

LUKE LATTANZI: REVITALIZING THE HAMILTONIAN SPIRIT IN THE AGE OF TRUMP POPULISM

AMERICAN PIGEON



THE RIDDLE OF **POPULISM**

It's ABOUT WORTHINESS

BY ELLIOT LEE

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AMERICAN PIGEON

THE RIGHT SIDE OF JOURNALISM.

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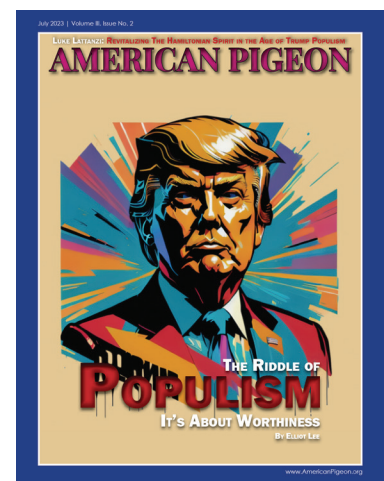
IT'S ABOUT WORTHINESS

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Though there is some debate about it, populism is generally defined by reference to two opposing groups—the people and the elites. In this arrangement, elites are corrupt and self-interested, and the people are an exploited class, which must be liberated from the rule of elites. But what if this goal were fundamentally flawed?



AMERICAN PIGEON is a conservative magazine and news publication fostering conservative perspectives on American politics, often gazing from afar as everyone else battles it out. Put forward as “The Right Side of Journalism,” the publication is for those dissatisfied with the impotence of the well-fed right, or the well-fed left, as well as the grifting of the many “rising stars” of today’s celebrity class. Since February 2022, AMERICAN PIGEON has published periodic magazine issues in both online and print PDF formats. The publication has transformed itself into a triannual magazine, now publishing three issues per year as of 2023, as well as online news and opinion content.



A Note From Your Editor

One of the many most wrestled with questions of our time is that of equity, not necessarily what is best for each of us but what is most fair. Of course, this demands that we accept there is no best to be had, no ideal to be shared. No common good. Each man works toward his own benefit, which is best for him insofar as he does not compete with his neighbor. John Nash taught us that if everyone goes after the blonde, no one will get her. Go for her friends, no one goes for the blonde, and everyone gets laid.

Politics is driven by libido, the impulse to conquer, to dictate the social facts rather than abide by that which is most unlike him. But the individual enjoys no such privilege; he is now part of a tribe. “Politics is the personal” is reality because it has been made such. Consciousness is the pituitary gland of society. Everything is fair game.

But when a people become a part of each other, the group, striving for the “common good” (scare quotes for the doubt in human capability to perceive and execute it as such) then they dictate according to ideal, i.e., a perversion of generalized governing dynamics of society for the desire to own it.

If this desire was anything, it would be populism. But this is neither a negative nor positive description. It is as equally important to be a bedrock together against malignant actors as it is to be free from the diktat of the mob.

The question, I suppose, is that of moderation. How do we balance ourselves between prudent relativism (not without the leverage of power) and ulterior self-determination (let Poland be Poland). But even with these analogies we see a symbiosis. Because culture is fluid and upstream from politics. Until it isn't. All streams become stagnant at its most balanced low; and then the war begins because all things have reached its pinnacle. That is to say, its lowest point.

I feel for many reasons that the conversation of populism will always be insufficient. We have so much to do, and yet it becomes at once so important but impotent. Nevertheless, I must retain a hope, if not just for those reading now. For what it is worth, we are our populace. If change was ever to occur, it begins here—with a populist dream and a Hobbesian nightmare.

With my earnest best,

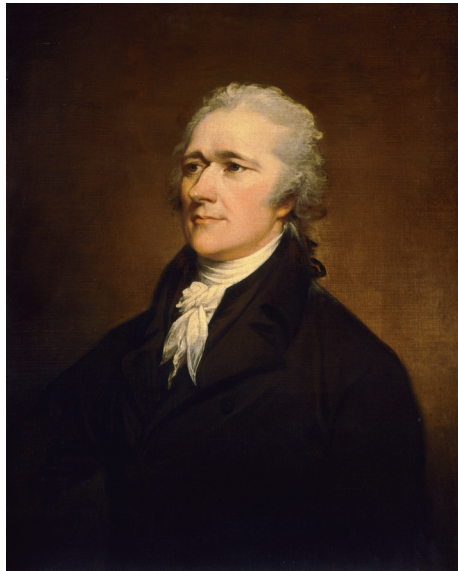
Jacob, *editor-in-chief*

Revitalizing The Hamiltonian Spirit in the Age of Trump Populism

BY LUKE LATTANZI

The swift death of the presidency of “sober expectations,” as put forward by Alexander Hamilton has long since been lamented by conservatives. Hamilton, perhaps more so than any of the founders, understood the virtues of prudence and moderation. His blueprint outlining an energetic executive in the *Federalist Papers*—that is, an executive not bound by the fickle passions of public opinion—greatly informed the federal government’s first eight years of operation under the steady leadership of George Washington.

Hamilton presented a vision of republican government that would most certainly offend the sensibilities of modern Americans, the vast majority of which are opposed to any political philosophy in which the president is not the chief representative of the public’s desires. Hamilton believed in representative government, yes, but strongly insisted that the proper role of the elected class—and of a statesman more generally—was to carefully mitigate and refine the boisterous passions of the people.



Portrait of Alexander Hamilton by John Trumbull, circa 1806. Photo courtesy of the National Gallery of Art.

before seen in contemporary American politics. When running for president in 2016, he proclaimed himself the voice of the people, the man who would blow up the Washington establishment and right the many wrongs endured by a disenfranchised working class whose jobs had been lost to shuttered steel mills and automobile plants,

sits with pre-existing lamentations about raw majoritarian passions ruling the day, and whether such passions—Republican or Democrat—are conducive to running a republic where the law rules over every man.

Stephen F. Knott, in his book *The Lost Soul of the American Presidency: The Decline Into Demagoguery and the Prospects of Renewal*, traces the American presidency’s gradual fall from grace to its initial deviation from its Hamiltonian origins. Knott designates the rule of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson as the two presidencies that were pivotal in putting the executive branch on a collision course with the majority.

What was originally intended to be an office solely charged with executing the laws and Constitution, as well as unifying the nation quickly became a “tribune of the people.” Jefferson’s presidency bore a stark contrast to Washington and John Adams. Proclaiming the “Revolution of 1800,” he disdained the Constitution for the many mechanisms put into place to prevent majority rule. When Andrew Jackson came to power a few decades later, he largely

“The vast majority of the bureaucracy stays in place, regardless of which party controls the office. The result has been, especially in recent years, an administrative state—or a Deep State, as Trump likes to call it—that can undermine the president’s agenda should it not approve. What we now have is a sort of paradox: a president empowered by the majority’s good graces can be as big a man as he wants to be, but in order to remain in control of his own branch he must make peace with the unelected “expert class” that decides and carries out the countless intricacies of modern policy, both foreign and domestic.”

Conservative reverence for the founders, particularly those of Hamilton’s skepticism toward the whims of the majority, has not faded. The same lament for the progressive erosion of the American constitutional order is just as strong, if not even stronger now than it was before the rise of Donald Trump. But Trump’s ascendancy to the presidency catapulted a wave of conservative populism to the forefront of the Republican Party never

the many casualties of globalization.

The question of populism currently confronting the conservative movement is a consequential one because it begs an even larger question about how conservatives ought to approach statecraft more generally. Trump, like many presidents, but more specifically as a populist, attempts to derive his legitimacy from the majority. But one has to wonder how well a conservative zeal to put Trump back in the White House

continued the earlier work of Jefferson’s Democratic-Republicans, declaring in his first address to Congress that “the majority is to govern.”

Knott also identifies Woodrow Wilson and the corrosive strain of progressivism he brought to the White House as yet another nail in the coffin of the constitutional presidency. At best, Wilson considered the Constitution, specifically its intricate system of checks and balances designed

to sustain the separation of powers, to be severely antiquated. He thought that the president ought to be “as big a man as he can,” and that the president “has the nation behind him, and the Congress has not.”

When it comes to the modern conservative movement and the great populist question now facing it, the argument laid out in Knott’s book is of utmost importance. I had cited Knott earlier in AMERICAN PIGEON’S last magazine issue focusing on the nature of republics, and in that piece I made note of the popular presidency’s strict adherence to the whims of the majority, most notably its enlistment of countless unelected policy experts and administrators. The modern executive branch comprises over one million federal employees spanning 15 executive departments. The problem with a presidency that has been made into a tribune of the people is that ultimately, the president has had to enlist a massive bureaucracy in order to meet the demands of the people.

Curiously, as it would turn out, massive bureaucracies do not simply change when a new man moves into the Oval Office every four to eight years. The vast majority of the bureaucracy stays in place, regardless of which party controls the office. The result has been, especially in recent years, an administrative state—or a “Deep State,” as Trump likes to call it—that can undermine the president’s agenda should it not approve. What we now have is a sort of paradox: a president empowered by the majority’s good graces can be as big a man as he wants to be, but in order to remain in control of his own branch he must make peace with the unelected “expert class” that decides and carries out the countless intricacies of modern policy, both foreign and domestic.

Trump, even though he was propelled to the White House by a strong populist wave, didn’t do this. He instead rightfully condemned this unelected class of civil servants and attempted to reassert his control of the executive branch. But unsurprisingly, when Trump attempted to single handedly reign in the Deep State,

it fought back. And in the end, the Deep State won.

There are two main problems that have contributed to the creation and sustaining of this paradigm. One is a strictly mechanical problem that, should Congress ever grow a pair, can be corrected. The other is a deeper, cultural problem that has to do with the way many, both inside and outside Washington, conceptualize American statecraft to begin with.

The first problem lies in Congress’ reluctance to reassert its legislative power as enumerated in the Constitution. The modern lawmaking process in the United States is a far cry from how your fifth grade teacher described it. We would all like to believe that the legislative branch makes the laws and that the executive branch executes said laws. But in reality, Congress will often pass legislative “packages” that can easily be hundreds, if not thousands of pages long. Rarely, if ever, do lawmakers read these bills in their entirety before they are passed. While Congress of course still knows what the bills will generally do, the vast majority of the specifics are often left unaddressed, and are instead left to the policy makers in the executive agencies to decide.

The result, as has been previously stated, is an administrative state empowered with pseudo-legislative authority by a Congress too busy fundraising and campaigning to legislate intentionally.

Such a problem also deals a sobering blow to Trump’s populist messaging. The former president has made combatting the administrative state an even larger focal point of his 2024 election campaign than he did four years ago, and has doubled down on the notion that he, and he alone, is the one capable of defeating it once and for all. But, as has just been said, executive orders alone will not fix the problem at hand, not as long as another president can come in and simply reverse it all with yet another stroke of a pen.

The solution will have to come from all of us. A conservative populism can only work if it is channeled correctly. Such a movement must dedicate itself to electing

leaders who are willing to embrace a bit of noblesse oblige, if you will. This French idiom refers to a nobility that revels not only in its own privilege, but also a moral obligation to lead the polity by good example. That is to mean, it must prioritize electing a Congress cognizant of the true task at hand: reasserting its legislative power and taking the consequentiality away from the unelected agencies.

With this, we are confronted with the second problem that speaks more broadly to our civic culture. The administrative state is, in part, culturally reinforced by a sort of political careerism in which to work for the federal government, particularly in the executive branch, is to suddenly be a duty-oriented civil servant. While we of course ought not to slight the importance of necessary government personnel, it is precisely this mindset that also leads to overzealous bureaucrats who believe that disobeying the president and taking the law into their own hands is somehow virtuous, or even more worryingly, akin to “saving the republic.”

It may very well not be possible to make a complete return to the executive branch put forward by Hamilton and executed by Washington. What we are capable of doing, however, is to apply the philosophical frame of reference that guided their approach to statecraft to our own era. It is true that Hamilton was no populist. He disdained in any context the popularization of the presidency. However, it may be possible to give this Trump-era populism a bit of a Hamiltonian kick. Conservatives have a unique opportunity to channel and refocus the current wave of populism to motivate the masses to be *something more than just the masses*. That is to mean, right-wing populism can either descend into yet another tired game of mob rule and further feed into the progressive transformation of the presidency, or it can advocate for a restored civic culture and citizenry capable of understanding that the “little arts of popularity” get a republic nowhere.

The Priority of Love

BY ALCUIN NELL

There isn't much to see as you drive south on I-27 out of Amarillo. After 20 miles or so you will see a few stone spires peeking out of Palo Duro State Park, which is the only sight more amusing than the impressive (but common) tumbleweeds you encounter on the drive. Then, as you continue southward the landscape will change to your east. That's Caprock Canyon. It's the last interesting sight for the remainder of your trip into Lubbock, TX. There is only cotton and dirt until you hit the north flank of the city.

The first structure eliciting any feeling of beauty upon arrival is the giant, windowed obelisk of First Baptist Church of Lubbock. A towering, angular column that juts into the sky. The buildings of Texas Tech University have their own beauty as well, but they're covered among themselves in a way, and not as conspicuous as First Baptist. The church is hard to miss. Saving a few other churches it's the only building in town that really grabs your attention. A pretty Methodist church is West of First Baptist, but it's downtown,



The Merrill Hotel in Lubbock, Texas, circa 1920. Photo courtesy of the DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University Digital Collections.

be someone there with one open. To visitors this may seem fanatical, but to the people of Lubbock it's just the way things are. More common experiences that connect the town's people are dust-storms called "haboobs," Texas Tech football, and for the college students, worship nights at The Wesley or Church on the Rock. The annual

dissenting c-no-offee shop could not afford to stay open. For good. Personally, I wish all the coffee shops would close on The Lord's Day but they generate so much revenue they prefer otherwise. No one's perfect I guess.

These norms even percolate down to Lubbock's social sphere. It's socially

"If the conservatism of today does not recover the priority of love it will continue to slide into liberalism. When nothing is given a special love, there is really no love at all and nothing is worth conserving. At least leftism today is consistent in that it spreads its decadence equally and everywhere. Conservatism today just does it more inconspicuously. But modern conservatism need not be this way; accepting our humanity is the way forward."

and often forgotten.

While the sight of Lubbock might suggest there's nothing extraordinary going on, visitors quickly find a homogenous, Christian culture and ethic perfused among the people. In all the coffee shops there are Bibles open to the New Testament—likely John's gospel or Ephesians—and conversations flow. Backpacks and expensive laptops are left at tables when people need to temporarily leave their seat. The likelihood that items run off is slim. Car keys are even used to indicate a seat or table is occupied by a coffee drinker.

You cannot escape the Bibles when you visit a spot in town. There will always

Christmas lights show on campus and the large, circular bush on Indiana Avenue that the property owners dress-up for holidays are also pillars in the Lubbock experience.

The cultural norm of Lubbock rules the city with an iron fist. Businesses who deviate suffer. One coffee shop that hosted a "drag queen story time" was recently forced to beg for customers on Facebook. Apparently they were unable to capture enough support and were forced to shut down. This is while other coffee shops are slammed with Bible-readers and latte drinkers on weekends. Indeed, the coffee shops adhering to Lubbockite culture cannot afford to close on Sunday, and the

risky to announce you're an atheist in Lubbockite social groups lest you desire to alienate yourself from most peers. At Texas Tech University the student ministry tables outnumber the local secular club's 1-4. At most universities, students wear salmon-colored shirts with Greek letters on them. In Lubbock those shirts are replaced by clothing from student-led ministries. Secular students even wear the shirts because they're given out for free. It's not weird to walk around campus with a Jesus shirt—it would probably be weird if you did not. In fact, at one point, Lubbock reserved the highest number of churches per capita in the United States. No wonder

the locality is saturated with Christian culture.

Even if many of Lubbock's citizens are nominal Christians, Christianity still orientates the city toward a higher good. For example, in April 2021 the town rallied to end abortion in the county by passing an ordinance that decrees Lubbock a sanctuary city for the unborn. Over 60% voted in favor of the ordinance. The ordinance protects the unborn to a higher degree than Abbott's HeartBeat Bill, too. Lubbock went as far as to completely outlaw the procedure. The town had waited quite a while for such an ordinance to receive votes. Locals jumped at the opportunity.

There are towns like this peppered all across America. They reserve their own lingo, common past times, celebrations, weekend activities, and all phenomena that form a common experience. Like Lubbock, their citizens have a special love for their locality and labor for one another in a *special* way. Their love is prioritized, thus townsmen strive to preserve their shared culture, likeness, and ethic. The special love Lubbockites have for one another was made manifest when they voted to end abortion in their city and collaboratively rescinded their business from the leftist coffee shop.

Modern conservatism has lost this priority of love and has instead bought into the liberal notion that one ought to love everyone equally. However, perhaps much fault can be levied onto popular evangelicalism. Most evangelicals are unaware the Christian tradition has never affirmed a universally equal love, a result of Christianity purchasing the post-World War II sociopolitical consensus wholesale. The average evangelical will likely hold the common conservative positions also held by Turning Point USA pundits, but they are missing what has undergirded their conservatism for centuries: priority of love.

Stephen Wolfe's book *The Case for Christian Nationalism* has caused somewhat of a resurgence of this tenet. The book has caused intragroup dust-ups among Christians and conservatives alike. Questions have been raised over how one should prioritize their natural and immediate loves in light of the universal love for humanity. Many evangelicals will have a guttural response when you reject that everyone should be loved equally. Many conservatives will follow suit.

As a Lubbockite, I will echo Wolfe:

"Since those who share a culture are

similar people, and since cultural similarity is necessary for the common good, I argue that the natural inclination to dwell among similar people is good and necessary. Grace does not destroy or 'critique' it."

The term "nature" here encompasses all the natural affections, inclinations, and anthropological elements we observe in the created order. "Grace" here is the "favor" of God, not an essence or substance, but rather the gradual and effectual "move" towards fulfilling moral oughtness. The easiest way to explain this is religious conversion. When someone is converted, that act of "grace" does not destroy the natural things in the subject but "perfects" them. Natural things being their personality, closeness with relatives, tendencies, etc. Those natural things are not destroyed but made more holy. Relationships provide another helpful example. One's relationship with a spouse is not destroyed by "grace" (moving towards good) but is refined.

Thus, we all feel a special love for people that we share our living experience with—this is natural—and this is not opposed, abrogated, or destroyed by grace. Stripping away the theological language, you could say that the natural prioritization of love is not opposed to moral goodness. It doesn't follow that moving toward the good kills this natural love *per se*. A perverse prioritization of love can turn into tribalism, but the urge of prioritization is not evil *in and of itself or in its essence*.

But today's conservatism and evangelicalism shy away from this truth either in fear of suffering the typical cocktail of leftist insults, or, more sinister, because they honestly believe everyone should be loved equally. This thinking stems from the assumption that prioritizing love—not loving everyone the same—is opposed to the good.

But therein lies the issue. Prioritizing love is *paramount* to bringing about good within one's culture in time and space. Lubbockites did not physically travel to other localities to pursue the end of abortion. One can desire (even ought to desire and hope for) that far off places would not abort unborn babies (a love that stems from the connection of humanity), but a priority of love inevitably exists. Loving thy far neighbor does not diminish loving thy close neighbor.

Our modern abandonment of the priority of love nourishes the black mold growing in the walls of the modern conservative movement, whose fruits are

spineless legislators and actors that kowtow to leftism. Groups of people are only justified in *conserving anything* if their love is prioritized. Conservation itself posits that certain things ought to be conserved. Those things that ought to be conserved are especially loved, and are placed higher than other things. The question then stands: What are the things that warrant a higher love? That is found in nature: family, your culture, your locality, and your people. A prioritization of love is nested in the natural affections, which is nested a second time in common experience.

Consider what an unnatural approach may look like. That would mean all opportunities to bring about common goods are equal because everyone is deserving of the same love. The potential "goodness" is not bound by time, space, geography, culture or language. In this model one ought to labor for good just as much in one place as in another place. Unnaturally, Lubbockites would be under the same moral responsibility to bring about the demise of abortion in Clovis, New Mexico (Clovis recently abolished abortion in 2022, an effort led by local Christians at Grace Covenant Reformed Church) as in their hometown. Clovis is 100 miles away. But this would not matter. Sure, they wouldn't be able to vote on an ordinance, but they would have to labor all the same to satisfy the moral obligation in this unnatural model. But this seems unreasonable. It is impossible to love everyone equally because we cannot labor for (and inflict) everyone equally. We're spatiotemporally bound.

The necessary consequences are, it seems, that one ought to labor for the people they can the most. It is *this* kind of conservatism that is ordered according to reality. It plays out meaningfully in time and space because it *discriminates* rightly. Leftism—and I would include a conservatism that does not integrate a priority of love—is a blob of pluralism that results in mass degeneration because nothing is prioritized. Leftism is fantastic because it does not comport with reality and expects humans to love like unlimited beings.

The great Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas offers help: "On the contrary, one's obligation to love a person is proportionate to the gravity of the sin one commits in acting against that love. Now it is a more grievous sin to act against the love of certain neighbors, than against

the love of others. Hence the commandment, ‘He that curseth his father or mother, dying let him die,’ which does not apply to those who cursed others than the above. Therefore we ought to love some neighbors more than others.”

He follows with: “They held that the order of love is to be understood as applying to outward favors, which we ought to confer on those who are connected with us in preference to those who are unconnected, and not to the inward affection, which ought to be given equally to all including our enemies. ... But this is unreasonable. For the affection of charity, which is the inclination of grace, is not less orderly than the natural appetite, which is the inclination of nature, for both inclinations flow from Divine wisdom. ... We must, therefore, say that, even as regards the affection we ought to love one neighbor more than another. The reason is that, since the principle of love is God, and the person who loves, it must be that the affection of love increases in proportion to the nearness to one or the other of those principles.”

Aquinas had it right. If we cannot love everyone equally, and if we cannot *affect* everyone equally, we must cherish people according to those limitations. Those are the people who share our similarity of experience which our spatiotemporal bounds are

literally mapped onto.

The Protestant giant John Calvin agrees. Calvin, who unfortunately many modern evangelicals are not aware of, would argue that the closer the relationship someone has with another the more frequent the “offices of kindness” ought to be. Calvin supports this by drawing from nature itself: “For the condition of humanity requires that there be more duties in common between those who are more nearly connected by the ties of the relationship, or friendship, or neighborhood.” In the theologian’s eyes, prioritizing the closer relationships is no offense to God, and, even, such prioritization is morally impelled. Calvin grounds this idea in God’s providential working in human history and the human condition in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, his magnum opus. Equality of love likely never entered the man’s mind.

If the conservatism of today does not recover the priority of love it will continue to slide into liberalism. When nothing is given a special love, there is really no love at all and nothing is worth conserving. At least leftism today is consistent in that it spreads its decadence equally and everywhere. Conservatism today just does it more inconspicuously. But modern conservatism need not be this way; accepting our humanity is the way forward.

The Riddle of Populism

IT’S ABOUT WORTHINESS

BY ELLIOT LEE

Though there is some debate about it, populism is generally defined by reference to two opposing groups—the people and the elites. In this arrangement, elites are corrupt and self-interested, and the people are an exploited class, which must be liberated from the rule of elites. But what if this goal were fundamentally flawed? For all of the faults of elites, there are serious reasons to doubt that rule by the masses would be a significant improvement and equally serious reasons to suspect that it might be significantly worse. What is needed is not the abolition of a ruling elite class, but rather, a new elite.

While populism may seem like a relatively novel framework for understanding politics in 21st century America—primarily because our current crop of corrupt elites benefits from the illusion that we live in a classless society—it would be very familiar to previous ages. What would not have seemed so obvious into previous ages is the belief that the people could or even should be liberated.

Jose Ortega y Gasset’s *Revolt of the Masses* described a change in the relations between the elites of his time and the

masses which echoes many contemporary concerns (which is probably why his title gets cribbed so often). His characterization of the “masses” and the “mass man” was brutally negative. Spiritless, incurious and irrational, the masses were, above all, ungrateful—puffed up with an unjustified sense of entitlement to a future of greater and greater material benefits. Decades later, when Christopher Lasch wrote his famous response to Ortega, *The Revolt of the Elites*, he sought to demonstrate that America’s contemporary elites were in many respects no better and in some, worse.

I’ll admit that I find Lasch’s argument compelling and that it is my impulse to side with this group so inadequately described as “the people.” But beyond that, I have to further admit that whenever I am around large numbers of people who could be said to represent this group, I find myself uncomfortable, out of place, and irritated. So much so that if someone were to ask me if I would want to live in a country in which these people decided everything, I would have to admit that I do not.

It’s not just that they do things like watch *The Voice* (or whatever programming is currently aimed at piquing the interest of middle-American wives with husbands too exhausted or emasculated to object). I don’t think it’s an issue of class either.

My own background is nothing special. I’ve spent a number of years filling orders in warehouses or landscaping or whatever other menial labor you can imagine. In terms of material wealth, I am in no way superior to them, and frequently inferior. No, it’s something deeper than that.

In fact, what I find difficult to accept about the masses is precisely what many (including personal heroes like G. K. Chesterton) have accounted as their greatest virtue: they are staunchly anti-ideological. Though they may claim many different banners—American patriotism, Christianity, etc.—when it comes down to it, these end up seeming more like a kind of linguistic cement used to establish communities rather than declarations of genuine belief. One senses that their true motivating instinct is a kind of generalized gregariousness—a simple desire to be friendly with other people, to belong, and to have access to sources of comfort and simple pleasures.

Curtis Yarvin ruffled a not insignificant number of feathers when he described populists, through the lens of Tolkienian taxonomies, as hobbits. According to Yarvin, hobbits just want to grill and raise their kids and are therefore distinctly different from the elves (elites) who are concerned with living beautiful lives, who are able to devote themselves to ideals. If

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this seems elitist, that's because it is. This may be a tough pill to swallow, but elitism is good, necessary even. In our age of "body-acceptance" and "fat phobia" it ought to be abundantly clear that a consistent rejection of elitism results in the abolition of virtue itself, and this is grotesque.

Of the many other insights, Alexis de Tocqueville noted that democracy has the potential for becoming a cult of mediocrity. A truly democratic spirit reduces all things to a matter of public opinion. As a matter of fact, a great number of our prized cultural myths are examples of the enlightened individual standing against the muddle-headed masses, a very undemocratic notion. To return to the metaphor, the elves are the heirs of Socrates who claimed that the unexamined life is not worth living, and the hobbits are the small-minded Athenians that put him to death. In this light, it seems impossible to assert that hobbits should have the right to rule over elves.

None of this is to defend our current elites, who appear in turn to be entirely chest-less (to adapt a term from C. S. Lewis), clueless (despite their elevated IQs and educational achievements), and embarrassingly egotistical. Their only apparent idealism is for "social justice" and "anti-racism" as well as a vague desire to abolish suffering from the human experience. The latter usually works out into a belief that all problems are merely technical issues relating to production. They are basically sincere believers in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*; they just need to eradicate all the bigots in order to get there.

What then is to be done if neither the masses nor our elites are fit to rule?

The populist dilemma is one which must be resolved, not by abolishing social elites (an option which amounts to unmaking civilization), but in recognizing the complimentary virtues of elites and populace, and choosing a new elite which is capable of embodying the sincerely held values of the populace. Once again, the limiting factor will be the populace themselves. Legitimate populism requires a radical responsibility on the part of the people. They must accept that they have the leaders that they deserve, that if these leaders are unacceptable, then they themselves will have to change. There is no shortcut; the way forward is simply difficult.

One foreseeable issue is that America is a modern economy and as such has constructed itself in such a way that management is of foremost importance in keeping the gravy-train running. These managers have a certain kind of intellect and a certain kind

of ethos, and the combination of these two things is essentially why we have the kind of country that we have, warts and all. For those who desire a different kind of country, which defends different things and appreciates different virtues, it will be necessary to realize that this may very likely coincide with a decrease in standards of living. Therein lies the rub.

Though Americans may occasionally enjoy adopting the aesthetics of their forebears (less now after years of demoralizing propaganda), if we are to be honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we are now a country of consumers, not believers; and how does one sell austerity to a country of consumers?

In case it needs reminding, this country was founded by extremely ideological people, people for whom the bastardization of Christianity perpetrated by King Henry VIII constituted enough reason to uproot their families, take a perilous journey to the other side of the Earth, and start anew so that they could worship as they wished. I'm sure that at the time, this was an extraordinarily profound commitment; today it might well be regarded as a monstrous one. Who can even imagine such a thing in our world of on-demand-everything?

In seeking to install a new elite, we must become men with chests, capable of recognizing virtue in others, cultivating it in ourselves, and most of all, being loyal to those whom we recognize as having this virtue. This is the problem that the populist right has currently. Various social media personalities (modern-day warlords) compete for clout and influence, and in doing so, play into the same cycle of audience building and schism that forms the basis of successful engagement-farming. But clout is not the same thing as political power. It may be the case that the methods that are effective for building clout are actually directly or indirectly at odds with the goal of building political solidarity.

This is not an issue exclusive to the right; it is just more visible there because this kind of behavior is ludicrous when you are out of power. But really, this is the problem of our time. This cycle has to be broken, and the only way that it can be broken is for the masses to become something other than masses. It is not enough to be the emotion-cows that populate the left (and right), fed on propaganda and milked by outrage. We have to become believers: serious people capable of understanding the Good, working towards it, and realizing that the lower must be sacrificed to the higher.



Apple Harvest by Camille Pissarro (1888). Public domain. Painting courtesy of the Dallas Museum of Art.

**“How does one
sell austerity
to a country of
consumers”**

Noblesse Oblige and the Broken Contract: How Americans Can Connect With Their Ruling Class

BY JANO TANTONGCO

In popular parlance, the term democracy is invoked as the end-all-be-all of modern government. It implies rule by popular favor, and the winning politicians' slogans often include some variation of being a "champion of the people."

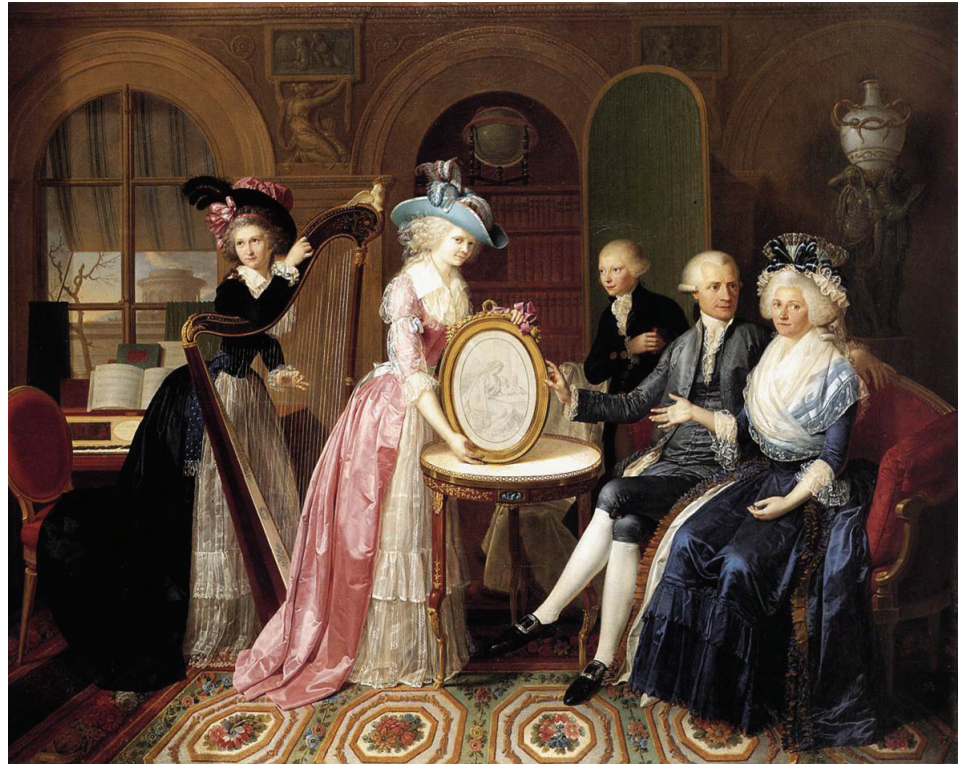
In a post-2020 world, the shadow side of populism reared its head and set fire to the kindling that formed in the social media age—a potential for the already prevalent cancel culture to spark into full-blown "mass formation," as famously described by Professor Mattias Desmet: an anxiety-ridden population that can readily bend to the whims of coercive elites. The masses, when ungrounded by a clear moral imperative—whether in the form of king, constitution, or religion—are subject to manipulation by political opportunists.

Commentator and former White House staffer Darren Beattie described the issue perfectly in his *IM-1776* piece, "The Future of Populism":

"I mean, populism is a tool, but it's one tool among many, and it's certainly not sufficient on its own. You do need a faction of the ruling class behind you in order to be effective in governance. You know, people conflate populism with just lowbrow, mass behavior, and these kinds of things. But it's clearly necessary to also cultivate an elite, both cultural and intellectual, and capture the institutions that serve to reinforce your ideas once you get political power so you don't have to find yourself again in this situation where you nominally have government, but functionally you're kind of impotent."

Aristocracy without populism is dictatorship. Populism without aristocracy is impotent.

Populism is a powerful tool indeed. On the one hand, it got Donald Trump elected in 2016. Seemingly in opposition, its collective power also later facilitated the world's acquiescence to the initiation of a



Portrait of the Villers Family by Jean-Bernard Duvivier, 1790, Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

biomedical security state with COVID-19. But, like an electrical circuit, populism needs an endpoint for the energetic current to flow. And, despite sloganeering for "grassroots local politics" on both sides, power tends to flow in one direction: up.

The French term *noblesse oblige* speaks to something lost in the American consciousness. Literally, it translates to "nobility obliges," as in, those of noble rank bear responsibility, not just privilege, to the people they rule. By virtue of our democratic republic, it carries a sense of inherent non-applicability to our system. On the surface, we thumb our noses at the very idea: "surely we have no ruling class or monarchs, we govern ourselves." But underneath this pretension exists our repressed drive toward the imperial.

American history is highlighted by presidents and officials who wielded *noblesse oblige* to manifest the will of the people—though whether this will was

genuine or fabricated is always a point of contention. From FDR's sweeping New Deal in the wake of the Great Depression to Reagan's landslide victory in 1984, there are moments where the people issue a clear mandate, typically to address some sort of prevailing and timely crisis.

Today, there is a deeply seated political nihilism that makes the concept of noblesse oblige a seemingly absurdist proposition. We often think, "why would the elites have any interest in making the lives of the common man any better?" Political optimism in some circles amounts to pseudo-realization that both parties are against the people, so it's better to opt out and escape to the countryside. This is bleakness masquerading as willful nonparticipation.

How far gone we are from this ideal is perhaps best illustrated in how establishment Republicans recoil at the new wave of conservative populism ushered in

via Trump.

Not far off from a *Babylon Bee* headline, *The Hill* recently published an article entitled, “GOP senators rattled by radical conservative populism.” In it, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Ala.) told the publication that “our party is becoming known as a group of... extremist, populist over-the-top [people] where no one is taking us seriously anymore.”

Another Republican senator, who requested anonymity in speaking with *The Hill*, said this “radical populism” (The Hill’s words) is making speaking with their constituents “difficult”:

“There are people who surprise me—I’m surprised they have those views...I don’t want to use this word but it’s not just a ‘red-neck’ thing. It’s people in business, the president of a bank, a doctor.”

It is extremely telling that an anonymous sitting Republican senator is bewildered by the idea that there is a public—beyond just “rednecks”—that hold opinions oriented against their own establishment position.

In an article focused on the book, *Colonialism: A Moral*

“Today, there is a deeply seated political nihilism that makes the concept of noblesse oblige a seemingly absurdist proposition. We often think, “why would the elites have any interest in making the lives of the common man any better?” Political optimism in some circles amounts to “realizing” that both parties are against the people, so it’s better to opt out and escape to the countryside. This is bleakness masquerading as willful nonparticipation.”

Reckoning by Nigel Biggar, Andrew Roberts of *National Review* writes about the noblesse oblige of British aristocracy as exemplified by the figure of George Nathaniel Curzon, viceroy of India:

“I love India,’ Curzon told his school friends, ‘its people, its history, its government, the absorbing mysteries of its civilization and its life.’ He spoke of ‘the fascination, and if I may say so, the sacredness of India,’ which he had first visited in 1887, and he promised to ‘devote such energies’ as he ‘might possess to its service.’ He contrasted the rapacity of the East India Company in the 18th century with the ‘spirit of duty,’ which, owing to ‘a Christian ideal,’ meant that, in their own time, ‘we think much of the welfare of India and but little of its wealth; that we endeavor to administer the government of the country in the interest of the governed; that our mission there is one of obligation and not of profit (sic).”

As Roberts notes, the boilerplate Marxist take on figures like Curzon is that they are “merely white supremacists whose aim was to extract whatever raw materials and profits they could from the empire, treating the natives as little better than slaves in the process.” It misses a fundamental dimension to what animated Western aristocracy, no matter how misguided or wrong we may find it to be with present-day moral hindsight: they believed in a grand ideal of human progress. A Twitter user using the pseudonym “Taz” puts it succinctly:

“Noblesse oblige was a real & powerful sentiment to much - although not all - of the aristocratic class. Especially those Victorians & Edwardians who suckled on the teat of King Alfred’s legend. Our modern patricians - celebrities, bankers & influencers - don’t have that.”

Of course, the *noblesse oblige* of the 19th century isn’t a direct analogue for what we need today. But, it does speak to the caliber of ruling class we need to make American populism viable. The on-going, highly volatile political experiment with Donald Trump betrays the stifled, unconscious need to have an authentic connection with our own ruling class. His voters, which span the spectrum of political thought, passed judgment on our elderly, vapid, sycophantic elected officials.

And yet, Trump is far from the picture of refined nobility to lead America. Ron DeSantis offers more focus and palatability, but so far, lacks the X-factor that imbues a leader with the charisma to connect to their followers. So, where do we see *noblesse oblige* thriving in a way that is compatible with Western ideals of freedom and progress?

The future of this dynamic is finding room to breathe in Central America, where Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele is pioneering a fresh style of governance that balances progress with unflinching national interest. The 41-year-old promoted Bitcoin heavily as one facet in a push to modernize El Salvador’s economy.

And most notably, he has turned the tide on the country’s plague of notoriously sensational gang violence with a swift hand.

Bukele makes no attempt to hide his intent to rule with targeted muscularity. His Twitter bio currently reads simply, “Philosopher King.” In the past, it’s been “Dictador de El Salvador.” He’s being tongue-in-cheek, but his robust style of governance and flexibility toward due process shows it’s at least partly sincere, much to the Economist’s horror—but the Salvadoran people’s adulation. In a recent poll, Bukele is regarded as more popular than the Pope in many Central and South American countries.

Despite the turnaround, the magazine’s central thesis is this:

“Yet his war on gangs has three enormous downsides. First, many innocent people have been incarcerated. Second, it has given him an excuse to accumulate immense powers, and he is not finished yet. Finally, he has created a formula that political opportunists in other crime-ridden countries with weak institutions could copy. Call it: how to dismantle a democracy while remaining popular.”

Bukele’s success is apparently inspiring others to take up the same spirit, including Jan Topic, a businessman in Ecuador who is running for president on a similar hard line with clean-cut aesthetics and unabashed strength.

This is just the beginning of the re-emergence of *noblesse oblige*, and it will undoubtedly dovetail with the long-repressed populism of the postmodern West. Trump gave us a taste that resurfaced ancestral memories of what can happen when the people are truly aligned with the ruling class. Bukele is mapping out in practice what it looks like. How America will fully step into the court of nobility is just around the corner. The people are starving for it.



Une exécution capitale, la place de la Révolution (c. 1793) by Pierre-Antoine Demachy; Pierre-Antoine Demachy, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

**“Spiritless, incurious and irrational, the mass
an unjustified sense of entitlement to a futu**



**es were, above all, ungrateful—puffed up with
re of greater and greater material benefits.”**

How the COVID-19 Pandemic Gave Rise to Right-Wing Populism

BY AARON REIN

It's no secret that right-wing populism made a resurgence globally as the world came out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Italy has elected its first female prime minister, who *CNN* complains pushes policy “further to the right than any mainstream political movement Italy has seen since the days of its former fascist leader.” These “far-right” ideas include: questioning abortion rights, managing immigration, and a general distaste for globalism.

Sweden—a historically socially liberal country—has seen an immigration-control league of Democrats gain enormous favor in the country's parliament. This is likely due to an increase in gang violence and general violent crime, especially in immigrant-heavy areas of the country.

France has seen constant protests over totalitarian moves made by President Emmanuel Macron in recent months. The most recent rise was due to Macron using executive power to push massively unpopular pension revisions past the legislature.

Most importantly for Americans, President Joe Biden, who is as much of an establishment politician as anyone, has seen some of the highest disapproval rates of any U.S. president in recent history. Currently, 54% of Americans disapprove of Biden's actions and performance as president.

How did we get here?

Obviously, these massive shifts in public opinion didn't come from the ether. There's a very clear catalyst that brought the people to despise the control of the “powers that be.” COVID-19 was used as an excuse by political establishments to demonstrate and enforce their power.

Through the crackdowns, most citizens stayed quiet and obeyed the orders of the government. However, during the last few months of the pandemic and long after, people started waking up to what was



People protest COVID-19 lockdown orders on Saturday, April 25, 2020 in Queens Park in Toronto, Canada. Photo courtesy of Michael Swan/Flickr.

going on behind the scenes.

The rich got richer. The middle class shrunk further.

Between 2020 and 2021, the 400 richest people in the world, the elite of the elite, added \$4.5 trillion to their net worths in the middle of a global pandemic. That amounts to an additional 40% compared to what they owned only a year prior. The working class? Between the same two years, 97 million people joined the “extreme poverty” level, making less than \$1.90 per day. Projections before the global government crackdown forecasted a decrease of 20-30 million people in extreme poverty.

The conditions of the lockdowns served no purpose in protecting the wealth of the average person and instead inflated that of the elite.

Education was hampered.

Despite the numerous “experts” on the news and on social media that tried to insist that online learning was just as good or better than in-person instruction, students learned less. In June 2020, Christine Greenhow, a Michigan State

University associate professor of education technology said that “Online learning can be as good or even better than in-person classroom learning. Research has shown that students in online learning performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction...”

But this simply was not the case. Not being in the classroom and instead the distracting home environment, students across the United States lost a lot of educational time. According to Thomas Kaine, a researcher with NWEA (a non-profit standardized testing organization), American students lost between 13 and 22 weeks worth of learning by the time they came back to school in the fall of 2021.

Much like the upwards transfer of wealth that occurred during the pandemic, it hurt the working class the most. The deciding factor on where any given school fell in that 13-22 week range was the wealth of the school's students. The least fortunate lost almost six entire months of educational time. The elite, who opt their children out of public schools entirely for private schools or homeschooling at a much higher rate than middle and lower-income families, dodged this loss as both of their preferred institutions experienced much less or no learning loss.

The pandemic significantly exacerbated mental health issues in children and adults.

The mental health of children, teenagers, and adults across the world was utterly wrecked by lockdowns.

An article on COVID-19's impact on mental health published in *FACETS*, the official journal of the Royal Society of Canada's Academy of Science puts it succinctly: “Children and youth flourish in environments that are predictable, safe, and structured.” The panic and lockdowns set in by big government acted as the antithesis of what makes for a good environment for youths.

It should be noted that mental health issues were on the rise in the U.S. (and globally) before the pandemic. From 2016

to 2020, there was a rise in anxiety and depression in adolescents from 14 to 16 percent, according to an analysis by KFF. However, that step of 2% in four years is nothing compared to the damage the pandemic did.

In 2022, when KFF asked U.S. parents what effect the pandemic had on their children's mental health, 55% answered that their children's mental health was negatively impacted. Only 9% said that their children were positively impacted.

The U.S. is not an outlier here though. Britain's "Prince's Trust" program publishes a report on the mental well-being of young adults between 16 and 25 every year. 56% of respondents identified in the 2021 paper reported feeling "always" or "often" anxious. Exactly 50% reported that their mental health had gotten "worse" since the start of the pandemic.

Like every part of the pandemic, this affected people with less power and money at a larger scale than it did the elite. In the same KFF paper, it was revealed that people with a household income of less than \$40,000 a year were 8% more likely to have been mentally affected by the pandemic than those with a household income of \$90,000 or more.

Why does that matter?

According to most figures, low and middle-income Americans make up approximately 80% of the population. In most European countries, around 85% of the population is low or middle-income. This means that in an unfettered democracy, the government must cater to this majority or risk expulsion from their seats of power.

Now, more than any time in recent memory, the majority of citizens feel as if the elite (one percenters, deep state, choose your name) have been prioritized at the expense of the average citizen. This is the core of what populism seeks to cure.

As to why specifically right-wing populism is making a splash: Left-wing populism is rare, and it is often a thin veil to cover real intentions and consequences. Most democrats will point at Senator Bernie Sanders as a perfect example of left-wing populism. On the surface, this seems like a reasonable claim. "Most Americans have

very little understanding of the degree to which media ownership in America—what we see, hear, and read—is concentrated in the hands of a few giant corporations." Though this sounds like Donald Trump's brand of populism, it's actually a quote from Sanders' book, *Our Revolution: A Future to Believe In*.

But while Sanders' tirades about universal healthcare and free college give off a populist aura, he nevertheless embodies a broader progressive agenda that has taken very kindly to globalization, usually at the expense of middle-class Americans and to the benefit of transnational corporations, as well as a naive idealism that borders on utopian fantasy. Many of his most famous policies, such as universal healthcare, for example, would clumsily federalize the nation's healthcare system, making the already pressing problems of bureaucratic bloat and burnout rates among doctors even worse than they already are, leading to systemwide detriment, and even a possible collapse.

Needless to say, this would cause large amounts of grief to the average citizen. To deem these policies sufficiently "populist" simply because they appeal to the idealist sentiment of "healthcare for all" doesn't work when the end result would most assuredly exacerbate the current systemic challenges the healthcare system currently faces.

A few more examples include S.938, S.1963, and S.393. Each of these acts proposes to expand a service to Americans such as water, college, or more social security. The problem with all of these programs is the same. The money has to come from somewhere, and that somewhere is taxes. The end result is more money being taken from the average American and given away. If the average American isn't helped—and in fact hurt—by these actions, they cannot be defined as populist.

The only other cohorts of the left put up the cheap facade of being "for the people," which was torn down by their actions during the pandemic, bailing out big corporations and shutting down small businesses.

If left-wing populists are virtually nonexistent, the elitist left leaves a vacuum

for the right. The right-wing populist "for-the-people" approach becomes the only reasonable choice to "fix things" as fast as possible.

So why is the time ripe for right-wing populism? The pandemic exposed unimaginable corruption around the world. It showed that the incumbent left did nothing but conspire with the elite despite their promises of being the servants of the people. In contrast, right-wing populism's current brand pledges to focus on improving the life of the average citizen, starting with preserving the nuclear family, reducing crime, and the promise to "drain the swamp." In the aftermath of the pandemic, the right has juxtaposed itself as the harbinger of the defiant masses going against the establishment that sent a wrenching ball through civil society.

I, myself, am a skeptic of the populist politician's claim that they can make such overarching, systemic changes without having the government reach their hands even more into the daily lives of civilians. I'd imagine it's near impossible to remold society itself at such a high speed without at least partially oppressing law-abiding citizens.

In 2001, during the days following 9/11, Congress and President Bush signed off on the USA PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act promised to protect all American citizens from terrorists using the full force of the federal government. To do this, the PATRIOT Act provided the federal government with the unprecedented ability to surveil all citizens at all times. The PATRIOT Act was a populist piece of legislation, as the argument to approve it was that it would improve the safety of Americans and stop further terrorist attacks. The PATRIOT Act did its job, as the U.S. never experienced a terrorist attack on the scale of 9/11 ever again, but it came with incredible damage to liberty, the foundation that the United States sits on. Populism has pitfalls, and it isn't the answer to everything.

Whether or not the current generation of populist politicians will fulfill their lofty promises without nasty drawbacks is up in the air, but one thing is certain: populism only seems to gain speed in a snowball

BURKE

THE EDITORS' COLUMN

Notes on the Gauchiste Right

BY LUKE LATTANZI

Roger Scruton invoked the word “gauchiste” (translated from French as leftist) to refer to the intellectuals, who, in their artisan-styled college town cafes pontificate endlessly about the society that could be.

Inspired by the many manifestos that drive their wild designs, one of Scruton’s (and others’) core critiques of the leftist has always been that he is an intellectual. The word “intellectual” is often conflated with intellect, or intelligence, but this is not how Scruton used the word.

Jordan Peterson recently took to Twitter declaring that “There are no Great Socialist Intellectuals by definition.”

But if we apply Scruton’s criteria, it is very clear that many socialist thinkers were actually great intellectuals. The problem with Peterson’s argument—or perhaps with the many conservatives who continue

to worship him as the archetypal “public intellectual”—is that all socialists tend to do is intellectualize everything, without much consideration for how their new society would work in praxis.

Edmund Smirk, a popular conservative pseudonymous Twitter account, first took note of this:

“Does Peterson not think Marx was a great intellectual? The standard conservative criticism has always been that socialists are “too intellectual” -- not in the sense that they are abnormally smart, but that they are cut off from the real world. To reverse that is hogwash.”

Karl Marx was a great intellectual, and those who attempted to establish the Earthly Paradise as laid out in the *Communist Manifesto* quickly subjected hundreds of millions of people to its real-world horrors. But these horrors, of course—which consumed much of the 20th century—were never really accounted for by Marx’s intellectualism.

But that intellectualism persists nevertheless, if not in the cafe then more prominently in the Ivory Tower. And to make matters worse, it is far more insulated and hegemonic nowadays, using the enduring prestige of longstanding institutions of higher learning to further legitimize their insufferable revolutionary recitade. Dutschke would be proud.

While it is easy for conservatives to dismiss leftists as midwitted (and we very well may be wholly justified to do so), that does not necessarily make them any less intellectual. The conservative understanding of the intellectual, as presented by Scruton, as well as other American thinkers like Russell Kirk,

correctly identified the leftist as someone strictly in the business of pontification, without much consideration for how it all would work in the real world.

Thinkers like Scruton and Kirk are largely regarded for developing a body of work that successfully traced modern conservatism’s intellectual bloodline back to the writing of Burke. While a return to a more Burkean outlook has been hailed by “New Right” conservatives on Twitter and elsewhere, there are unfortunately many who either misunderstand him or deliberately mischaracterize his work.

A persisting problem on the right is the many mini-movements that conflate a genuine effort to stalwartly guard tradition with a shallow bohemian aestheticism that romanticizes aspects of long-gone eras never to be recovered. But Burke knew better. When he invoked the ancient virtue of prudence, he meant that if there is to be change, it ought to be out of a “moral rather than complexional timidity”; or, in other words, to approach all change with a bit of humility and reverence for what is already built. Change ought not to come from fickleness or cowardice.

The right today is filled with those who prefer to occupy those same cafes, writing overly long screeds about the impending post-liberal regime change, or about how the anti-liberal left and right can now suddenly converge to overthrow the liberal order. There is also a sort of sadness to be felt as we watch these right-wing hipsters become heavily invested in the pseudo-art of pontification.

Scruton observed that when the leftist intellectual occupied the cafe, he merely sat and watched the “passing show”; that





is to mean, despite enticing the impressionable young college freshman to “come over to his position,” the cafe itself was not a legitimate expression of political power. The leftist was instead merely operating adjacent to the real centers of power. But things have changed since Scruton wrote those words, and we have seen increasingly that the leftists have gradually moved from the cafe to the Ivory Tower itself. The gauchiste right has yet to do so, and as of now, it would appear to lack the necessary political machinery to make the leap.

Many conservatives have harped about Burke’s insistence on prudence being chief among virtues in the statesman, but seemingly only in the face of “light or transient causes.” In other words, prudence is only emphasized when radicals appear. While this is what conservatives ought to do, it is only half the battle. Far less acknowledged is the necessity of prudence when the conservative performs his chief political function: the conservation of tradition.

To be prudent is to be pragmatic. Mindlessly posting cherry-picked quotes from ancient Greek or Roman thinkers on social media, coupled with a picture of their corresponding stone statue, does nothing for the organic preservation of tradition. This is not to say that social media cannot play a role in preserving tradition. After all, as one of our main forms of communication, political messaging can be spread faster than ever, and this has been used by both those on the left and right to get the point across. But while social media platforms have been shown to help promulgate

all sorts of reactionary politics, it is nevertheless incapable of preserving culture organically.

There is a reason why the “Reject modernity, embrace tradition” slogan has become a popular internet meme—the onlineness of it all ironically undermines the point. Our hyper-digitized age has created a disconnect, and conservatives parroting the tired platitudes of “rejecting modernity” ought to make the effort to find out what that really means, especially as they, too, regularly take advantage of this so-called culturally degenerate modernity.

None of this is to say that conservatives shouldn’t be trying to change the culture, but such efforts should be made pragmatically, based on what can reasonably be recovered, so as to avoid the trap of seeking to recover a lost age based on heavily romanticized depictions of what that looked like.

For as much as Burke advocated for the preservation of the bonds between people handed to them by an oldfangled social order, his advocacy for clear minded, pragmatic rulers also suggests that he realized that some things really are lost to the sands of time.

Of course, this is not to say that conservatives should lose their reverence for oldfangled social orders that no longer exist. But the point of conservatism shouldn’t be to return to something that is already lost, but to recover the philosophical framework that guided their approaches to statecraft so that we may apply them to our lives as best we can.



View of Washington by Edward Sachse. Public domain. Painting courtesy of the National Gallery of Art.

**“The solution will have to come from all of us. A conservative populism can
itself to electing leaders who are willing to embrace a bit of *noblesse*
only in its own privilege, but also a moral obligation to lead the polity b
cognizant of the true task at hand: reasserting its legislative power and**



an only work if it is channeled correctly. Such a movement must dedicate *oblige*, if you will. This French idiom refers to a nobility that revels not by good example. That is to mean, it must prioritize electing a Congress and taking the consequentiality away from the unelected agencies.”



A Generation Crippled With Student Debt

BY THE EDITORS

The Supreme Court knocked down Joe Biden’s plan to do away with \$400 billion in student loan debt, arguing that the administration overstepped its power by not first conferring with Congress. The 6-3 decision effectively leaves millions of borrowers on the hook to resume payments this fall. While many conservatives applaud this decision, citing “personal responsibility” and the “useless woke degrees” that taxpayer money would be subsidizing, there is a larger issue on the horizon that is only compounding as long as the debate around this topic continues superficially unfettered.

The Political Problem

This first step is acknowledging that there exists a multifaceted problem. That there are 43 million Americans that applied for relief tells us there is a significant portion of the populace struggling to repay their debt. While Biden’s plan would have only “canceled” up to \$10,000 for those making less than \$125,000-\$250,000 a year, such a sum of money for students who owe tens of thousands of dollars—sometimes over a hundred thousand dollars—would have been a sizable help.

Of course, these facts alone are what makes it easy for Democrats to now campaign against the “evil conservatives.” Biden has already gone on the offense since the Court’s decision came out, which can only stand to bolster his campaign.

What Republicans do terribly in the face of this criticism is neglect to provide any solution of their own—maybe they ultimately don’t see a problem with the federal government indiscriminately handing out loans to those who cannot afford it and those who are not pursuing degrees complementary to their costs. In turn, these indiscriminate loans then allow colleges and universities to raise their tuition. There is no longer incentive to make college affordable—everyone who wants to go can go; they simply have to hold out their hand and accept that they will be indebted to the federal government for what they borrowed plus interest.

The scheme is predatory, but will continue to take place as long as conservatives keep parroting the useless “personal responsibility” narrative without realizing that we are breeding a generation that will not only have to bear the burden of the outrageous spending of the irresponsible politicians in Washington and the inflationary pressure that comes with it, but indebted to that same government—after all, the money must come from

somewhere, right?

\$400 billion over the next 30 years to alleviate some of the college burden is not the only solution. But it is a start; and it must only be complemented with a plan to cut the federal government out of the equation, or at the minimum reduce its incentive to dupe unsuspecting 18-year-olds and their parents to accrue this debt as though college is needed to procure decent jobs. Spoiler: not always.

Conservatives are not without blame on this front. To champion responsible spending does not preclude investment in a future generation currently drowning in malfeasance. That is nonsense and de facto irresponsible. While Republicans and Democrats can agree on sending tens of billions of dollars to Ukraine and other countries, there is much debate on where to invest in the U.S.

But that debate appears disingenuous and is almost always political, meaning that the debate exists solely for the optics; in effect, that translates to a debate for political power. But such a power is always futile. Biden understood that he had no authority to decree by executive fiat that student debt will be canceled; but he did it anyway and now the story is that he is preparing to use the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide debt relief. And that will reportedly take a year or two to implement.

In other words, it will be ready after the 2024 election. How convenient.

This is the nature of politics. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* (1973) was a godsend. After 50 years of judicial fiat, Democrats had every opportunity to federalize the alleged “right to abortion.” But how useful would that be if an issue cannot be used for campaigning?

Relieving college debt is no different. Neither political party actually cares about the crippling debt facing an entire generation of Americans.

Rethinking College: Restore the Original Purpose of the University

The endless debate over student loans is a testament to the modern university being seen as the crux of a successfully executed career path in modern America. Countless majors and minors are now offered by practically every school ranging from traditional liberal arts disciplines such as philosophy and political economy, to vaguer, more modern majors such as business administration.

The vast differences between these majors reflects the state of the modern American workforce and how much a college education is pushed as the end-all be-all for success; as is also indicative of the degree requirements needed to get one’s foot inside the door of any given career path.

The idea of pursuing a four-year college degree as the default next level of progression after high school has only strengthened the government-sanctioned predatory student loan paradigm discussed earlier.

Politicians such as Bernie Sanders insist that the severity of student loan debt warrants not only a forgiveness of that debt, but also a universal guarantee of college education for all Americans, courtesy of the federal government. Republicans have called such proposals radical and imprudent, and perhaps there is some truth to that; but ultimately, neither the policy initiatives touted by progressive

Democrats, nor conservatives’ milquetoast appeals to “personal responsibility” properly acknowledge the true despotism of the entire paradigm—that being the role of the university itself.

The origins of American higher education can be traced back to the mid-1630s in the early colonial era, in which the first institutions of higher learning were solely tasked with training the clergy’s next batch of ministers, continuing the old English tradition handed down to them from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Things began to change in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries however, when universities began instituting curriculums solely predicated upon the liberal arts. If you went to Harvard College in the 1820s, your undergraduate studies would primarily concern politics, philosophy and classics. You would learn ancient languages such as Latin and Greek.

The purpose of the university in the early United States was relegated primarily to those who wanted to pursue greater intellectual development, a sort of high mindedness so utterly diluted and practically extinct by today’s smorgasbord of college majors.

It is about here where the progressive will object that higher education at this time (and in the case of the nation’s most elite institutions, in the present) was reserved solely for the aristocracy, and the progressive would be correct in acknowledging this.

But the progressive, often congratulating himself for his “groundbreaking” proposals concerning higher education for all—as well as the insufferable revolutionary rectitude that comes with it—incorrectly concludes that the heart of the injustice lies in the so-called lack of opportunity of underprivileged high schoolers who will never make it to college.

The true oppression, we contend, lies in the fact that the average American high schooler is often pushed to pursue a college education in the first place. College is not for everyone, nor should

be necessary for most occupations. The role of the university in American society has been erroneously expanded beyond its original responsibilities, as well as beyond those who were originally in need of its teachings, and as a result we’ve been led to our current predicament concerning America’s up-and-coming generation of student debt slaves.

The current predicament has also left the liberal arts—the original foundation for modern American higher education—with little to no appreciation. Degree programs within liberal arts colleges are often criticized by students and parents about their innate lack of a “return on investment.” Students are instead encouraged to pursue more “practical” majors, such as engineering or computer science before even considering “useless” degrees like philosophy or political science. And unfortunately, they would be right. Why pay six figures for a degree that isn’t guaranteed to get you a job in an economy that is increasingly requiring at least four years of college education in almost every career path?

For America to truly solve the student debt problem, there must be a broader conversation concerning why the workforce is increasingly requiring more college degrees in the first place. The role of the university, which was originally designed exclusively for professions such as ministry, legal practice or classical studies, has grown into a business that sells prestige and certification while students plunge themselves into six-figure debt.

Such a task, of course, is far easier said than done. After all, we do not live in the eighteenth century, and many professions around today either did not exist then, or have evolved drastically since. Nothing here should be misconstrued to advocate for the return to eighteenth century education standards. Rather, we seek to revitalize a long-forgotten way of thinking about the Ivory Tower, limiting the amount of career paths that would require undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate training in the first place.

AMERICAN PIGEON

Mission Statement

**“Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.”
— Edmund Burke**

We decided to begin from the inspiration of voices that have been all too often misunderstood, mischaracterized, and left to silence by the herd of self-righteous and deafened court of public opinion.

At a time no more politically severed than now, accurate, probing discourse has been submerged, and often it seems consciously subverted, underneath hysterics. The persistent issues of our time demand more than unchecked political assassinations, but examinations into the positions we take, ideological prejudices we hold, and into the throes of objectivity accelerating to a halt.

It is up to a socially deafened generation, suffering from its own willful blindness, to break the feedback loop of our self-tailored feeds we bury our heads into, believing we are saving the world, at the expense of humanity. Always at the expense of life.

The unreality of the ‘safe space’ is that within it is contained the small self-pitiful hope that social insulation will perpetually protect the essence of who we are, “whomever that might eventually turn out to be.” What was initially a physical space has evolved into a digital world, answering why with whatever pathology we might bring to life.

Developed from the desire to tailor everything to our preconceptions, is the chaos we now see as Americans tear their identity apart, and lose deference, friendships and family.

I observed that despite our studies of culture and societies, we never asked why they perished; or, if we did, in the answers motive took precedence over truth. As a result, by our lack of historical orientation and gratitude, we manufacture the hatred brewed for our own civilization, allowing our students to actively aid her decadence.

Social conservatism derives from gratitude. When threatened with constant change, the fragile networks upon which social relations depend are upheld by a common moral and political criteria. That criteria can only remain free and valid when dissent is welcomed.

In the era of 250 characters, and millions achieving their fix with a like, reblog, repost, and captioned rant, induced with self-prescribed dopamine and “feel-good” politics, it’s within the American interest to put their pride aside and contend with truth—and truth is not something that is conveniently agreeable.

But as our social and cultural institutions crumble, families and friends split, sports and corporations becoming political appendages, schools and universities harboring political motives, inflated with power politics, discursive formations, language alterations, hate-promoted ideologies, historical revisions, and much else, we threaten not to succumb to tyranny, not autocracy, not media and establishment puppetry, but because of these, civilizational decadence.

Over a century ago, pigeons were the unsung heroes of World War I, delivering messages to commanders on the battlefield. At the time, technology was inept and unmatched by these feathered soldiers who proved more reliable than telephone and telegraph.

Today is an age where our communication is restricted and increasingly censored along ideological lines in the Information War. We are all pigeons in some way, flying around eating and defecating, eliciting only casual disregard.

It’s our mission to swing on our carrier bag and helmet, fly above the noisy feedback loops to carry back down what is most important.

Let the truth stand on its own, as everyone else attempts to write history.

—*Jacob Yusufov, Founder & Editor in Chief*