administering subtly the dependency of its people upon it for all goods and ascribing to the state praise or blame for our ‘quality of life’. Society may feel that it controls the state, but it is the responsiveness of the state to its citizens that reveals real power and control. We have seen that such responsiveness has involved an invasion of every part of society, every aspect of life falls within the purview of the state now, and its technical administration of all goods and responses to

all desires and demands. Administration has replaced political dialogue, management has replaced statesmanship. The art of politics is lost to us, perhaps dead in a past that conservatives have not been able to preserve. If there remains any political life to be found, though, it must be found from within true conservatism, as all else remains attached to progressivism, movement, and social goods.

True conservatism becoming political would bring us back to a war of words, reviving debate, conflict, and competition, at its best being akin to those of the Lincoln Douglas debates concerning moral issues and the preservation of social integrity, rather than homogeneity, and this through politics, through human struggle and talent, through compromise and negotiation, through politics in other words, rather than through technical management of social factions and cleavages into homogenous masses. True conservatism is the only avenue to politics in the modern liberal state, the only legitimate alternative to the illusory seduction and mechanical management of the end of history, the end of politics, and the end of human being. True conservatism is the only ground upon which we might stand to judge and harken our pacified society toward the political and, thus, toward salvation from the totalitarian state of technological reason and the tyranny of ourselves against ourselves through the institutionalization of our desires and passions within the modern liberal state.

Advocating a resurgence of the political from within society is not an

elitist call to overhaul government and infuse it with only political and philosophical aims, though. Rather, it is itself a political action on behalf of society and human being for their salvation *right now*, given how far we have gone from any reliance upon traditional virtues. It is a call to recover what once was conserved. This is the only form of true conservatism left to us in the modern age.

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