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Towards ‘Hesperialism’

David Engels

The European parliamentary elections in May highlighted the growing scepticism among citizens towards what remains of the European ideal. This — along with growing intellectual opposition to the dominant, left-liberal, ‘politically correct’ ideology of the European Union — points to the possibility of real change.

Even among the most chauvinist of nationalist Eurosceptic movements, there is growing recognition that addressing challenges to cultural identity and sovereignty needs to be pursued in a coordinated manner — and on the basis of institutions that are entirely different from those that comprise the current administrative bureaucracy in Brussels.

But changing the European paradigm is a slow and ongoing process. To date, the numerous common projects and initiatives that have emerged have been diffuse and even contradictory. But they have also triggered other new initiatives. The construction of an ‘alternative Europe’ by the Visegrad States is one idea elaborated upon by the Deputy Minister of Hungary in this edition.

While the formation of a unified, pro-European and also truly conservative political establishment still remains a desideratum, the intellectual preparation for such a possibility is well under way (see the interview with Steve Bannon). Other cooperative efforts among European intellectuals include the ‘Paris Declaration’ of 2017 and, more recently, the book, Renovatio Europae, which I had the honour to co-ordinate.

Stemming from an initiative by the Instytut Zachodni in Poland and co-written by a group of leading European intellectuals, Renovatio Europae describes various aspects of a fundamental reform of the European Union. Introducing the term ‘Hesperialism’ (in reference to the Greek term for the uttermost Western part of the world), the collection of essays seeks to inspire an intellectual and political movement that will preserve the traditional values — and the cultural diversity — of our Christian European civilisation. Published in German, English, French, Polish, Spanish, and, most recently, Italian, the book promotes strategic cooperation among European nations to protect the continent against a range of threats, including the ongoing attacks on the family. As the Duc d’Anjou notes, this is one of the central struggles of our time. Other threats include materialism, ‘political correctness’, Islamisation, the LGBT agenda, mass immigration, and an ascendant China.

The dismantling of the historic identity of our civilisation — and its replacement by a hedonistic, multicultural ‘world-society’ — has grown to such proportions that it is doubtful whether we will ever re-establish a society whose majority adheres to the values and traditions of Christianity. Accompanying all this is the desecration of many European churches — and the burning of Notre-Dame de Paris, whose disfigurement serves as a real memento mori of the West.

But it is usually in the darkest hour when true hope is re-kindled. Thus, the foundation of a new movement of ‘Church vigilantes’ in France offers a model for citizen action. And in the reconstruction of Notre-Dame, there is the abiding hope that efforts will respect its ‘Gothick’ spirit, as Witold Rybczynski urges. More broadly, the hope of rebuilding European Christendom may be possible, as Charles Coulombe explores in our pages.

There is no doubt that the struggle to reclaim our identity will be long and difficult. Even in a best-case scenario, the world of tomorrow will see the loss of much of what we cherish today. Already some of Europe’s most traditional societies have turned their back on their values, as Caroline Simons reports from Ireland. Perhaps this is why, as things crumble, conservative intellectuals are focusing attention on the responsibility of individuals to protect conservative values — by leading exemplary lives.

To this end, my 2019 book, Que faire?, describes 22 practical, everyday rules for remaining true to our European values, while living within an atomised society largely estranged from tradition, solidarity, and transcendence. But as true Europeans, we also know that the real importance of the fight does not lie in achieving success but in being loyal to our beliefs and committed to our ideals until the bitter end — for the sake of the West.

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About the cover: “Nikola Šubić Zrinski’s Charge from the Fortress of Szigetvár” (1825) by the German-born Austrian painter Johann Peter Krafft (1780-1856). The siege of Szigetvár in 1566 was, according to Cardinal Richelieu, “the battle that saved civilization”.

It is time to express, once again, the importance I attach to the family and its defence. At the moment, a battle is being fought between two models: that of a dehumanized world and that of a society — we should say, a *civilisation* — that gives man his full place.

It is not a matter of simply choosing between two equal conceptions of man — that is, man as an object, a submissive, a slave of excessive globalization, and man as that which institutions can help to elevate and build (that is to say, man as a *subject* of rights). It is a matter of rejecting one in order to promote the other. *This* is the purpose of important meetings like the World Congress of Families (WCF).

We must, indeed, get out of that ambiguity in which Western societies have lived for too long, based on a certain scepticism and relativism. Both have led to dead ends. Christian teaching, the foundation of our societies, is there to remind us that there is no place for two truths.

But what has been done with this message over the past two centuries? It has been permanently undermined, religion often being presented as a source of oppression or even “opium” of the people. But who came up with these ideas? Those who led to ‘the Terrors’ and the totalitarianisms. Now that historians have regained a certain ‘freedom of thought’, Marx — who had long been exalted — is now merely a man, one who has had a hundred million victims around the world. A sad record. Ideologies can kill!

But history tells us that excess always leads to a healthy reaction. Do we not see it coming now? It involves families everywhere who are beginning to react in many different ways. By taking back the family’s natural right to educate and instruct; by recreating social structures — for early childhood, for the elderly, for the disabled; and by asserting itself, as we see in France today, in order to regain a decent standard of living and not be overwhelmed by multiple taxes and regulations that make sense only to those who developed them.

This ‘return to reality’ is being led by families. It is they who must be encouraged — by giving them a clear framework for action. This involves three points:

First, the recognition of the family as the *basic* unit of society — one from which all other things will flow: the town, working communities (whether manual or intellectual), all the way up to the state (which may or may not encourage families).

Second, this framework must exalt life in *all* its expressions — that is, it must reject that which destroys life before birth. We must ensure that our children, as well as those who preceded us, are assured of a most peaceful existence.

Finally, the third pillar of a balanced society is that of justice, which must be maintained to guarantee society a balance between its members. We know that there will always be strong and weak, but a good government is one that allows the strong to exercise their talents and ensures that the weak are not oppressed. ‘Everyone in his rightful place’ is the secret of a balanced society.

The France of the *ancien régime* understood this. The kings, my ancestors, and generation after generation, have always had at heart the need to ensure that this justice — which was their *first* duty — was respected. Breaking this balance by giving priority not to the *eternal* law but to *contingent* law, which can be changed by majorities of chance and circumstance, is what has brought our societies to a deadlock.

It’s time for them to get out of that deadlock. A meeting like the WCF XIII will contribute to this by allowing everyone to get to know each other better, to help each other in their mutual practices, and above all to regain hope for the future. This hope, which is also inscribed in the genetic code of Christian society, is what helps us all.

May Saint Louis, my ancestor, inspire our leaders — and may the Holy Family remain the icon that guides us.

Mgr. Prince Louis Alphonse de Bourbon, Duke Of Anjou, is one of the heirs to the French throne. This speech was delivered on 30 March 2019 at the World Congress of Families XIII held in Verona. It has been given a title and edited for clarity. The original French text can be read online at Légimité.
Ireland Chooses Abortion

Caroline Simons

In January 2019, state-sponsored abortion services became available in Ireland. The Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 (hereafter, the ‘2018 Act’), provides that ‘termination of pregnancy’ is available on demand in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. The Act defines ‘termination of pregnancy’ as ‘a medical procedure which is intended to end the life of a foetus’, rather than a procedure or treatment to end pregnancy.

It is available also up to an undefined time of ‘viability’ in cases of risk to the woman’s life or health (including mental health) where two doctors deem it an ‘appropriate’ means to avert the risk. In an emergency, where two doctors consider it necessary to avert a risk to a woman’s life or health, the procedure can be carried out at any point up to birth. Similarly, if a pre-born baby has a condition which is likely to lead to its death before or within 28 days of birth, there is no time limit for the procedure.

These changes to the law were made notwithstanding the duty of doctors in Ireland to practise ‘evidence-based’ medicine. Although abortion is legal in nearly every European jurisdiction, an evidence base is lacking for the proposition that abortion (as distinct from termination of pregnancy and delivery of the baby) is necessary to avert a risk to the life of a pregnant woman. Nor is there evidence that intentional termination of the life of the pre-born baby is necessary or appropriate for treatment of cancer in the mother, or that it confers any maternal survival benefit.

The Irish people choose abortion

In other jurisdictions, abortion was made lawful by courts or politicians. In a constitutional referendum held on 25 May 2018, the Irish people themselves decided to remove the constitutional protection of the pre-born baby (the 8th Amendment) and to empower the Irish parliament to regulate termination of pregnancies.

On a turnout of 64.13% of the electorate, 66.4% voted to approve repeal of the 8th Amendment. This was the highest turnout of voters for any constitutional referendum, exceeding even the 60.52% who came out in 2015 to vote on same-sex marriage (which was approved by a majority of 62.07%).

The people’s decision to ‘Repeal the Eighth’ marks a spectacular reversal of public opinion. In 1983, on a turnout of 53.67% of the electorate, 66.9% approved the 8th amendment to the Irish Constitution. This inserted a new provision into the Constitution that acknowledged the right to life of the pre-born baby and undertook to respect, and, ‘as far as practicable’, to ‘defend and vindicate’ that right. It stated explicitly that due regard had to be given to the equal right to life of the mother.

Ireland’s excellence in obstetric care

Although a contrary impression has been given by national and international media, pregnant women in Ireland have generally received the highest standard of care. The World Health Organisation has recognised this over many decades. Ireland without abortion had consistently better maternal mortality and morbidity rates than most countries where abortion is available. The law and the Medical Council’s Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics permitted termination of pregnancy where there was a real and substantial (not necessarily imminent) risk to the life of a pregnant woman which could not otherwise be averted. Doctors acted in the interest of both patients: the woman and her pre-born baby. This meant that where the medical margins of safety would allow, doctors acted to prolong pregnancy in the baby’s interest. If the baby reached a gestation where survival might be possible, every effort would be made to optimise that survival.

While it was permissible to terminate pregnancy to save a mother’s life and a baby’s life might be lost, it was never permissible to deliberately kill the baby. Women in Ireland have been and continue to be entitled to receive necessary medical treatment for any condition or complication they may suffer during pregnancy, including cancer.

Of course, cases of negligent medical care occur and questions regarding the clinical management of patients may require judicial resolution. These cases happen in Ireland as they do elsewhere, and in obstetric as in other areas of medical practice. Notwithstanding these cases, the President of the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in Ireland and the Masters of the National Maternity Hospital and the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin told the parliamentary Committee on Health and Children in 2013 that they were not aware of any situation in which a lack of legal clarity prevented appropriate care and said that they had never withheld appropriate treatment for a woman.

These sentiments were reiterated in 2018 during the campaign regarding the 8th Amendment. Dr. Eamon McGuinness, former Chairman of the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, wrote:

“The Eighth Amendment has one medical effect only: it prevents Irish doctors from deliberately, as an elective matter, causing the death of an unborn child. It awards to
the child in the womb the right to have their life protected in Irish hospitals, in Irish GP [general medical practitioner] surgeries, and in Irish operating theatres.”

Reassurance was provided by another consultant obstetrician, Dr. Mary Holohan, that “Ireland’s law fully provides for the small number of cases relating to necessary obstetric interventions …. We have the scope of practice needed to guarantee best international standards of care to women in pregnancy.”

In the 35 years since the 8th Amendment, there were a number of cases around which pro-choice activists built a successful narrative that pregnant women were dying because of the unavailability of abortion. They asserted that the 8th Amendment restricted obstetric care. On close examination, none of these cases support this contention. Two cases in particular lit a touchpaper for change in public opinion. These were the case of *X v Ireland* in 1992 (“the X case”) and the tragic death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012.

*X v Ireland*

The X case concerned a 14-year-old girl, Miss X, who was pregnant as a result of rape. She travelled with her parents to England to have an abortion. Prior to leaving Ireland, her parents sought advice from the Irish authorities in relation to scientific testing of the foetus to establish paternity in a criminal prosecution for rape.

The Attorney General applied to the High Court for an injunction preventing Miss X from travelling to England for an abortion. A psychologist gave evidence that she might commit suicide if she was refused an abortion. The High Court issued an injunction preventing her from leaving Ireland and from arranging the procedure.

Although they were already in England making these arrangements, the family returned to Ireland when they learned of the injunction. The case was appealed to the Irish Supreme Court. It decided (in the absence of psychiatric evidence, and on the basis of a concession by the Attorney General) that her threat of suicide because of her pregnancy was a risk to Miss X’s life which could only be avoided by termination of pregnancy, and that termination was lawful in these circumstances. The court directed that Miss X should not be prevented from leaving the country. It was reported subsequently that she did not have an abortion but suffered a miscarriage in an English hospital.

*Opening the floodgates*

After the X case, the pro-life movement in Ireland feared that allowing abortion for suicide or mental health reasons would ‘open the floodgates’. Abortions performed in the UK for risk of injury to a woman’s physical or mental health have consistently accounted for over 97% of all abortions. (In 2017, 98% of abortions in the UK — England and Wales — were performed on this basis; 99.5% of those abortions were done because of risk to the woman’s mental health.)

In a referendum in 1992 however, the people rejected an amendment which would have excluded the risk of suicide as a basis for lawful termination of pregnancy. (Pro-life and Catholic advocates had also called for a ‘No’ vote because of the flawed wording of the proposal.) They approved amendments that provided that the 8th Amendment would not limit freedom to travel to another state, and to allow freedom of access in Ireland to information about services lawfully available elsewhere. Thus, where termination of pregnancy had been available
where it was necessary to avoid a physical risk to the woman’s life, it was now available, at least in theory, where there was a risk of her suicide.

A referendum in 2002 offered the renewed possibility of removing the threat of suicide as a basis for legal abortion. This was supported by the government and by the Catholic Church. A minority among pro-life voters considered that the proposed wording might inadvertently remove protection from the embryo prior to implantation. Post referendum analysis suggests that this minority was sufficient to tip the balance in favour of defeat of the referendum proposal. On a turnout of 42.89%, it was rejected by 50.42% of voters.

Savita’s death

Savita Halappanavar died in October 2012 while under hospital care for inevitable miscarriage. Five days before she died, Mrs. Halappanavar’s request for a termination of pregnancy had been denied on the grounds that her miscarriage appeared to be progressing normally and her foetus was still alive.

Three official and independent enquiries found that her death resulted from sepsis and poor miscarriage management. Official investigators acknowledged that “clinical circumstances can and have arisen in Ireland where a termination of pregnancy is an appropriate and necessary clinical step in the medical treatment and care of a patient.” They said that appropriate monitoring and evaluation “would likely have lead [sic] to reconsideration of the need to expedite delivery”, which “would likely have helped to prevent rapid deterioration of the patient”.

These acknowledgements and findings have been almost excised from public consciousness. The announcement in the Irish Times newspaper that “Woman ‘denied a termination’ dies in hospital” alerted pro-choice activists immediately to the potential of her death to win support for the campaign to repeal the 8th Amendment. It triggered an outpouring of public mourning that was reported by media from Ireland to India. The haunting image of Savita and the suggestion that an abortion was necessary to save her life hugely influenced public debate and fuelled the growing public appetite for some measure of abortion.

In 2013, the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act became law. Its stated intention was to legislate for the decision of the Supreme Court in the X case in 1992. It provided that where a pregnant woman’s life was at risk, including by her own threat of suicide which could not be otherwise averted, termination of pregnancy was permitted. It prohibited the intentional destruction of the pre-born baby. This did not satisfy the pro-choice lobby, but a broader abortion law was not possible while the 8th Amendment remained.

“Dripping water hollows out stone” (Ovid)

After Mrs. Halappanavar’s death, the campaign for a referendum to ‘Repeal the 8th’ intensified, focusing initially on abortion for ‘hard’ cases, like rape and ‘fatal foetal abnormality’. Money poured in to Irish campaigning bodies from organisations overseas, including Soros’ Open Society Foundations. Prominent obstetricians campaigned, (including some who had said in 2013 that the law had not prevented appropriate obstetric care) complaining that the law had a chilling effect on their clinical practice. Feminist academic lawyers increased their efforts for Repeal. Wearers of ‘Repeal’ clothing and costumes from Atwood’s dystopian novel, The Handmaid’s Tale, became visible advocates for the pro-choice cause.

By 2018, all political parties and political leaders supported and campaigned for the Repeal of the 8th. These included the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), the Minister for Health and the Minister for Children. The Repeal campaign relied largely on personal stories and feelings to garner support. Prominent obstetricians, including the President of the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists pronounced the law unworkable. Only a handful of colleagues, most of whom had retired, spoke against them.

Cases which had nothing to do with the 8th Amendment or with abortion became part of the Repeal campaign’s narrative. The campaign was reinforced by blanket support in the mainstream media. A pro-life campaign across
social media was scuppered weeks from polling day by advertising bans imposed by Facebook and Google. The *Irish Times* newspaper reported that these bans were instigated by pressure from government circles.

Misinformation, false analysis and euphemism were used to persuade the Irish that abortion is ‘healthcare’ and the pre-born baby is a ‘choice’. A member of parliament (a pharmacist and a mother) insisted that a pregnant woman was “not carrying a life”, she was “carrying a pregnancy”, and that “there is no baby anywhere being terminated” in the abortion legislation. The Minister for Health promised that his legislation would prohibit abortion for disability (it does not) and late term abortions (certain abortions can take place throughout pregnancy).

All pro-life amendments proposed to the abortion legislation were rejected, even those which the public might conceivably support. These include amendments which would require that the baby be administered pain relief prior to the abortion, which would have prohibited abortion for disability or gender selection, which would have prohibited the sale of foetal tissue and which would have required dignified burial of foetal remains following surgical abortion rather than disposal as waste.

While the Irish legislature has refused to give these protections to the pre-born baby, it has been more generous in the case of animals. Section 17(1) of the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 provides that no operation or procedure, with or without instruments, can be carried out on an animal “without the use of an appropriate anaesthetic or analgesic administered so as to prevent or relieve any pain during or arising from the operation or procedure”. As for the proposal that the abortion legislation provide for the dignified burial of foetal remains, the Health Service Executive (HSE) advises on its website that pre-born babies who are aborted before nine weeks of pregnancy can “be flushed down the toilet or wrapped in tissue and disposed of” as the woman wishes.

Following the passage of the 2018 Act, members of the *Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists* (the Institute), working on guidelines to implement the abortion service, spoke euphemistically of the need for feticide prior to medical abortion to ensure that babies “are born sleeping”. (Medical abortions are drug-induced and can result in live births. Surgical abortions, of their nature, destroy the foetus.)

In January 2019, the Institute issued an *Interim Clinical Guidance; Pathway for the management of fatal fetal anomalies (FFA) and/or life-limiting conditions (LLC) diagnosed during pregnancy*. This *Guidance* advises that feticide may be performed before medical termination for FFA/LLC, including cases where the foetal anomaly is not immediately lethal, after 21 weeks and 6 days of gestation to ensure that there is no chance of a live birth.

Permitting abortion as in the 2018 Act, where a pre-
The destruction of innocents

Since abortion services commenced in Ireland on 1 January 2019, reports indicate that 800-900 abortions are being carried out each month. Even allowing for reports of the number of abortion pills previously bought online and the reduction in the number of Irish women travelling to England for abortions, this suggests an almost trebling of Ireland’s abortion rate to over 11,000 abortions in one year.

One of the capital’s maternity hospitals has predicted an annual rate of 10,000 abortions. It is estimated that 80% of these will be carried out medically (with abortion pills) in the first nine weeks of pregnancy, general medical practitioners (GPs) being the primary service providers. Women in Ireland do not have to pay for this service. GPs are reimbursed €450 per abortion, which includes three appointments, and pre- and post-care.

Where pregnancies are more advanced than nine weeks gestation, abortions must be carried out in hospital. The obligation on hospitals to provide abortion has an impact on the availability of theatre and gynaecology services. Because of time constraints to comply with the law, elective abortions may be prioritised over these services.

An abortion carried out at the National Maternity Hospital in March 2019 is being reviewed by the UK’s Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. In this case an initial test for foetal anomaly indicated that the baby had Edward’s Syndrome, or Trisomy 18. The parents have said that they were advised that it was unnecessary to await the results of a second test and that there was “no hope”. They agreed to an abortion, which was carried out at over 15 weeks gestation. They learned after reading the second test results that their baby was healthy.

Conscientious objection

Although provision is made in the 2018 Act for the right of doctors, nurses and midwives to conscientiously object to participation in abortion, this right is not extended to pharmacists or to medical or nursing students. A conscientiously objecting doctor must refer a woman who wants an abortion to a colleague who will provide this service.

It seems that the right to conscientiously object to participation in abortion services may be of little use for doctors who wish to apply for posts at publicly funded maternity hospitals. In February 2019, the National Maternity Hospital in Dublin advertised positions for a consultant anaesthetist and a consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology. The advertisement stated that candidates must be able to carry out patient duties along with teaching, administration and management duties “which as of 2019 includes elective terminations of pregnancy services and the post-holders will be expected to contribute to this new service as part of their practice plan”.

The hospital stated that these positions are to be funded specifically from a financial allocation by the HSE to the hospital for the “provision of termination-of-pregnancy services and are for individuals willing to contribute to the provision of these services”. As hospitals are legally obliged to make these services available, it is likely that future advertisements will make similar stipulations.

A church of pagans?

In a country where 78.8% of the population identify as Catholic (Census 2016) and weekly Mass attendance is high by European standards, the decision to remove the right to life of the pre-born baby from the Constitution in order to enable abortion is confusing. Among other things, it points to a failure of the Catholic Church in Ireland over several decades to impart to and/or convince even its own congregations of its teachings on the sanctity of life.

Writing in Catholic World Report in June 2018, Russell E. Saltzman recalled a 1958 lecture titled “The New Pagans and the Church” in which Joseph Ratzinger stated that the Church “is no longer, as she once was, a Church composed of pagans who have become Christians, but a Church of pagans, who still call themselves Christians, but actually have become pagans”. Saltzman observed that the pagans in Ireland have reached a 66% critical mass and that default paganism has become the norm governing life for many, if not most, people in Ireland today. If this is a default rather than a considered position, one may only hope that the realities of abortion will, in time, encourage people to reprise the traditional precepts.

Caroline Simons is an Irish lawyer.
It Ought to be Gothick

Witold Rybczynski

In 1681, the great Christopher Wren was called upon to add a bell tower (today known as Tom Tower) to the unfinished gatehouse of the Great Quadrangle of Christ Church in Oxford. The college had been built by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey 150 years earlier in the castellated Late Gothic style that was then popular. By 1681, such architecture was definitely out of fashion and Wren, who was Britain’s leading architect and an active proponent of Renaissance classicism, might have been expected to add a classical tower to Christ Church. Instead, he chose to fit in rather than stand out. As he succinctly explained, the tower “ought to be Gothick to agree with the Founder’s worke”.

I was reminded of Wren during the events that followed the calamitous four-hour fire that destroyed the roof and spire of Notre-Dame de Paris this April. A few days after the fire, the government of Emmanuel Macron announced that it intended to hold an international architectural competition to rebuild the cathedral. The Prime Minister, Édouard Philippe, emphasized that the spire should be restored in a manner “suited to the techniques and challenges of our time”. President Macron himself promised that Notre-Dame would be rebuilt within five years (in time for the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris), and that it would be an “inventive reconstruction”, a “contemporary architectural gesture” that would leave the cathedral “more beautiful than before”.

The architectural community, reading between the lines, saw an opportunity. Soon, dozens of proposals flooded the internet. Many unknown architects — and a few well-known figures such as Norman Foster — had a go. Since glass is the material du jour, many of the ambulance-chasers proposed putting a glass roof over the nave. Maybe it would be a greenhouse, maybe a viewing platform, whatever. Predictably, the replacement spires tended to be glass shards or steel spikes, although a pair of Italian architects proposed a Baccarat crystal.

The rest of the world looked on in growing disbelief — and concern. The official architect of the cathedral, who had been supervising a painstaking renovation over the past six years, pointed out that a five-year schedule was unrealistic. Le Figaro published a protest letter calling for a more measured response, not an “architectural gesture”. The more than one thousand signatories included a former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the two chief curators of the Louvre, and a number of prominent French preservationists.

On May 28, the French Senate, the country’s prime legislative body, passed a resolution stipulating that any rebuilding must abide by existing planning, environmental, and heritage regulations — in other words, no rush. Moreover, the result should be faithful to Notre-Dame’s “last known visual state” — no steel spikes. Before it became law, the resolution had to be approved by the National Assembly. The debate there was lively, much of it centering on the difference between rebuilding and restoring. “I don’t want it to be more beautiful than before,” proclaimed one deputy, “I want it to be identical!” Finally, on July 16, after the Senate and the National Assembly failed to reach agreement on a common text, the National Assembly, where Macron’s centrist party has a majority, passed a reconstruction bill. The legislation does not address the actual architectural form of the rebuilding, one way or the other.

A few days after the fire, Slate posted a rather silly article titled “Let’s Not Rebuild Notre-Dame.” The gist of the article was that any reconstruction of the medieval building would be inauthentic, so it would be best to leave it alone. “Just like we visit ruined castles, let’s visit Notre-Dame and be conscious that with it, a part of our civilization has gone up in smoke,” wrote the author, a Parisian translator named Bérengère Viennot, “that we must accept it, with its scars and its losses, because that’s what’s left”.

Viennot’s article reflects the common view that great buildings are like inviolable works of art; if an arm breaks off the Venus de Milo you don’t stick on a new one. But architecture is a peculiar art. As soon as a building is finished, it begins to change. Practical considerations intrude, people move things around. Unlike paintings, buildings are left out in the rain (as Frank Lloyd Wright used to say), they weather, things break or wear out and are repaired or replaced. And it’s not just the users and the elements — buildings are subject to natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and fires, as well as manmade destruction such as military bombardment, vandalism, and insensitive alteration. The last is hardly the least dangerous. An owner’s desire to remain up-to-date, no less than a fire, is always a potential threat to an old building.

Buildings last for centuries, and are routinely altered to accommodate changing functions. The Great Mosque of Córdoba, for example, was enlarged three times between 784 and 987 to accommodate the growing population of the city. There was no master plan, but over two centuries successive generations of builders and craftsmen copied what was there, even as they rebuilt the minaret and introduced domes and lanterns. The result, like so many great buildings, is a palimpsest; layers of history — including lots of reused Roman columns — and all the more compelling for it.
The corner stone of Notre-Dame de Paris was laid in 1163. As was common practice, construction began with the choir and proceeded westward — that way Mass could be said in the unfinished church. The construction, which proceeded in several bouts, took a hundred years. When the nave was complete the clerics concluded that the altar area was too dark and a transept was added. In the mid-13th century the transept was enlarged and remodeled with lacier stonework and dazzling rose windows. By then the towers of the west facade were complete. They are not identical, although not as different as those of Chartres Cathedral, one of which is Romanesque, the other Gothic.

Over the years, Notre-Dame has suffered many slings and arrows: Huguenot rioters sacked the church in the 16th century; in the 17th, Louis XIV rebuilt the rood screen, opened up the choir, added a new high altar, and replaced many of the stained-glass windows with clear glass; during the French Revolution the church was looted and its west front was damaged — the *sans-culottes* decapitated the statues of the Kings of Judah believing them to represent French monarchs. Napoleon had himself crowned in the cathedral, reinstating the building as a national symbol, although he didn’t repair it, just slapped on a coat of whitewash.

The old church was not in great shape, and in the mid-19th century it underwent a major rehabilitation. The work was overseen by the architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, in many ways the inventor of the modern practice of historic preservation. He removed the neoclassical features added in the 17th century, restored much of the stained glass (that work was only completed in the 1960s), and replaced looted statuary. He also built a 300-foot *flèche*, or spire, over the crossing, the original having been removed in 1786 and never replaced. “To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or rebuild it,” he once famously wrote, “it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which could never have existed at any given time.” This somewhat cryptic statement underlines the paradox of restoration, which is that “completeness” is not a natural condition of architecture, and that a restored building represents something new as well as something old. Viollet-le-Duc’s work on Notre-Dame was sometimes creative, such as the famous roof gargoyles that were not a part of the original medieval fabric. But whatever he did was carried out in the Gothic spirit; “What would a medieval master builder have done?” was his ruling principle.

So why is there even a question of how Notre-Dame should be rebuilt? To understand, one has to go back to the early 1900s and the emergence of architectural modernism, one of whose founding principles was that every age requires its own unique architecture. As the field of historic preservation developed it adopted the same doctrine: When old buildings were added to, or substantially altered, the new work should be distinct from the old — “of its time” was the phrase often used. That is what Macron meant by “inventive reconstruction.”

The idea that an old building becomes inauthentic if it is seamlessly restored is a credo that has been repeated so often it’s easy to forget that this was not the way that buildings were repaired in the past. It was the custom among the ancient Chinese, when an important building was damaged or destroyed by earthquake or fire, to simply rebuild as if nothing had happened. For example, the largest building in Beijing’s Forbidden City, the Hall of Supreme Harmony, was originally built in 1406. Over the years it was destroyed by fire (usually caused by lightning strikes) no fewer than seven times. Each time it was faithfully rebuilt, the most recent reconstruction dating from the end of the 17th century. Thus the building that is there today is slightly more than 300 years old, although the design is 300 years older than that. No one has ever called it a fake.

Europeans, while not as dogmatically wedded to tradition as the ancient Chinese, were similarly conservative. When the Doge’s Palace in Venice suffered a major fire in 1577, the architect Andrea Palladio proposed a major makeover. Why not replace the old-fashioned facade, built in the 15th century, with something new, something modern, he argued? In Palladio’s case, something modern meant *all’antica*, in the style of the ancients. But the Venetians liked their quirky Gothic building with its squat pointed arches and colorfully patterned walls, and that is what they rebuilt. Saint Mark’s Campanile, the bell tower that stands in front of the Doge’s Palace was completed in 1511. In the following four centuries the 400-foot tower survived fires and several lightning strikes until 1902 when, for unexplained reasons, it suddenly collapsed. The collapse was total — contemporary photographs show a mound of debris in the Piazza San Marco. What did the Venetians do? It took them less than a day to decide to rebuild it exactly as it had been before (adding only structural reinforcement and an elevator). Today’s architecture critics would call it ‘Disneyfication’, but to the Venetians it just seemed like good sense.

Modern warfare, with its artillery bombardment and aerial bombing, has been the scourge of architecture. During the First World War, Ypres in Belgium was the site of five separate battles and suffered inestimable damage — by the end of the war the entire city was reduced to rubble. The old market square included a 13th century cathedral and the medieval Cloth Hall, one of the largest secular Gothic buildings in Europe — both now lay in ruins. Both buildings were subsequently meticulously rebuilt according to their original design, a project that took 40 years. The modern-day visitor would be forgiven for believing that the immense Cloth Hall with its tall central belfry is a survivor of the 14th century, and in a way it is — even though it was built in the 20th.

In the past, when a beloved old building suffered
misfortune, the common practice was to rebuild what was there before. This is what the citizens of Ypres did in their town center, just as after the Second World War Poles would rebuild the medieval Old Town in Warsaw, Germans would rebuild the historical center of Dresden, and the British would restore the bomb-damaged House of Commons in London. Nostalgia was certainly involved, but also a spirit of defiance: History is not destiny, it can be reversed, things can be put right.

The best way to rebuild Notre-Dame de Paris would be to restore what was there, as if the fire never happened; there is no need to commemorate a senseless accident. The structural damage will have to be repaired first. Gothic cathedrals were built with belt-and-suspenders: the nave was spanned by a ribbed stone vault, but the actual weight of the roof with its heavy lead covering, was carried on an independent wooden structure of rafters, braces, and tie-beams. The Notre-Dame fire, which started in the attic of the north transept, totally destroyed this structure.

A recent report in The New York Times suggested that had the fire not been prevented from spreading to the wooden structure that supports the eight giant bells of the north tower, the damage might have been much, much worse. But it was bad enough. The roof is gone, the spire is gone, and three large portions of the thin stone vault collapsed under the weight of the falling 750-ton spire. Establishing the integrity of the surviving vault is the most pressing question. The 21 flying buttresses of the choir have been temporarily reinforced and work is currently underway to ascertain what damage the heat of the fire — and the massive quantities of water — may have caused to the stone. Replacing and repairing the vault will be a challenging task.

Whether it is necessary to replicate the heavy oak framing of the roof itself is debatable. Wouldn’t a fireproofed steel structure — lighter and more fire-resistant — be a better option? The lead roofing of the nave and the spire could be replaced by something environmentally safer (the melted lead roofing has caused serious levels of toxic contamination in the area surrounding the cathedral). The design of a new flèche will undoubtedly be the subject of much debate. Viollet-le-Duc built a distinctive and beautiful two-story wooden spire that was taller and more ornate than the medieval original. This has led some to describe it as superfluous. But the 19th century spire, like Viollet-le-Duc himself, has become a part of the history of the cathedral, no less than the iconic gargoyles, and it deserves to be replaced. And whatever its exact design, it ought to be Gothic. Efforts to “improve” Notre-Dame should be resisted. There is a place for steel spikes and Baccarat crystal — just not here.

Witold Rybczynski is emeritus professor of urbanism at the University of Pennsylvania. Author of 20 books, his latest is Charleston Fancy: Little Houses and Big Dreams in the Holy City. This essay originally appeared in the July 2019 edition of The American Interest. It appears here by kind permission.
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You have created a Facebook group called “Protège ton église” (“Protect your church”). What is it about?

This is an initiative that I launched with a friend at the beginning of the year — in view of the number of Christianophobic acts in France (and which are rarely mentioned or recorded by the media). The attacks on churches — ranging from vandalism (tags, graffiti) to desecration (opening of tabernacles, theft of hosts, chalices, etc.) — is something that deeply affects Catholics on the one hand, but also, more generally, French people. Just think of the emotion that the fire at Notre-Dame de Paris generated among the entire French population, both Catholics and atheists!

For it is indeed the very roots of France that are being attacked — the “eldest daughter of the Church”, as she was called by Charles VIII. France has had undeniable Christian roots at least since the conversion and baptism of Clovis. France was later consecrated to the Blessed Virgin Mary by Louis XIII; it is the land of many Marian apparitions and, as a consequence, of pilgrimages.

Thus, the main goal of our organization, which has now taken on a national dimension, is to watch over our Catholic heritage. We are doing this through church watches and vigils. Protège ton église is now in operation in several cities: Paris, Dijon, Aix-en-Provence, Fougères, Angers, Nancy, Nantes, Rennes, Toulouse, Versailles, Strasbourg, Reims, Lille, Lyon, and Amiens, with an administrator at the head of each section who is in charge of organizing watches in his city.

The association is mainly organized on Facebook: each section has its own group and then we have a general group page, ‘Protège ton église France’, on which we post [information about] Christianophobic acts (in France), in conjunction with the website l’Observatoire de la Christianophobie, and we publish a photo of each vigil along with a small description.

The point is, first and foremost, to demonstrate that anti-Christian acts do not leave us indifferent and that France is capable of protecting its heritage and its roots. For Catholics, it goes even further, because a church is where the tabernacle is located — that is, the real presence of God who sacrificed Himself for man’s salvation.

Is your action coordinated with the religious, political, and/or police authorities of the cities where you operate? How are your actions received by these authorities? And by the Catholic population?

Our work is still in its infancy: many projects are being developed and we are creating sections one-by-one, thanks to volunteers who want to take responsibility for the watches and vigils for the churches in their city. Groups are beginning to be formed and there is already an idea emerging to call priests to bless the vigils or to be ‘chaplains’. We also have many seminarians among our watchers, and many priests send us messages of support. I was recently told that a priest we don’t even know spoke about us while giving a homily in Marseille!

The movement is gradually becoming known. We have already contacted mayors and members of parliament to inform them about our initiative. That being said, we want the group’s positions to remain politically and ideologically independent because we welcome ‘watchmen’ from all walks of life and we do not want to prevent the arrival of new volunteers because we do not represent their political
opinions. The cause takes precedence over personal opinions. We welcome all those who wish to defend their tangible and intangible heritage, Catholic or not.

As for the police, we have not yet made direct contact with them. For the moment, our watch groups do not exceed 15 people. We ask the watchers to be peaceful, to have their identity papers with them during the watch — as well as the telephone number of the local police station in case of in flagrante delicto. These precautions make it possible to avoid potential incidents and for us to contact the police quickly in the event we catch someone in the act of vandalism.

We have not had any major problems so far. And when I say “major”, I mean serious and concrete repercussions or strong opposition — not the few derogatory messages we may have received on our Facebook page, one of the hazards of social media networks of which we are well aware.

As far as the Catholic population is concerned, they take our actions very seriously: we are seen as “defenders of the Catholic heritage” and some people recognize us from one watch to the other. We communicate, but we also act and that is what is important. Protège ton église is something concrete and active.

Bear in mind that our movement could be described as “young”. The watchers are mostly between 18 and 30, and this promotes a fraternal and very enjoyable atmosphere within the groups. This youthful atmosphere also encourages openness because passers-by are intrigued and ask those standing watch questions during the rounds.

We have both committed students and young working people, married [and] engaged. We insist on the need to have people with balanced, mature, and reasonable lives. The group is mainly made up of Catholics; but there are also people from other backgrounds who are eager to “feel useful,” to defend a just and noble cause.

How can Catholic laity participate and strengthen your actions to protect our churches in France?

Lay people can participate first by following our Facebook group for those who have an account, as well as by ‘liking’ the associated page. Those who are most committed and available can join the section for their city — or even initiate the creation of a section if there is not one near their home and link it to our activities.

We also welcome help with information. As I said earlier, we pass on information about the Christianophobic acts recorded by the l’Observatoire de la Christianophobie, but we also do our own research on the news. But it is very complicated to scan all the information concerning anti-
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Christian acts (in France) and it takes a long time.

It is possible to also help us by sending us articles or links referring to such acts so that we can then post them on our Facebook page. We currently have five people coordinating our activities and digital communications, and we are always overwhelmed!

People also need to talk about Protège ton église, tell others about it, through social media, online networks, etc., so that more and more people will join us — and so that the scope of the movement will increase because there are many churches to watch over.

There is also the possibility of supporting us financially, and this would be a great help to us in light of the different projects that are being developed. These include hosting the website, outreach to homeless people, designing a logo — or even a sweatshirt or polo shirt so that people will recognize us — and purchasing various materials for our communications and other ongoing projects.

Above all, the greatest help we can receive is through prayer. We ask people to pray for us, for our action, for our movement, for all our watchers. But also for all those who are the source of vandalism or desecration because, as Our Lord Jesus Christ said to His Divine Father: “They know not what they do.” We must pray for their souls and their conversion. And we must pray more for France — by asking Saint Louis and Saint Joan of Arc to intercede for it.

Michel Janva writes from Paris. The interview originally appeared in French in Le Salon Beige. It has been translated and appears here by permission.
You could be forgiven for thinking that conservatism today is in a bad way. The lead article in the Economist’s 4 July 2019 edition was titled, “The global crisis in conservatism”. Seeking to disassociate conservatism from the populism of the ‘new right’, that article more or less placed classical liberalism and conservatism in the same basket: “Conservatism tempers liberal zeal; liberals puncture conservative complacency.” Or, to bastardize William F. Buckley Jr.’s famous saying: a conservative stands athwart history yelling “Stop!” whenever the Economist tells him to.

Conservatism does share some things in common with classical liberalism, and it certainly has a role to play in curbing the excesses of progressivism. But its intellectual tradition is far richer than that suggested by the Economist’s selective and over-simplified reading of a strand of British conservatism.

Francesco Giubilei’s latest work, The History of European Conservative Thought, translated from Italian by Rachel Stone, is a recent attempt to explore the diversity of conservative writers and ideas in several European countries since the French Revolution. Giubilei is an up-and-coming author, publisher, and professor in Italy — Forbes has even included him in its list of the 100 most influential people under 30 in Italy. Having made a name for himself with several books dealing predominantly with conservative thought in his home country, The History of European Conservative Thought marks Giubilei’s introduction to an international audience. Its scope is ambitious and its subject timely.

It begins with a survey of how various conservatives have conceptualized their philosophy and how it might be distinguished from related political ideologies such as liberalism and what he calls “reactionism”. To pin down a working definition of the term, Giubilei writes:

“Conservatism was born in response to the French Revolution. It aims to protect the human person and his intermediary groups, groups that might be crushed by powers of centralized governments. Such governments tend to erode and sometimes intentionally attempt to destroy traditional values, as well as the idea of community itself. And they might succeed in doing so, were it not for conservatism and the strength of ‘the increasingly essential values, such as tradition (opposed to progress), prejudice (opposed to reason), authority (opposed to power), freedom (opposed to equality), private property (opposed to statism), religion (as opposed to morality), community (opposed to individual).”

What follows is an array of names and variations of conservative thought that emphasize one or more of those aforementioned values. For instance, liberal conservatives typically join hands with fiscal conservatives in their opposition to state involvement in the economy; but both tend to more progressive positions than social conservatives when it comes to issues of marriage and abortion. Neoconservatives place little emphasis on maintaining traditions, believing instead that it is of greatest importance to protect democracy above all else. In this they stand opposite to the paleoconservatives, who are sceptical of unfettered globalization and advocate social conservatism and isolationism. National conservatism, by contrast, “varies the most from one country to another … because every nation is characterized by different traditions.” Finally, conservatism is distinguished from “reactionism”...
on the one hand, by acknowledging that returning to a bygone age is impossible, and liberalism and libertarianism on the other hand, in emphasizing liberty as one of many values, and not necessarily the most important one.

Giubilei then proceeds to survey the development of conservative thought in separate chapters on Britain, Germany/Austria/Prussia, France, Spain, the United States (curiously understood as Britain’s heir), and Italy. He does so by writing concise sections on some of the most important conservative thinkers in each country since the French Revolution, although he is not particularly concerned with slotting the selected thinkers into the conservative classifications mentioned above. Instead, he prefers to paint a brief biographical portrait of them and their most important works. English-speakers will recognize some of the usual names — such as Edmund Burke, Michael Oakeshott, Roger Scruton, Leo Strauss, Russell Kirk, and William F. Buckley Jr. The book’s strength, however, is in supplementing these writers with other, less familiar names, especially from the Continental European tradition, whose conservatism has been shaped by historical forces not found in the Anglo-American tradition.

Italian conservatism, for example, has had to contend with the “marriage between revolutionary and traditional beliefs … embody[ing] both the Risorgimento mentality and the Fascist mentality.” Unlike the romantic refusal of materialism and rationalism to be found in some conservative writers, such as Samuel Coleridge, “considered by many as the ‘purest’ conservative” or Stefan George, the “spiritual father of the conservative revolution”, Italian conservatism is tinged with a revolutionary streak: “it does not refuse modernity by searching for a return to the past, but rather looks with traditional values toward the future.” Where the French Revolution threw the baby out with the bathwater, the Italian Risorgimento was predicated on “innovation by conserving”.

At times one has the impression that Giubilei surveys European conservatism at breakneck speed precisely because of the ambiguities at the heart of the conservative tradition in his home country. The Italian conservative Leo Longanesi — the subject of one of Giubilei’s earlier books — once lamented: “I am a conservative in a country with nothing to conserve.”

Unlike Britain or France, “Italy is a relatively new nation; its past was made up of many small autonomous states and the two encumbering presences of the church state and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies. Finding a historical reference point for the nation requires a closer look at Ancient Rome rather than the fragmented Italy of the late eighteenth century.”

One might have expected the German conservative tradition to suffer from the same malady, were it not for Bismarck’s assiduous efforts to unify the country in the rigid and militaristic Prussian mold. In this he was aided by the historian Heinrich von Treitschke, whose writings advocated “a nationalist conservatism that distanced itself from Metternich’s traditional conservatism, which Treitschke considered too pacifist, too internationalist, and too tolerant toward Slavs and Jews”.

German and Italian conservatism faced the same problem of newly formed nation-states having to invent a properly national tradition. Hence the attempts of writers such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Count Arthur Gobineau, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain to trace the lineage of 19th century Germans back to the rugged and virtuous Germans of Tacitus’ Germania. Italy saw a similar movement, for example, in the works of Giuseppe Mazzini and the deeds of Premier Francesco Crispi, imbued as they were with a sense of Romanità and the burning desire to build a third Rome.

The increasingly authoritarian nature of these regimes; their bristling at the power and success of the materialist, bourgeois democracies, Britain and France; the need to invent traditions that could encompass the entire nation — all of these factors could make conservatives especially vulnerable to the exasperated ramblings of a Duce or a Führer. While many of them found the resources within their conservatism to resist the fascist pull — be it respect for spiritualism (Stefan George, Thomas Mann), the need for “intermediary bodies and the aggregation of individuals” in society (Arthur Moeller van den Bruck), or simply opposition to scientific racism (Othmar Spann) — others, most famously Carl Schmitt, fell prey to fascism’s allure.

These historical particularities go some way to accounting for the differences between German and Italian conservatism on the one hand, and British conservatism, for instance, on the other. But must conservatism be a defence only of the particular, or can it also defend the universal? By examining the trends in conservative thought since the French Revolution, it is easy to pit the particular, concrete customs and traditions of various European countries against the abstract, universal claims of the Revolution. This is, after all, one of the cornerstones of Edmund Burke’s opposition to the Revolution.

But buried within Giubilei’s study is the acknowledgment that some forms of conservatism could be based on something more fixed and universal than the mutable traditions of any particular country. This is implicit in Giubilei’s inclusion of American conservatism, which, as F. A. Hayek once observed, seeks to preserve ideals commonly understood to be ‘liberal’ in the European sense. However, despite repeatedly referring to the Austrian economist, Giubilei omits any sustained analysis of the “liberal-conservative” Hayek, thus precluding a conservatism whose edifice could encompass the entire nation.
exploring its significance for conservatism, is Catholicism. Many of the conservatives examined in the book are converts to Catholicism. Karl Ludwig von Haller, Joseph von Radowitz, Friedrich von Schlegel, and Karl von Vogelsang were all originally Protestants who became Catholic. Haller considered Catholicism to be “the only religion with an anti-subversive and hierarchical character.”

He was far from the only thinker to find a bulwark of stability in the Catholic Church. A century after Haller, Charles Maurras “considered the church to be the guardian of the nation’s order. His penchant for Catholicism rose from a virulent anti-Protestantism. According to Maurras, the Lutheran Reformation was nothing more than an anticipation of that which was to come during the French Revolution.” For Giubilei, the conservatism of almost every French writer studied in the book is strongly connected to their Catholicism.

One of the reasons why so many conservatives were drawn to Catholicism can perhaps be found in Giubilei’s assessment of Joseph de Maistre: “[Maistre] describes the authority of the church as capable of combining spiritual infallibility and temporal sovereignty. Infallibility and authority are united within the pontiff, who holds an authority similar but superior to temporal sovereignties, thanks to the universal character of the faith. As the church is one and universal, the infallibility principle sits naturally within the Catholic faith. Maistre dreamed of a union of every Christian sovereignty in a universal republic, under the supremacy of a spiritual power in the pontiff: a society of Christian nations, in which earthly solidity is guaranteed by a single, superior, and impartial power.”

Unlike the plurality of Protestant sects and the multitude of nation-states with their different customs and traditions, Catholicism offers unity and universality. Unlike temporal regimes, Catholicism offers the steadfastness of eternity and the divine. And yet, what makes parts of *The History of European Conservative Thought* so elegiac is the realization that so few of even the Italian conservatives, in comparison to their French counterparts, are attached to the universal and fixed creed that was born on their soil. This faith has been challenged by a liberal doctrine that conforms to De Maistre’s conditions: it is equally universal in scope and supremely empowering in locating authority and sovereignty within each individual.

It may be that liberalism, much like Catholicism, has answered a deep need within the human spirit, which has made it all the more difficult for the Church to resist. Marcel de Corte’s concerns about the progressivism of the Church continue to be echoed today by scholars, such as the American political scientist Daniel J. Mahoney in his most recent book, *The Idol of Our Age: How the Religion of Humanity Subverts Christianity*.

The book ends on a note of loss: “[t]he conviction that one is not ‘from this era’; the longing for a world forgotten, a culture forsaken, a history lost; and the call to remind one’s contemporaries of all that has been inherited: these are the spiritual markers of every true conservative.” Conservatives could go the way of Alexis de Tocqueville, resigned to the passing of the old regime. In this case they would serve the purpose accorded to them by the *Economist*: as a brake on progressive excess. They could adopt the position of some American conservatives and defend liberalism, rightly understood. They could dig in their heels and assert the primacy and perfection of the Catholic faith. They could honour the particular prejudices and traditions of their respective countries. All these approaches have been eloquently defended by conservatives of various sorts. Giubilei’s book is a celebration of their work. A true conservative, he is indebted to the greater thinkers of the past.

Scott B. Nelson is a writer and political thinker based in Vienna. He received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Vienna. His dissertation, Tragedy and History: The German Influence on Raymond Aron’s Political Thought, recently published by Peter Lang, was awarded the ‘Raymond Aron Prize’ at a June ceremony in Paris. He is presently working as co-author on a book about Cicero and modern politics. He blogs at *Vienna Symposium*.

On Liturgical Integrity

Joseph Shaw

In 2006 Martin Mosebach sprang to fame, in the English-speaking world, as the author of *The Heresy of Formlessness*. It was a defence of the ancient Latin liturgical tradition of the Catholic Church: the liturgical tradition which had been celebrated by all western Catholic priests until just 40 years earlier, had provided the spiritual roots for the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, had sustained the martyrs of the Nazi and Communist prison camps, and had inspired the Church’s greatest artists, poets, and musicians.

That such a phenomenon as the ancient Roman Rite should find a conservative defender might not seem surprising, but at that time this form of the liturgy had become a kind of forbidden fruit, something which conservatives who wished to be taken seriously as mainstream figures had ritually to disavow. In this context, it was little short of astonishing that Mosebach’s volume of reflections would be published by Ignatius Press, a conservative American Catholic publisher which had made the avoidance of this ‘third-rail’ issue the key to its intellectual respectability.

The founder of Ignatius Press, Fr. Joseph Fessio, felt the need include a “Foreword” by himself explaining that he did not, personally, agree with the contents. Nevertheless, and to Fr. Fessio’s great credit, he realised that Mosebach was initiating a debate which Catholics had to have, and was doing so in a uniquely intriguing, subtle, and potentially fruitful way.

Since then, much has changed. First, in the very next year, Pope Benedict XVI lifted almost all of the legal restrictions on the celebration of the more ancient form of the liturgy. Then, in 2013, Benedict was replaced by Pope Francis. Under the new Pope, we have seen, in subtle and not so subtle ways, an unprecedented attack on those ‘conservative’ institutions of the Church which had positioned themselves so carefully, and yet so precariously, between the official reforms of the 1960s and the Church’s perennial traditions.

Fr. Fessio’s favoured liturgical tertium quid (as he called it in his “Foreword”), known as the ‘reform of the reform’, has been a particular target of Papal scorn. The result has been a polarisation of the debate, between liberals and out-and-out traditionalists. No longer is the traditional liturgy unmentionable; one might almost say that it has become, for conservatives, the only show in town.

As Mosebach’s latest collection of essays demonstrates, it is not only on strictly liturgical issues that Catholics attached to the ancient liturgy have important things to say. Indeed, the attack on that liturgy in the first place was only partly made on liturgical grounds, forcing its defenders to consider questions like aesthetics, the connections between high and low culture, education, communication, tradition and modernity, and the ways in which the spiritual and moral life is fed, informed, and grounded, in shared rituals. It is to themes such as these that Mosebach addresses himself in this collection of short essays, only a few of which I can explore in this review.

One topical issue Mosebach considers is the question of the exclusion of references to God in the constitutional treaty of the European Union. Why does God normally have a place in such documents, including Germany’s Basic Law? He writes: “The
invocation of God in the constitution implies an avowal of the idea that the state cannot create the law, but is rather only called to protect it; indeed, that the state only possesses legitimacy so long as it guards the law that was not created by it.”

Mosebach quotes Dostoyevsky’s famous dictum, “If God does not exist, everything is permitted.” Dostoyevsky’s is not a Catholic thought, and Catholics who lose their faith in God can find it easier than some, from other traditions, to maintain their grip on the force of the moral law, and the value of truth and beauty. This is because for the Catholic tradition these things are established as objective features of the universe by God’s creative will, not imposed arbitrarily on an otherwise meaningless and featureless void by God’s command. The order, normativity, and beauty of the world are certainly congruent with the existence of a personal, creator God; but they can be recognised independently of that reality, as they were by Aristotle.

On the other hand, Dostoyevsky, and Mosebach, certainly have a point. In practice, the disavowal of God is often identified with a disavowal of all that binds us, not only in terms of duty, but even in terms of meaning. Indeed, when God is rejected, it is frequently not only God but all those aspects of classical culture which have become associated with Christianity, whether they be practical forms of life, artistic traditions, or schools of philosophy.

As for the rejection of reference to God in a constitutional document, where he can no more restrict the all-important genital freedom of modernity than the figurehead of a ship can determine its direction, its meaning is clear. It is an assertion that there is no law above the constitution, and the constitution is itself simply a convenient, temporary, negotiated agreement to satisfy as many of the preferences of the signatories as possible.

In two of Mosebach’s most intriguing essays in this volume he addresses the Lourdes Madonna: the mass-produced figurine found in its thousands in Lourdes itself, and instantly recognisable all over the world. It is, as Mosebach says, unquestionably kitsch, a word which expresses the triumph of mass production over the instinctive good taste of the traditional artisan.

This is only one side of the story, however. For it was not mass-production which evicted genuine art from the devotional market-place; on the contrary, it moved into a vacuum created by the emigration of fine art to secular subjects. This itself, Mosebach suggests, was the ultimate consequences of the western Church’s liberation of religious art from the narrow restrictions of form, subject matter, and symbolism we still see in place in the Christian East. This led to the “its surrender to individualism and subjectivism” which has given us the story of Western art, which is ultimately incompatible with a devotional vocation. He notes: “Goethe did not know how right he was when, in his Roman Elegies, he wrote in a spiteful undertone: ‘Miraculous images are usually very poor paintings.’ Idols are not meant to be works of art, and even when they are — like the great icons of Byzantium and Russia — they are only incidentally so.”

Mosebach notes that the mass-produced quality of the Lourdes Madonna, and the namelessness of the artisans who created her, in an odd way lend her the objectivity and anonymity characteristic of traditional devotional art.

Another aspect of the situation is the aesthetic ideal of the modern, anti-traditional Catholic elite, which is as incapable as it is unwilling to serve the devotional and aesthetic needs of the simple faithful, despising their faith even more than their simplicity.

“When our age comes into contact with the faith of more pious, simpler people, there arises a reaction which is comparable to the struggles and resistance with which the body fights blood of the wrong blood group. This reaction is religious kitsch — it characterises the clash of a secularised civilisation with the sense of veneration and faith of those people who, at the same time, originate from within this very civilisation. Thus the kitsch in a place like Lourdes is probably unavoidable. It is the last final memory of a time when the greatest artists vied with one another to unleash a truly intoxicating sense of beauty within churches, before the very eyes of the poor. The sour, self-consciously ‘objective’, puritanical ideal of ‘noble simplicity’, encouraged in official church art, will never be able to silence this memory. Kitsch is inauthentic, certainly, but it stands for something authentic. It is the defiant resistance of the poor in an age which despises their needs.”

Another intriguing discussion in this volume concerns art, blasphemy, and censorship, an issue until recently thought to be closed, but now reopened by the growing and increasingly assertive Muslim minority in Germany and elsewhere. Mosebach is free of the incompatible, yet inseparable, assumptions which make coherent discussion of this topic impossible in liberal circles: first, that censorship of art is inherently intolerable, and second, that causing offence to members of non-Christian cultural groups is never justified.

Mosebach’s discussion starts from the point of view of the artist. He observes that the effect of the lifting of all legal and social restrictions on blaspheming against the Christian religion has been to render blasphemy ubiquitous and banal. Some might have hoped that the failure to give blasphemous artists the satisfaction of the reaction of pious horror might lead them to explore other avenues in search of excitement, but it has not
done so. In the end it is not Christians who are the object of this abuse, but Christ. At least, this would be my own explanation for the phenomenon Mosebach observes: “These bold ‘blasphemers’ are happy to cry ‘Victory!’ as they run through gates that are wide open anyway; they perform in a jaded and blasé milieu, and act as though they had just risked the pyre of the Inquisition.”

Vigorous opposition to blasphemy, of the kind which might cost you your job or even your life, which once played a part in European culture and has reappeared in the context of Islam, gives the artistic religious insult the possibility of having real cultural meaning and significance: “It will do a lot for the social climate if blasphemy once more becomes dangerous.”

That is not to say that the dangerous action is always wrong. For Mosebach, the artist’s vocation implies freedom. But that is not a freedom which should or even could be legally guaranteed. It is freedom which the artist may think must, for artistic reasons, be asserted, in the teeth of legal or social opposition, and it is the riskiness of this assertion which guarantees the seriousness and the authenticity of the artistic statement.

He writes: “The artist who feels called to injure a social convention, or the belief of those for whom God is present, or even a law for the sake of his art, is obliged — and I am convinced of this — to follow that call. He will generously pay the large costs thereby incurred, even if they endanger his existence. The risks which he assumes in his infringement of the law will at the same time, however, protect him from being flippant in practice. In his studio or study he will ask himself: is this blasphemous element really necessary, is it an irreplaceable part of my work — or is it just a flourish, a caprice or piece of insolence? Must I undertake this hazard if I wish to be able to look myself in the mirror?”

Mosebach speaks, of course, as an artist himself. To be an artist, as to be scientist or an academic, is to take seriously the inner logic of one’s discipline and be true to it. One’s conception of that logic will correspond to one’s own artistic or intellectual vision, so the question is also a matter of being true to oneself, oneself as an artist or intellectual. The possibility of artistic martyrdom may be the price of artistic integrity.

Joseph Shaw is a senior research fellow at St. Benet’s Hall, Oxford, and a member of the faculty of philosophy. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and chairman of the Latin Mass Society.
In March, Budapest hosted a ‘Summit on Migration’ with speakers from around the world. Were you surprised by any of the presentations?

The ‘Summit on Migration’ proved perfectly that, just as Chancellor Konrad Adenauer once said, “We all live under the same sky, but we don’t all have the same horizon.” It was wonderful to see all the different perspectives and solutions for tackling the issue of illegal migration across the globe. But the Summit also showed that despite our differences, our core problems and the answers given to these problems, are very similar. Accordingly, I was convinced once again that there are more areas that connect us than divide us.

This was the main point of the conference: to show that despite our differences it is still possible and desirable to build an international conservative network. The Left has already done this, which is why they have a comparative advantage over us. At least since the ’60s, they have built an international network quite successfully — a network which consists of various academics, politicians, and NGOs which disseminate their ideas throughout the globe.

The Budapest Summit has, without any doubt, proved that it is possible, and, in fact, much needed to build a platform for conservatives as well. We seriously hope that Hungary and Budapest can become an intellectual hub in the near future — a kind of a conservative ‘safe space’ for all across the world. The Summit was one of the first steps to achieve this goal.

I’ve always been struck by the fact that conservative groups in Europe don’t know each other and don’t work together. Thankfully, this seems to be changing.

In this regard, the migration crisis was a very important turning point. The threat of mass illegal migration was a ‘wake-up call’ for conservatives because it was a problem to which all of them could relate to. The answers given to this crisis have shown that despite their differences, the core beliefs of conservatives all around the globe are the same. These unfortunate series of events have allowed us to come together and think about conservative answers to all the other global questions and problems which have long been dominated by the Left.

Back in time, as a law student I learned about and was very much impressed by the success of the conservative legal movement in the United States. Just as the Federalist Society regained the right to have a clear voice, I firmly believe that it is also possible for us to build an international conservative network, which can take the exclusive right back from the Left to formulate answers to global questions.

It was certainly a reminder that each country is unique — geographically, historically, culturally — and should not necessarily have the same policies. Each one needs its own solutions. In this regard, what is your outlook for Hungary and Europe in general?

This is one of the main advantages of conservatism. It is not an ideology or a doctrine per se; it sees differences as values and not as something that should be eradicated. It is completely normal that countries with different
geographical situations, history or culture, have different opinions and will accordingly give different answers to problems. This ‘common sense’ attitude makes conservatism so successful.

And this ‘common sense’ attitude was also what made the European Union successful back in the 20th century in the first place. If we look at the ‘Founding Fathers’ of the European Union, we can see that some of them were almost extremely pro-European federalist; but others were staunch believers of the importance of nation states. Still, all of them understood that to ensure the success of the cooperation they all had to compromise. It was common sense to think it impossible to make decisions without the consent of the people and to unilaterally decide which direction the European Union — European Communities at that time — should take.

But this ‘ancient knowledge’ has since disappeared. Most of the elites in Brussels today — guided by a doctrine called ‘progressive ideology’ — believe that the only legitimate answer to our current problems is ‘more Europe’. They are no longer interested in what the people think or in the idea of compromise. This is what lies behind the constant attacks against Hungary. The success of Hungary especially in tackling illegal migration clearly show that there are more legitimate answers to the problems of our times — just not the ones Brussels puts on its flag.

So, for the European Union to be successful again it has to return to the principle of common sense and compromise making. By the way, this attitude is backed also by the Christian intellectual heritage of Europe — just think about the principle of subsidiarity. We have to understand that to be successful we do not need a European superstate — which, as history has shown, is only achievable by force. We instead need strong nation-states, which voluntarily cooperate closely together. We simply have to find those areas where we can cooperate together as equal nations and we have to forget those other areas where our interests are too divided.

The media and the international Left continue to claim that nationalism is necessarily a ‘precursor’ to fascism. How do you respond to such criticisms?

The current concept of liberal democracy seems to dismiss the idea of the nation state without properly assessing the consequences of this suppression. But as Yoram Hazony argues also quite clearly in his very timely book *The Virtue of Nationalism*, only the nation-state is able to provide the necessary framework for the people to rule themselves. So, without nation-states we can’t have democracy either.

It is especially important to understand this in the context of European integration. The famous German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, once said, that he “has always found the word ‘Europe’ on the lips of those who wanted something from others which they dared not demand in their own names!” Those who speak about an ‘even stronger union’ or a ‘United States of Europe’ want to tear down the sovereignty of nation-states and impose an imperial administration upon them.

Unfortunately, there is nothing new under the sun. European history is a tale of constant battles between imperialism and localism-nationalism. Even the tools are similar: Napoleon built his empire by forcing the ‘Code Napoléon’ on the conquered territories, while today the force of the EU bureaucracy also grows through the harmonisation of EU law.
The ‘imperialism’ we see today is really the imperialism of the multilateral structures and international bureaucracies. They act like imperialists: imposing their will and taking away our freedom.

After the horrors of the Second World War, it was quite understandable that a lot of people developed an aversion towards politics. There was a general, popular idea that politics is ‘bad’, so we need instead some kind of ‘deep state’. This idea, however, led to technocratic governments and to an EU which instead of politics is driven by an undemocratic bureaucracy — a kind of ‘deep state’ or, perhaps more correctly, an ‘administrative state’.

These bureaucracies use institutions and international law to smother all dissent. They frown at democracy and politics. But in the long run, they will also have to face the will of the electorate. This hostile attitude from the elites towards politics and democracy has led to the success of today’s left- and right-wing populist movements.

Instead of technocratic answers and the administrative state, we need politics and democracy. We need to listen to the will of the people.

How do we win those arguments? What are the tools in our arsenal? What would you advise conservatives to do?

We have a great advantage over the ‘deep state’ — namely, that we possess democratic legitimacy that they do not. Here in Hungary, conservatives are in an especially good position, as the majority of the electorate shares our political values and views. This firm support is fundamental to achieve our goals.

Of course, it can often be heard from liberal and left-wing politicians, that conservative policies are ‘undemocratic’. With these accusations they attempt to present their own concept of democracy — the so-called ‘liberal democracy’ — as the sole, ‘true’ form of government — even if it is against the will of the people. This is a paradoxical situation as they try to defend democracy from democracy in the name of democracy. The truth, however, is that the policies carried out by the Hungarian government are deeply rooted in the Hungarian constitutional tradition.

But this kind of reinterpretation and appropriation will not be successful in Hungary. Let me give just one example. Recently, I was at an international conference in Hungary and I was listening to a very famous international lawyer arguing why the only approach to democracy is liberal democracy. During the lecture, an elderly professor sitting next to me, pointed out very aptly, that the word ‘liberal democracy’ rings familiar to Hungarian
The average working person, whether in Europe or in the Americas, seems to have conservative instincts. Are they not the very people who support conservative or ‘right-wing’ parties?

This phenomenon is perhaps even more true in East-Central Europe. The Soviet occupation and the communist regimes oppressed conservative views for decades. Oddly enough, this also helped to conserve the basic principles of right-wing politics. The meaning of 1968, for example, is completely different in our region than it is in Western Europe. For us, it means the struggle for the freedom of our nations and not the absolutism of personal freedom.

This explains why our societies tend to be more resilient against liberal ideas, the power of the ‘deep state’, or any kind of imperial endeavour. Our people only want to live their lives as they want to. They want to preserve their beliefs and the community they grew up in. It is by no means accidental that we Hungarian conservatives like to use the slogan, “God, Nation, Family” to describe our belief system.

In defending “God, Nation, Family”, hasn’t Hungary become an enemy to groups on the left?

Hungary’s position is very clear about these values. These values are our guiding principle and we are determined to preserve them at all costs. On the other hand, however, this struggle of Hungary is almost against all odds. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said at the Budapest Summit, that we are aware of our own European ‘weight’. Hungary is not a large country with a big economy or a large military budget. Our role in the European institutions is also quite limited due to the relatively small proportion of the Hungarian population in Europe. These are the circumstances we must face.

But these unfavourable odds are by no means unique in Hungarian history. Our ancestors, for example, fought a 300-year-long war with the more capable Ottoman Empire. We didn’t once give up, even when the Empire captured the half of our country. Our great-grandfathers and grandfathers also grasped their guns and fought against the terror of the Soviet tanks during the 1956 anti-Soviet revolution. We might have lost in the short term, but in the long run we regained our freedom, and the Soviet Union is fortunately now only a very bad memory.

Furthermore, our odds seem to be much better now than in the past. Day by day, more and more Europeans start to realize that they don’t need and a don’t want a European Empire. They don’t want the liberal elites to change their way of life and reshape the face of the continent. Also, conferences such as the Budapest Summit convince us all that we have allies, conservative allies in Europe and in the entire world. Without them, our odds would be far worse.

What is your understanding of ‘conservatism’?

It may surprise you, but the word ‘conservative’ in Hungary is not so well known and not used frequently. This is mainly because Hungarian people have a special distaste for ‘-isms’. Still, according to my own experiences, and also according to different opinion polls, the people of Hungary are indeed very much conservative.

One of the most influential Hungarian poets of the 20th century, Babits Mihály, wrote that the Hungarian people have two main characteristics. The first is a belief in the importance of independence and personal freedom. There is a famous English proverb which is very popular in Hungary that says: “my house is my castle.” This means that no one should be able to tell me how to run my own private life. I think this attitude is the one of the most important cornerstones of Hungarian conservatism.

The second trait that Babits highlighted — which is another cornerstone of Hungarian conservatism — is the need for law and order. This need is based on a recognition that personal freedom cannot be guaranteed without a solid legal framework based on common sense, which is the only thing that can provide freedom to every single person.

This seemingly paradoxical longing for both personal liberty and law and order means that Hungarians most importantly would like to have a strong, sovereign government which both maintains security and also preserves liberty. According to the historical experiences of the Hungarian people, these two pillars only can be preserved when the Hungarian state manages to keep its sovereignty.

Every time a foreign power took control in Hungary, neither personal freedom nor law and order could continue to flourish. In this sense, the claim for sovereignty is a third pillar of the Hungarian conservative tradition.

I think this is the best way I can describe what conservatism means for us Hungarians. In a sense, it is very similar to what Russell Kirk wrote in *The Politics of Prudence*: “The conservative thinks of political policies as intended to preserve order, justice, and freedom.”

*A. M. Fantini is the editor-in-chief of The European Conservative.*
CONSERVATIVE AND TRADITIONALIST BOOKS
SÃO LUÍS - BRAZIL

IBSHER NORONHA
RICARDO DIP
ARISTÓTELES DRUMMOND
JUAN DONOSO CORTÉS

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MIGUEL AYUSO
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ARLINDO VEIGA DOS SANTOS
IVES GANDRA DA SILVA MARTINS

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As Russell Kirk famously wrote, John Stuart Mill referred to conservatives as “the stupid party”. According to another famous saying, conservatives don’t do anything other than sit back and think (or they merely sit without doing anything). A similarly dismissive attitude can be found among the academic left, which has always assumed that conservatives are nothing but ignorant, superstitious people — and that truly serious scholars cannot be conservative.

To be sure, academics with a “conservative mind” remain a small minority in the fields that make up the humanities in the West. One need only recall the findings of Robert Maranto, Frederick Hess, and Richard E. Redding in *The Politically Correct University: Problems, Scope, and Reforms* (2009). In fact, radical leftist, Marxist, and postmodernist nonsense is the dominant approach in academia today, as Heather Mac Donald has documented in *The Diversity Delusion: How Race and Gender Pandering Corrupt the University and Undermine Our Culture* (2018).

In such times, it is important to demonstrate that the conservative disposition, broadly understood, is a sophisticated, philosophically reflective, and scientifically defensible approach to the world. It is also high time to renew our political vocabulary, as the doyen of contemporary conservatism, Sir Roger Scruton, has often said, recalling how Marxist language invaded the academic world decades ago.

Inspired in part by Scruton’s understanding of the important nexus between language, culture, and politics, a few years ago, Hungarian editor, writer, and professional translator Péter Pásztor — who has rendered in Magyar the works of many important thinkers — proposed to translate Scruton’s well-known *Dictionary of Political Thought* (1982; 3rd ed., 2007). But it quickly became obvious that Scruton’s approach was distinctly different from the Hungarian mode of thinking. His insights, though universal, sometimes seemed inadequate in the context of the history and experiences of Hungary and, more generally, Central European.

Hungarian conservatism has arisen in an entirely different context from Anglo-Saxon conservatism. It cannot, therefore, only appeal to the preservation of tradition, habits, and long-standing customs. Hungarian conservatism is not a status quo conservatism. It is a value-oriented conservatism, which is a consequence of the particularities of Hungarian history — and an outcome of the last real working ‘political order’ in Hungary: the dualist times in the decades before the First World War, stemming from the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise.

This situation has been called a “conservative paradox” by András Lánzci, a well-known political thinker and author of *Political Realism and Wisdom* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Currently rector of Corvinus University at Budapest (formerly known as ‘Karl Marx University of Economics’), Lánzci has argued that Hungarian conservatism has to be open other conservative schools, going beyond merely ‘liberal conservatism’ to include ‘conservative revolution’.

So Pásztor ended up leading a group of Hungarian scholars to start a project to prepare a new political encyclopedia — published this year as the *Magyar Politikai Enciklopédia*.
Enciklopédia (Hungarian Political Encyclopedia) — that would more adequately reflect Hungary’s circumstances and unique historical trajectory.

The project proceeded with the collaboration of several leading Hungarian editors and intellectuals. These included Balázs Mezei, a political philosopher, professor at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, and a doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; Gergely Egedy, also a doctor of the Academy, who focused on the Anglo-Saxon world and on the history of conservatism in general; Tamás Gusztáv Filep, a researcher at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, who specializes on Hungarian minorities abroad; András Karácsony, a legal philosopher; Miklós Király, a lawyer and professor; and Sándor Pesti, a political scientist.

They, in turn, worked with a team of 80 other established and emerging scholars from across different disciplines. The result of their efforts was a total of 670 entries over 650 pages that address different aspects of Hungarian politics — from a conservative perspective.

So, in addition its conservatism, what else is unique about this particular political encyclopedia?

First, in addition to extensive explanations of terms, phrases, and concepts that are common currency for conservative thinkers, the Encyclopedia adopts an overall view and attitude that is broad, diverse, and rather understanding of many social and political phenomena too often dismissed by the left. For example, in a left-liberal political encyclopedia, you typically might not find an entry defining ‘hierarchy’ as something that inevitably arises in any natural, free society (but rather simply as something to be destroyed).

Second, the range of themes included is rich and topical, and encompasses different cultural and religious traditions. You would not find, for example, in a left-liberal encyclopedia so many entries about Christian conservative or political thinkers and Christian politicians. You also probably would not find such a strong emphasis on the history of ideas, or about pre-modern political thought (whether Ancient or Christian), or about Medieval or even Renaissance-era thought.

With assistance from the Foundation for a Civic Hungary (Polgári Magyarországért Alapítvány) and the Barankovics Foundation, the Encyclopedia was published by Mathias Corvinus Collegium, a private college on top of Buda Hill in Budapest. Much of the Encyclopedia will soon be available from the publisher in English.

One of the recurring messages of the Encyclopedia is the importance of having more clarity in today’s political rhetoric. In fact, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who provides an apt dedication in the opening pages, says there is a battle over political language taking place. And he urges conservatives to take a stand in support of a renewed understanding of politics — and against the language of ‘political correctness’ and Orwellian ‘newspeak’.

This is a message well worth repeating. One of the main problems that contemporary conservatives have today is a tendency to unconsciously accept the dominant political rhetoric and the language of left-liberal thought, all of which is based on a revolutionary — and constantly expanding — understanding of equality, emancipation, and human rights. But the time has come to fight against this tendency and resist. This Encyclopedia is an important contribution to this struggle.

Gergely Szilvay is a senior fellow at Mandiner in Budapest and a doctoral student at Pázmány Péter Catholic University. He is also a contributor to the Hungarian Political Encyclopedia. [Editor’s note: An interview with Péter Pásztor, editor of the Encyclopedia, shall appear in our next edition.]
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Deep Europe, Real Europe

Charles A. Coulombe

The American who spends any amount of time in Europe and is enchanted rather than horrified (small refrigerators, lack of multiple food brands, odd plumbing fixtures, and the like) will soon become aware that in each country of Europe — from Ireland and Iceland to Russia — there is a social divide. This divide has nothing to do with income or social class, and everything to do with centre of interest.

Two continents?

On one side of this divide are people who (were it not for the odd language they speak) might very well be like most Americans. Their lives are circumscribed by work and commuting; their leisure activities — depending on age — might well be computer, clubbing, sports, etc. They have little time for or interest in their immediate neighbourhoods, and they dream of vacations in faraway resorts (preferably on the Mediterranean).

Although far from a majority among them, it is from their ranks that a great many of those who pursue American fads — from dietary restrictions to wonder drugs to strange alternative religions — are recruited. Usually whatever they eat is as much like its American original as it can be (though often those who are the most ‘American’ in lifestyle are the most condemnatory of the country that they appear eager to ape).

It is also the Europe of the marginalised immigrant from non-Christian lands — used as bargaining chips by their own leaders and Europe’s worst politicians to forward various agendas. Most of these simply want to make a living in lands incomparably wealthier than their own; some seek criminal activities; a few wish to transform their host country into a copy of the failed states whence they have come.

In very sharp contrast, over on the other side is a different world. It is the Europe of those who farm and hunt and fish — of folk customs and dances, festivals and song. Here the various feasts of the Church determine the customs of the year, and traditional associations of innumerable kinds — religious, cultural, military, shooting, and on and on — carry on age-old or restored practises. Nor is this Europe solely rural. Many of the Europeans cities retain various traditions, from London’s pearly kings and queens to the trumpeter of Krakow. The revived pilgrimage routes stretching across the continent to various Christian shrines are part of this Europe, as are the maintainers of historic houses and the governments of walled towns. So too the guardians of historic churches and the proprietors of funfairs and practitioners of traditional crafts, the members of literary and historical societies, and much else besides.

How are we to describe these two continents that inhabit the same geographical space? What are we to call them? Well, as I am writing (and you are reading) in English, let’s take a look at England — and here I am being quite specific: I mean neither Scotland nor Wales, wonderful as those lands are. They have their own versions of the dichotomy we are attending to; but England alone shall help us to understand the phenomenon.

Deep England and la France profonde

There is a phrase used by those who write in the pages of such journals as the Guardian to describe the second sort of people and places we have been looking at. They call it “Deep England”, and claim that it is at once a myth, a non-existent Neverland, and a convenient guise for racism, sexism, and classism. Apart from the fact that the incomes of Guardian writers keep them out of the financial settings of, say, rural gamekeepers and the urban poor alike, their sense of outrage is a bit disingenuous. Whilst fulminating against the undoubted racism of anyone who yearns for “Olde England”, they have no issue with one of Her Majesty’s judges ordering the infanticide of a half Nigerian girl’s unborn baby — or the judicial murders of Charlie Gard and Alfie Evans, for that matter. Nevertheless, I resolved to take a closer look at what so roused the Chardonnay-swallwers ire.

If one takes “Deep England” before the altar of Wikipedia, source of all truth, he shall be directed to an article on “Merry England”. The first paragraph informs us: “‘Merry England’, or in more jocular, archaic spelling ‘Merrie Olde England’, refers to an English autostereotype, a utopian conception of English society and culture based on an idyllic pastoral way of life that was allegedly prevalent in Early Modern Britain at some time between the Middle Ages and the onset of the Industrial Revolution. More broadly, it connotes a putative essential Englishness with nostalgic overtones, incorporating such cultural symbols as the thatched cottage, the country inn and the Sunday roast.”

It goes on at great length in a fairly supercilious tone (reminiscent of our Guardian friends) to dismiss it all — though it includes a great deal of useful information. At last, one arrives at the paragraph entitled “Deep England”: “‘Deep England’ refers to an idealised view of a rural,
Southern England. The term is neutral, though it reflects what English cultural conservatives would wish to conserve. The term, which alludes to la France profonde, has been attributed to both Patrick Wright and Angus Calder. The concept of Deep England may imply an explicit opposition to modernism and industrialisation; and may be connected to a ruralist viewpoint typified by the writer H. J. Massingham. Major artists whose work is associated with Deep England include: the writer Thomas Hardy, the painter John Constable, the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, and the poets Rupert Brooke and Sir John Betjeman. Examples of this conservative or village green viewpoint include the editorial line sometimes adopted by the British Daily Mail newspaper, and the ideological outlook of magazines such as This England. Wartime propaganda is sometimes taken to reflect a generalised view of a rural Deep England, but this is perhaps to ignore both the competing views of ruralism, and the mix of rural and non-rural actually offered for a post-war vision of a better Britain.

Setting aside the preciousness of the writer’s tone, I could see the truth and the falsehood wherewith he wrote. My next thought was to enquire after “la France profonde”. I clicked to the article and what should I find?

“La France profonde (‘Deep France’) is a phrase that denotes the existence of ‘deep’ and profoundly ‘French’ aspects of the culture of French provincial towns, of French village life and rural agricultural culture, which escape the ‘dominant ideologies’ (Michel Dion’s expression) and the hegemony of Paris. It was made familiar to English readers in Michel Dion’s radical critique, La France profonde, predicting a union of de-Communised socialism with a reformed Catholic Church. France profonde was popularised in Celia Brayfield’s Deep France: A writer’s year in la France profonde (2004) retitled in paperback Deep France: A writer’s year in the Béarn. ‘Deep France’ is seen to be profoundly localist in outlook and to be receding in the face of international mass culture.”

Inspired by this, I soon found that every country in
Europe (and their daughter countries in the Americas, Australasia, and elsewhere) have similar phenomena. Although the wise men of Wikipedia and the Guardian (and numerous other such centres of intellectual depth across the globe) might see it as a term of opprobrium, it seemed to me to be a good turn to describe that second set of Europeans I described. So, let us dub it all — from Scottish Deans of Guild to Morris Dancers to Corpus Christi processions to Krampus to uniformed Polish miners to forest owners — “Deep Europe”.

Deep vs. Light Europe

Now, despite the best attempts of the people who have written about it to paint Deep Europe as ‘right-wing’, the truth is, it is more a-political. Indeed, in some places it nearly cracks under the strain of trying to be inclusive. If one wanted to describe its politics, it would have to be “conservative” — with a decidedly small “c”. So, far from it being utopian or otherworldly, as its critics suggest, Deep Europe is rooted in the realities of earth, body, and soul — literally too deep for those blinded by their own brilliance to discover.

But what of the first Europe we described, the one whose intellectual leadership the critics of Deep Europe aspire to be? Various of the “Deep” thinkers on the national level have coined a phrase to describe their opposite numbers: Light France, Light Spain, etc. “Light Europe” seems perfect.

Alien to the land whose larger urban centres it tends to occupy (though those are often shot through even still with bits of Deep Europe), Light Europe consists of a small elite and a large labouring class. The latter, however, is often less out of touch with reality than its masters in various respects. Sometimes this embarrasses those masters mightily, as when believers in traditional Christianity outrage the tenets of feminist decency. Nevertheless, where Deep Europe — concerned only with being and remaining itself — can verge on being a-political, the leadership of Light Europe must politicise everything they can.

Real vs. Legal Europe

There is, however, another European division which is in fact inherently political and co-exists with the first one. As we went to England to get a grasp of the first, so now we must move to France. Charles Maurras, the founder and truly the animator of l’Action Française, made the declaration in the 19th century that since 1789 France had been divided into two nations in the same nation. These were the pays réel, the “Real Country”, which was Catholic and Royal, and the pays légal, the “Legal Country”, which was anti-clerical and republican.

All true, to be sure; but it was a split that appeared in Spain with the First Carlist War, then in Portugal in the Miguelist War — and, indeed, in every Catholic country in Europe — sooner or later, up to and including 1918. The same fissure hit Orthodox countries with the Russian Revolution and the Iron Curtain. In Protestant countries, for a long time (except in Northern Germany, into which World War I introduced the split) the Real Country was the Legal Country. This cozy consensus, however, broke apart in the 1960s. The same split occurred — not only in Protestant Europe, but in the British Dominions beyond the Seas (well, Anglo-Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, anyway) and in the United States as well.

Georges Bernanos described the inhabitants of the “Real France” (ironically, in a book critical of Maurras) as Nous autres Françaises. This came to mind in 1994, when Philippe de Villiers ran successfully on a self-cobbled together ticket called Majorité pour l’autre Europe — “Majority for the Other Europe”. Regardless of what one thinks of the Viscount Le Jolis de Villiers de Saintignon’s past or present policies (such is his actual title), the ‘Other Europeans’ moniker cannot help but bring to mind Bernanos, and the idea that there is indeed a Legal Europe and a Real Europe. What are they?

The Legal Europe is the Europe of Brussels, the Europe of Guy Verhofstadt and Jean-Claude Juncker: of overregulation and bullying, of secularisation and open borders, of judicially imposed infanticide and same-sex marriage, of legally protected immorality and crime. It is the Europe that Britain is trying to escape, and that nationalist and populists make hay denouncing — and often enough for good reason. It is the Europe of State Socialism and surveillance, of Brutalist architecture and de-humanising education.

The Real Europe is the Europe of Constantine and Charlemagne, of Justinian and Charles V. It is the repository of a civilisation built upon Christianity, classical culture, and the energy and drive of Latins, Celts, Germans, Slavs, and Magyars. It is the Abendland, l’Occident, Christendom: where every land was formed by cooperation of Altar, Throne, and Cottage or Hearth; where the whole is made up of a totality of its countries, provinces, and towns — each with their own identity contributing to the whole; where local liberties — what we call today subsidiarity — exist under a regal authority sufficiently strong to defend and maintain order, and sufficiently light to permit all the mediating institutions in a healthy society to develop freely.

Many who oppose the Legal Europe most fiercely unconsciously belong to the Real Europe. Certainly, the monarchists — and the European equivalent of what Americans call paleocons — do. The Paneuropa folk do. But Neo-Nazis do not: their hatred of Christianity and embrace of determinism, their view of the nature of man, all put them firmly in the ranks of the Legal Europe — again, unconsciously.
So, are we able to equate the two divisions we have made? Does Legal Europe equal Light and Deep equal Real? Yes and no. Certainly the leadership of the Legal Europe and its constituent nations is roughly congruent to that of Light Europe in many ways. That leadership shares aspirations, values, and a goodly number of personnel. But the vast majority of ‘proles’ sentenced to live in Light Europe have little connection to the leadership of the Legal Europe in its continental and national incarnations, save as numbers to be used as leverage. The same vaguely lockstep ideology hovers over all.

There is somewhat less of a connection between Deep and Real Europe, save in vague attitudes toward life. Moreover, the leadership of Real Europe is so diverse and fragmented as to be almost invisible to itself. But there is certainly — especially on very local levels — some overlap. But they are far from the same: for one thing, the Deep Europe is far larger than the Real Europe, and far less conscious of itself. The distinction is perhaps the strongest in Catholic countries, where the crack between Legal and Real occurred longest ago.

Being of more recent vintage in the Protestant realms, the Deep countries are seen as more of a threat by the Light countries — hence, the rather nasty — not to say vicious — tone of the various comments we have seen. There are two deep-set psychological fears such folk have: one is that there indeed would be a confluence of the Real and Deep Countries, and a consequent awakening of the latter by the former; and the second is that their own essentially artificial and superfluous nature would be revealed, causing them (or at least their works and pomp) to be sloughed off.

**Preserving traditions**

Of course, the most obvious thing to do is to do one’s best to make those fears come true. When the nobility very publicly participate in local events, or members of deposed Sovereign Houses appear at such things or patronise various organisations — in other words, when they do in a social sense what they would do if reigning — it is a very good thing in itself (and raises consciousness, as we say in California). And at similar functions or any official ceremony in countries that have retained the Monarchy, reference to the Sovereign should always be made.

So, for example, a friend of mine who was an electoral officer in Toronto, when he would open a poll, would always read aloud the writ of election (nominally required but rarely done) in stentorian tones. Its rolling phrases never ceased to impress listeners: “Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom, Canada and Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith” declares (for example) that: “Whereas, by the advice of Our Executive Council of Ontario, We have thought fit to call a new Legislative Assembly for the province of Ontario, We Command You that, notice of the time and place of election being duly given in the said Electoral District, after the receipt of this Our Writ, YOU DO CAUSE election to be made according to law, of a member to represent the said Electoral District in the Legislative Assembly for the Province of Ontario,” (and so on).

That having been ordered, the Queen’s missive closed: “IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, We have caused these Our Letters to be made Patent, and the Great Seal of Ontario to be hereunto affixed. Witness, at Our City of Toronto, in Our Said Province on (blank), in the (blank) year of Our Reign.” In other words, under whatever regime one may live, reminding the neighbours of the Old Order is a very useful thing.

I shall never forget, a couple of months ago, going to the annual re-enactment of the arrival of Emperor Karl and Empress Zita by train at Brandýs in Czechia. A mob of Austrians, Czechs, and Hungarians waved double eagle flags and cheered as the train pulled in. It was Real Europe; it was Deep Europe; and it could not have happened 20 years ago.

There are many alienated young people on the other side (both Left and ‘Right’), among whom some (perhaps many) are looking for something to fill the emptiness given them by the Light Europe. Much of this is cultural. Ondřej Havelka, famed impresario of the ‘Melody Makers’, a Czech band that specialises in playing authentic music of the interwar era, explained his motivation in founding the band:

“I am one of those who are still waiting for something or somebody to appear, an artistic personality or artistic or thought direction, and offer us a way out of today’s cultural need, bring faith and hope, build and not break. In the hope that something like that will come. But how long will it take? And so that we do not go crazy during that long wait, we return to works of art or genres that were created in times when clear aesthetic norms existed and were even respected in popular art.”

Now, this is far from a political statement — and I have no idea of Havelka’s politics. But it is precisely to fill that void that denizens of Light Europe are drawn to Deep Europe.

That having been said, even if the Left’s worst fears were realised, and the Real Europe became fully conscious and ended its many internal divisions, and even if the whole of the Deep Europe were motivated behind it, would that be sufficient to halt the downward rush of the Mother Continent? No. There is an element we have not really discussed but which undergirds both Deep and Real Europe, and has been forcibly rejected by Light and Legal: the Church.
The role of Christianity

I have spoken of Christianity as an essential part of both Deep and Real Europe. But in our time, the leadership of the Catholic Church has become very connected to the leadership of Legal Europe — in many cases even aping their personal morals. The Orthodox Churches are split between Constantinople and Moscow, while the hierarchies of the northern European Protestant state churches have completely surrendered themselves to the embrace of the Light and Legal Europe.

Moreover, there can be no real change in Europe’s moral decline (and weakness toward Islam) until she regains the Faith that made her. This, however, cannot be a sort of surface conversion for cultural reasons — akin to Maurras’ veneration of the Church for her role in creating France, whence (so he believed until his conversion) came her importance.

In reality, it is the reverse which is true: the importance of France — and Europe — comes from the degree to which either country or continent incarnate the Faith. Thus, anyone who works for the Catholic Church to regain her traditional strength in dogma, liturgy, and devotions is also working for the Real Europe, as are all who strive to end the rupture between the Two Patriarchates — and who would restore the Union between East and West of the First Millennium. So, too, with those who struggle to rescue what may be saved of the northern European state churches — the Anglican Ordinariates come to mind.

With the Church once more on track of the salvation of souls and giving authority to the Real Europe — and life to so many of the practises of the Deep Europe — it may well be that the continent shall finally see a real renascence of Faith, culture, and life. We may not live to see it; but we can surely work for it.

Charles A. Coulombe is a columnist for the Catholic Herald. His most recent book is A Catholic Quest for the Holy Grail (St. Benedict Press, 2017). He is currently working on a biography of Blessed Karl of Austria.
Judging by the recent European Parliament elections and other examples, the Holy Father seems clearly unwilling to engage with the “sovereignist movement.” What, according to you, has been his approach exactly?

This has been going on for a while. To analyse it correctly I think you’ve got to bifurcate the Pope as the vicar of Christ on Earth, and the theological and dogma of the Church, versus the administrative side.

The Pope has been blatant since the very beginning. He made a distinct effort to sway the 2016 presidential election when he went to Mexico and celebrated Mass at the border. And what he said on the flight back was just incredible [the Pope said “a person who only thinks about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian”]. He’s never been really called out for that. I think by not having people stand up and say: “You crossed a boundary there,” it has just led to this continuation.

I think what’s most disturbing is that you have had these horrific, biblical, tragic situations in sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, the Middle East, and Central America, where people are being forced north because of economic conditions, but the burden of that is falling upon, or has fallen upon, working-class people in southern Europe, whether that is Greece, or in Italy, or in Hungary. And in the United States, around Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. It’s crushed the social safety net, and it’s crushed the working-class people there.

Who is mostly responsible for this?

It’s really the global elite. And what’s most disturbing is that the Pope is continually using the same language, and the same coded references, as the “party of Davos”. He’s essentially siding with the global elites here, not the poor, because he’s not talking about a solution. He continues to talk about open migration. He continues to talk about open borders. He’s essentially driving what would be a situation of anarchy.

Do you think he has become more strident in this regard in recent years?

From the 2016 presidential election to the 2019 European Parliamentary election, what’s most disturbing is that the Pope has thrown in hard with the globalists, the global elite, and the party of Davos. He now is in a situation where [he says] all the ailments of the world are because of the populist nationalist sovereignty movement and that is driving all the problems of the world. That is just categorically not true. It’s just categorically not true, and I think that he’s playing a very dangerous game here.

What crisis is the Church now facing, in your view?

The Church has an existential crisis, right now, of trust. Within this crisis, he has abjectly failed to deal with the administrative and financial problems of the Church. To be brutally direct, his current inaccurate statements on the McCarrick situation, his inaccurate statements about Chile, call into question his veracity. I don’t think he has the bandwidth right now to go and try to essentially confront

He is lying about his actions in dealing with the most existential crisis I think the Church has ever been in. This is going to rapidly lead, and I have said this consistently now for a year, towards an even bigger crisis. That crisis is now inextricably linked with this Pope. I have been his biggest supporter as far as the direct succession and not resigning when [Archbishop Carlo Maria] Vigano came out with the memo [his August 2018 testimony calling on Francis to resign for rehabilitating McCarrick]. I was the first conservative to say, when there was this braying for his resignation, “No.” I said: “He is the successor to Christ. He’s the vicar of Christ. There’s been a logical succession. You can’t do that. We can’t have guys resigning. We can’t have popes resigning.”

But the situation now is going to pick up momentum and is going to get worse, and he is fixated on issues like climate change and other issues. And concerning this issue of sovereignty, on which he continues to hammer the people, the little guys in the aisle — he is avoiding it, and/or misrepresenting what this is. The [Vatican abuse of minors] summit [of bishops in February] was a failure. The summit was a failure because he failed to say “zero tolerance”. He failed to say there was a failure of transparency. He failed to say total accountability, and he failed at getting civil authority to, basically, rectify this and rectify the legal situation. Listen, I think this is a huge problem and it’s metastasizing.

**How so?**

I think there’s a crisis of government. Listen, people have to understand we’re living in historical times in the Church. We had the dubia presented a few years ago by some of the most accomplished theologians and experts in Church canon law, and he’s failed to respond to them. I believe it’s the first time a dubia has not been addressed, number one. That’s out there. That’s a marker. The dubia has not been addressed. He’s blown it off.

We had 19 [now over 80] of the most impressive theologians accuse him of the crime of heresy, and headed by [Dominican] Father Aidan Nichols, a man of global prominence. The letter listed not simply the crime of heresy. It listed, I think, associates that he had to stop associating with that were also a problem. He laughed that off. In fact, I think he said it amused him.

In the history of the Church, you have to go back. When has any of this happened before? At the same time, he’s now wandering into a crisis in the Church on paedophilia. To wit, in Dallas the other day, they’re serving warrants. They’re raiding Church properties. You hear that there’s a wave of grand juries that potentially are going to be publishing reports. This is sweeping through the United States 25 or 30 years after this crisis first took place, with no resolution. Let’s be brutally frank. You were there at the summit. It was a disaster.

I want to add one more thing: The world is looking at us and at the same time, we are cutting a secret deal with the Chinese Communist Party, the most virulently totalitarian surveillance state in the history of mankind. To wit, we just had an exhibit in Beijing of Vatican art, and we’ve had the [Vatican] Secretary of State saying he’s going to continue to work with them, and we’ve had [criticism from] Cardinal Zen. This is a crisis, and it’s brewing, and he refuses to back off [criticizing] the sovereignty movement.

_How do you think the faithful should respond to this crisis?_  

I think people ought to understand that it is incumbent upon lay people in the Church to get engaged with this now or we’re going to lose the Church that’s been bequeathed to us for 2,000 years. When you look at everything that’s going on, if you go back 20 years, from John Paul II to where we are today, theologians are issuing letters accusing a pontiff of heresy, canonical lawyers, the former head of the Church’s Supreme Court, is issuing a dubia that essentially calls him a heretic, there’s the crisis of the paedophilia situation and the lack of response to it, you see civil authorities in the United States, you see other issues now in Latin America, like Chile and other places. There’s a firestorm brewing in Latin America.

_There’s widespread concern among Italians that the Vatican is becoming like a political party._

There’s absolutely no doubt. Listen, in the European Parliamentary elections, your readers, and particularly readers in the United States, should know he threw his hat in. He became politically active, and he is part of the global establishment, climate change, he’s a Green. He’s not even a center-leftist. It’s a political party that’s on the far left. It’s a political party that supports the Greens, which to me, is essentially a theological movement. It’s obvious. It’s pantheism, and the Church has thrown its lot in with it. All of his language absolutely is the Greens.

_And this goes beyond Italy’s borders?_  

He is actively becoming a political party not just in Italy but this is across Europe. He was active in France. He’s definitely active in Italy because Italy, as I have said, and I was the first to say this, Italy is the center of politics in
the world right now, because you have a populist party on the left and a nationalist party on the right that have formed a government. There’s a big article in I think it’s *La Repubblica* about me, where I’m just saying the government ought to try to stay together. I’ve been a big supporter of trying to make this work. Listen, we’re not naïve. The Church has always had a fundamentally big role in playing politics. Everybody knows that. This is something different, though. The Church has always had a very big and very large role in politics, as it has in the United States, but it’s been a different role. It’s been a cultural role.

**How does this differ from the Church you remember in your youth?**

I come from working-class Irish Catholic Democrats, Kennedy Democrats. We were there as little kids walking the precinct here, and all the virulently anti-Catholic stuff they were throwing up at Kennedy. The Irish Catholic working class in particular was very strong. Now, with the life movement, it’s become politically right. It’s a big supporter of Trump, and split. Progressive Catholics are very big, but the life movement is one of the basic parts of the Trump movement.

So, [the Church] has always been engaged in politics. We’re not naïve. This is something different. It’s different in degree, and it’s different in kind. Here’s what’s interesting: There’s been a counter reaction. I have never seen an Italian politician, a major Italian politician, take on the symbols of the Church like Salvini, with the rosary, the Bible, and calling young people to a lived Christianity in defense of the Judeo-Christian West.

**Why is the Pope joining up with the “far left”, as you say?**

This should be brought up, that he is a Latin American Jesuit inculcated in liberation theology. Liberation theology is nothing more than cultural Marxism with a thin veneer of the *Gospel of Matthew* on top of it, right? It’s Jesus as social justice warrior. The cultural Marxism of the liberation theology movement and the cultural Marxism of the Greens is the linkage of the Pope’s political movement. It’s quite natural for him. He’s both a Peronist and a Jesuit at the same time.

**How significant is it, this particular venture into politics by the Pope?**

It is very important. I think it’s got to be debated. This is going to be the next hot topic. I’ve gone around Europe. I
just spent months in Europe in the European Parliamentary elections. I have spent so much time in Italy. I’m back in the States. People are going to fight this. I don’t want to use the ‘S’ word, but I’m going to use it. I believe that we potentially could be heading to a schism. I don’t say that lightly. This has got all the underpinnings. You see the theology. You see people talking about dogma, and the Pope is not going to back off this, I don’t think.

Do you also think that a big part of the problem is polarization and a lack of nuance on all sides?

This is it. That’s why I’m saying we’re hurtling towards something that I think could be far deeper, because there’s no nuance here. You’re either on one side of this or the other. That’s the issue: that you either believe in the Westphalian nation-state and the underpinnings of a free citizenry, which is what the sovereignty movement is, or you believe the Church politically came to a resolution of this, from the Reformation, and the Enlightenment, and all that. That is a global organization religiously but not politically. What he has done is reverse this now. He’s thrown in. He’s a globalist. He’s a political globalist. He supports all the policies of the globalists. What your audience in the United States has to understand, from the pulpit in Europe they are absolutely throwing down harder than politicians. There were more negative things said from Catholic pulpits by bishops, archbishops, and cardinals in Europe about this previous election than the centrist candidates on the center-left and center-right. They were kind of wishy-washy. The Church threw in with the anti-sovereignty movement. This is not going to end well.

But do you think the answer could be to inject more nuance, for the Church as well but everybody to say, for example, “Well, we don’t agree on the science of climate change, but we do need to do more to safeguard the environment”?

Here’s what I think we ought to do: What is the Pope’s number one thing he always talks about? Dialogue. Where’s the dialogue with the sovereignty movement? Where’s the dialogue with the populists? You want subtlety? Pope Francis, you turn around and say dialogue. You go everywhere throughout the world. You’re down in Abu Dhabi and you say we’ve got to dialogue with the Muslims. I’m for that, absolutely.

But how about this? How about you dialogue with members of your flock who happen to be sovereigntyists instead of demeaning them, instead of saying that they’re the problem? Remember, a huge part of the sovereignty movement is in the pews every Sunday. This is what he’s talking about. This is his Church.

In the United States, a huge part of the Trump movement is working-class Catholics. Salvini’s movement is made up of working-class Catholics. Throughout Europe, the working-class Catholics are a big part of Marion Marechal and Le Pen’s movement. These are working-class Catholics. Alternative for Deutschland: working-class Catholics. The Pope wants to dialogue with everybody except his flock.

Including traditionalists, and those who are perceived to be on the right?

Listen, there should be another Vatican Council, but if the Pope believes in dialogue, there should be dialogue. If you want subtlety and you want rapprochement, we should immediately convene a conference. It should start with regional conferences that lead up to one in Rome. It should be a dialogue with the traditionalists and a dialogue with the sovereignty, and by the way, with the Greens and everything like that. That’s the way we hold the Church together. If you don’t do this, we’re heading towards a split. As night follows day it’s going to happen, because it’s getting more intense. The intensity is picking up.

If people don’t feel listened to, then they will break away?

Yeah, 100%.

People find it bizarre that the Holy Father speaks to everyone but those who uphold the Church’s teaching, who are orthodox.

I don’t think it’s bizarre at all. I think the apparatus of the Church is in control, is controlled now by a group that comes out of liberation theology. People should understand it was dismissed in the great centers of learning in Paris and in Germany back in the 1960s as being not a serious thing. It took root in Latin America and with the Jesuits. People have got to start calling it what it is. The Church is now inculcated at the highest levels with cultural Marxism of the liberation theology movement, and everything it does. The Frankfurt School is now in Rome, right? It’s in Rome. Everything that they do, it’s Gramsci. It’s culture uprooted from politics. This is the hegemony.

One thing I will tell you, I know all the traditionalists and I know all the sovereignty movement members, etc. are not going to back down. They believe this in the marrow of their bones, of the Church that’s been bequeathed to them, and also the underpinnings of the Westphalian system: that the nation-state directly comports to Catholic teaching on subsidiarity, that the citizen is empowered. It is those two intellectual constructs that merge in this, and I think they’re prepared to engage, but they are not prepared to retreat.
But what can be done practically speaking, if the Vatican and the others just don’t want to listen to all sides, how can this be resolved?

I don’t know if it can be resolved, but I’m prepared to listen. First off, what people should know is that it has to be [up to] the laity. I say this wearing my investment banker hat, and someone who’s worked in restructuring and bankruptcies, and seeing organizations that collapse. The financial and administrative side of the Church is currently run by the clergy who are incapable of solving this crisis. The laity is going to have to get more and more engaged.

That is just to say that the administrative, financial, and material. Leave the moral questions aside, which are so horrific. I’m just trying to be practical. If you don’t get engaged in that, we’re talking about a radically different Church in 10-20 years. I don’t think people understand the depths of what this could lead to.

Remember, this has been bequeathed to us for thousands of years. This is really the hard work of all those little people, the little guy in the pew, the men and women who sacrificed for the Church, and all of that could all be wiped out in a decade.

But even then, what can the laity do? What power does the laity have?

First off, number one, I think you’ve got to cut off the money. The donors have to cut off. If they won’t listen, if you don’t have these committees that are trying to engage, then they will listen to one thing, and that is if you cut off the money. That means you directly give to the building or whatever is in your parish to make sure that your parish continues to thrive, but you cut off any giving that would go to a diocese and back to Rome.

I hate to say it, you have the leverage point. I do this for a living. The laity has tremendous leverage in this situation. The number one leverage the guy in the pew has is stop giving money. As soon as you cut off the cash, you will force them to listen.

And make it conditional that the abuse crisis is properly addressed?

I don’t even think we’ve even started the process. I think you’ll see a lot more [abuse cases] in Latin America, I think in Cuba, I think in sub-Saharan Africa, and in south Asia, and Europe. I think we’re at the very beginning of addressing this crisis in the Church on the pedophilia crisis. I don’t believe the spin that it’s all behind us. It’s not all behind us, and it’s got to be addressed, and it has got to be addressed now. I just think it’s a tragedy, but it’s a bigger tragedy if you just don’t do anything about it.

The Vatican made a controversial secret agreement signed last September with China on the appointment of bishops, one which many Chinese Catholics felt was a betrayal of their loyalty to Rome. Given your long experience and wide knowledge of China, what do you say to Cardinal Parolin’s view that this is just the beginning, we have to give it time, and the Chinese government will come around to respecting religious freedom?

He’s absolutely dead wrong. He is absolutely wrong on every level. Look at Tiananmen. We’ve just commemorated the 30th anniversary of Tiananmen. All the wishful thinking that got us here is the wishful thinking from the late ’90s and early 2000s about trade, about Most Favored Nation, that as they get wealthy, they’ll get more liberal. All the evidence shows the exact opposite. In fact, let’s look at the activity that they’ve done since we signed this.

They’ve demolished churches. More people are intimidated. They’re trying to hunt down bishops. Cardinal [Joseph] Zen is one of the most holiest men in the world. He has been adamant about this. I say this as an authority in China, I am leading the effort in the United States and throughout the world about confrontation with this radical cadre. This is not about the Chinese people. The Chinese people are the ones who are being suppressed.

What are the wider consequences of this agreement do you think?

What the Church has done is made a pact with the devil. Actually, they’re hurting the Chinese people. The Chinese people hate this deal. The Chinese people, secular people, are saying, “What is the Church doing? Why is the Church giving legitimacy to a totalitarian surveillance state?” How can you sit there when you see the Uyghurs, the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Buddhists, Falun Gong, the underground evangelical church, and then you who represent the underground Catholic Church throw them under the bus? How can you even do that in light of what’s happening with the other religious beliefs?

People should note, it was after we signed this and announced it that the Chinese went to the Dalai Lama on sinicisation, which is a phrase Parolin uses all the time. He uses their phrase. They went to the Dalai Lama and said, because of sinicisation, Beijing has to approve the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama for the first time. These things are all interconnected, and the Pope and Parolin are engaging in dangerously naïve thinking.

Here’s what they’re doing: They’ve jeopardized the lives of living saints, the living saints of the underground Catholic Church. They’re putting all religious believers in jeopardy by giving a false cover to a murderous regime. The radical nature of the CCP is coming forward every day as they’re confronted in this economic war with the West.
Now, the one proponent they’ve got on the world stage is the Catholic Church and the Vatican? This is outrageous.

The agreement remains secret.

This is the other thing that’s outrageous. At the [February abuse] summit, it was all about transparency and accountability, and they [the Vatican] are now opening the Secret Archives of Pius XII to see what arrangements were made with fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. In this context, how can we possibly be in a situation to sign a deal with Beijing that’s secret? Here’s why it’s secret. I’m calling out Parolin on this. Everybody knows why it’s secret: because it contains secret codicils on full diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Beijing.

How does that work exactly?

It will essentially throw Hong Kong and Taiwan under the bus. Look what’s [been] happening in Hong Kong: On June 9 they had a massive rally against the extradition treaty. The Hong Kong deal, they’ve torn up. The one country-two systems is gone. They’re imposing ... an extradition law so they can essentially snatch free citizens from Hong Kong and put them in prisons in China. That’s being protested in the streets.

Joshua Wong was just sentenced for five more weeks, a brave young man. He notified people he’s got five more weeks in jail, so he would not be there for the rally. They’ve given him five more weeks in jail, one of the bravest young men in the world.

So no, please show me the evidence, any evidence that they are liberalizing. This deal is because of this Pope, and this is because of McCarrick ... It was McCarrick who made this deal. All I say is look at Cardinal Zen, one of the most respected individuals in all Asia, not just among Catholics. He’s considered by every person I know in Asia as a good and holy man. Look at Zen, he’s the biggest advocate of getting rid of this thing. I tell you, I am so focused on having this deal quashed, because I spend 50% of my time on this Chinese situation because of my deep affinity and love for the Chinese people.

Why do so many people throw the fascist label at you, and the anti-Semitic label, xenophobia, and so on. Why don’t you perhaps come back more strongly against that?

Because it’s about your actions. Obviously, they smear because they’re afraid of the message that I support and I bring. Along with [Trump’s Jewish son-in-law] Jared Kushner, we were the ones that pushed against the American government to have the Riyadh conference, to bring all the Muslim nations together, to work together to stop radical Islamic jihad. With Breitbart, I was the leading voice on stopping the BDS movement and the suppression of this crisis of the Jews in Europe, which is horrific. In Berlin, I just met with a Jewish organization was the first to start telling people how, under Merkel’s government, they
can’t wear the yarmulkes in Berlin because they’re afraid. My record on Jewish matters is unimpeachable.

**What about the fascist label?**

It’s the same thing. They’re going to call everybody fascists. Remember when I said, “One of the tenets of ours is the deconstruction of the administrative state.” We are actually the *anti*-fascists. Remember, fascism worships the state. We don’t worship the state. We think you need a strong nation, and you need a strong state apparatus to support what you’re doing, but it can’t be overwhelming. In fact, here, deconstruction of the administrative state is one of our guides.

That’s what separates us populists — right-wing and left-wing populists. We don’t believe in an overwhelming state. The fascists worship the state. The fascists want it to be in every part of your life. We argue the exact opposite. I want Church life to be Church life. People should have their own spiritual lives. They shouldn’t be guided by the state in this regard, right?

That’s one of my concerns with the Pope. He is now so engaged in the anti-sovereignty movement, but the fascist underpinnings are really in the Green movement. That’s because they want to take all forces of government and all forces of society, and combat what they think is an apocalyptic climate change. They’ve actually given a date of 10, 12, 11 years, or whatever it is. The Green movement is quite radicalized. They want to bring all forces of government into it. That, to me, is the underpinnings of fascism.

**What is the best way to counter that?**

I’ve said the exact opposite. In Italy, specifically, I have said you have to start to take apart this bureaucracy. It’s too all-encompassing in people’s lives. State capitalism, as you have in China, combined with big government leads you to fascism. I’m for the entrepreneur. I’m for breaking it up. Every one of my actions is the “anti” of this.

What they want to do is smear you. But here’s the great thing: I am not about to back off. I’m just a tough, ornery Irishman. I was taught at a very early age, if you want something, you’ve got to fight for it. I’m fighting for this. I’m not backing off one iota.

If Bannon’s a fascist, why would he be the guy who went to Milan, sat down with Salvini, and said, “Don’t do a deal with Berlusconi. Do a deal with [Luigi] Di Maio [of Italy’s leftist Five Star Movement]. Bring in and parlay with this young, vibrant Five Star Movement that’s populist, that is anti-crony capitalist, that wants to throw the bums out.” On the front pages of the Italian papers today, I argue,
“Don’t let this coalition fail. It’s not perfect. You’ve got to focus on the economy. You have made yourself the center of politics because you have a new politics that’s beyond left and right.” Would a fascist do that? No, a fascist would not do that. A fascist would say, “Get rid of the Five Star Movement.” I’m saying the exact opposite.

By the way, as you know, I don’t see eye-to-eye with the Five Star guys on everything, such as with the culture minister. They’ve got some cultural Marxists, but that’s okay. That’s what a free government, that’s what democracy, is about. It’s not perfect. You can have arguments, and things are going to happen, but that’s okay. When they snap at you, you know what they’re afraid of? They’re afraid that people can come together, that the populists on the left and the nationalists on the right can work together for this sovereignty movement, for the good of their country. That scares them. The [elites] just had all their power taken away in Brussels since the last election, and now they’re going to fight.

If you get your feelings hurt by having names called at you, then you’re in the wrong line of work. They’re going to say the worst things. If you want to have a humbling experience, just read my Twitter feed every day!

Regarding the monastery at Trisulti that you’re wanting to turn into an academy to defend the Judaeo-Christian West, what are you going to do to fight a recent threat by the Italian government to withdraw the lease?

They started a process. It’s fine. All the papers are correct. We’ve done everything exactly like they laid out. Benjamin Harnwell [founder of the Dignitatis Humanae Institute in charge of the monastery] is a very thorough, systematic guy. We’re going to fight this, but here’s what your readers should know. The Academy of the Judeo-Christian West is an entity today. We’re going to do it, and we’re going to start training people. That is going to happen. Now, I’m going to fight ... to make sure it happens at Trisulti because it happens to be a perfect place for it, but if we have to be in Rome or anywhere, it’s not going away.

Here’s what I love so much about the Academy and about Trisulti: As much as I trigger the left and the cultural Marxists, whether it’s the politics in Europe, China, whether it’s Trump, your audience should understand that nothing has triggered them like the Trisulti academy. Why is that? Because they fear a situation where people have been trained in the underlying tenets of the Judeo-Christian West, and they’re taught how to bring that into modern secular life. They fear that more than anything, and they will go to any extreme to destroy it. Well, it’s not going to be destroyed. It’s a living thing, and we’re going to make sure that we continue to nurture it.

Edward Pentin is the Rome correspondent for the National Catholic Register. He has reported on the Holy See and the Catholic Church for a number of other publications including Newsweek, Newsmax, Zenit, The Catholic Herald, and The Holy Land Review. He is the author of The Rigging of a Vatican Synod? An Investigation into Alleged Manipulation at the Extraordinary Synod on the Family (Ignatius Press, 2015). This interview was originally published at Edward Pentin’s blog. It appears here by permission.
Yvan Blot, the French politician, civil servant, and man of letters, who died on 10 October 2018 aged 70, was one of the central figures of the renaissance of right-wing thought in France over the last half century. Although France presents a left-wing and even socialist face to the outside world, French society is in reality largely conservative, as are a great number of her intellectuals who constitute a formidable undercurrent beneath the country’s politically correct surface.

The author of over 20 books and thousands of essays, Blot’s intellectual interests ranged very widely, encompassing the heritage of ancient Greece and Rome, Plato and Aristotle, Heidegger, as well as contemporary Russia, direct democracy, immigration, and much else besides. The fact that hundreds of people attended his funeral was testimony not only to the great affection in which he was held but also to the considerable influence he had wielded over more than a generation of politicians and other public figures.

The key to Blot’s success lay in his two main qualities: lucidity and energy. A quietly spoken man who never seemed to get angry, even though his political career had made him plenty of enemies (having started politics in the Gaullist RPR party of Jacques Chirac, for which he was elected to the National Assembly, he joined the Front national in 1989 and represented it as a member of the European Parliament until 1999), Blot never gave up. An indefatigably curious mind led him to spend much of his time at conferences, either as a speaker or as a member of the audience, where his interventions were always concise and matter-of-fact.

On his deathbed, Blot was still writing. His last article, as so many of his lectures and books, was devoted to Aristotle’s teleology. But Blot had come to understand, especially towards the end of his life, that the key to his political belief system was in fact Christianity, whence the fact that in the sketch for his last article, God was at the top of the list of priorities. Although not publicly associated with Catholic politics during his public career, Blot had in fact been privately drawn ever closer to religion, thanks to the interest he developed for Russia at the end of his life.

Having been a vigorous anti-Communist throughout his life (his first electoral victory, in 1983, was against the French Communist Party in Calais), Blot was fascinated by post-communist Russia and by the beauty of the Orthodox liturgy. His Christian name no doubt reflected his mother’s Polish roots but, at the end of his life, he started to spell it ‘Ivan’ as a sign of his new Russophilia.

Blot saw in Putin’s presidency a formidable example of how a country can overcome its revolutionary inheritance by renewing with its ancient historical roots. He wished that the same thing might one day happen in his native France. Immensely proud of belonging to the Valdai Group organised every year by the Russian presidency, Blot called for a statue of King Clovis to be erected in Place de la Concorde in Paris, in imitation of the statue of St. Vladimir the Great recently put up just outside the Moscow Kremlin. However, having been drawn back to religion through Orthodoxy, Blot — a member of the Catholic Academy of France — received the last rites from a Catholic priest and the Requiem Mass said for him in the parish church of the kings of France, Saint Germain l’Auxerrois, opposite the Louvre, followed the traditional Latin Tridentine liturgy.

After a brief association with the Nouvelle droite in the 1970s, Blot’s intellectual activism started in 1974, when he co-founded the Club de l’horloge with a group of other senior civil servants like himself. Such men...
constitute the backbone of the French state and, like Blot, they continued to work in their respective departments in spite of their unorthodox views. That year was also the year of Valéry Giscard d’Estaing and, therefore, of the decisive abandonment of Gaullism in favour of the centrist pro-Europeanism which has dominated French politics without interruption ever since. The election of Emmanuel Macron in 2017, who like Giscard was a former Minister of Finance, only serves to perpetuate this consensus for another five years.

In contrast to this soft-left, post-nationalism, the Club de l’horloge favoured the patriotic politics of national liberalism, which it convinced Jacques Chirac to adopt in 1981. The latter’s defeat by François Mitterrand that year caused the leader of the French Right to abandon such policies, and to imitate the Socialist who was to dominate French politics for 14 years: Blot left Chirac’s RPR Party to join the Front national as a result.

Blot’s genius was to be very pragmatic. Although he was deeply interested in metaphysics, on which he wrote widely, and although his enemies would have considered him a radical at best, his political books often tackled problems in a supremely practical way. Thus, he not only co-authored a book on Islamic terrorism — which he correctly identified as a ‘revolutionary’ movement, and on which he had worked professionally as an inspector in the Ministry of the Interior — but also became an ardent supporter of direct democracy, as practised in Switzerland and certain American states, and a fervent opponent of what he rightly called the oligarchy which controls France and Europe.

In his last book, La nouvelle lutte des classes (The New Class Struggle), he argued that Europe is the victim of a battle between self-appointed political elites and the people they are supposed to represent but whom, in reality, they betray. Blot formulated the idea that the true democrats were now on the right, where they are anathematised as ‘populists’ and ‘nationalists’, with the progressive left having drifted into support for highly elitist and anti-democratic globalist oligarchy. Thus the political class has haemorrhaged into a de facto monopoly, which, in the name of management-speak, it manages very ineffectively — whence the seemingly terminal decline of countries like France.

A man whose political opinions put him in opposition to mainstream politics, Blot, with his permanent reasonableness and balance, was a rare embodiment of the advice given by the 17th century Italian Jesuit, Claudio Aquaviva, to those desiring to convert society to the truth: be resolute in execution but gentle in manner. Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo should be Yvan Blot’s epitaph. He was, in short, the perfect gentleman.

John Laughland is a British author and professor. He specialises in political philosophy and international affairs. He has lectured at the Sorbonne and the Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris, and teaches political science at the Institut catholique d’études supérieures (ICES) in the Vendée.
The enormous contribution of Hungarians to humanities and the social sciences is still widely underestimated. Aurel Kolnai and Michael Polanyi, to mention just two of them, are still barely known in the U.S. and even less in continental Europe. A similar case is that of Anthony de Jasay, born 15 October 1925 as Jászay Antall in Aba, in the district of Székesfehérvár. He never belonged to any intellectual school. He was the great loner among the political philosophers of the 20th century, and the most radical among the radical individualists.

Preferring to think and write for himself, he mostly ignored the academic literature. He did not think too highly of economics. Although as a young man he had himself dealt with problems in the theory of risk, Jasay once remarked that economics could teach thinking — but its outcome would be feeble. About his own contribution to the “dismal science” he said that he, like anybody else, could not solve the problems — but at least he published some learned articles in prestigious journals to justify his own existence.

“My family became poorer and poorer in the course of history,” he told me, “and I had no [better] luck either.” This is quite a common complaint among the many Central European intellectuals of Jasay’s generation. In the Habsburg Empire, his ancestors were landowners who served the Emperor and King as cavalry officers. After World War I, the new Czechoslovakian state confiscated Jasay’s mother’s considerable inheritance in Slovakia; after World War II, the Communists nationalized his father’s property in Hungary and in the Carpathian Ukraine. In vain the young Antall had prepared for running a rural enterprise. To his dismay, a communist functionary informed him that “people like you will never get a job in this country”.

In 1948 Jasay fled to Austria, eventually making his way to Australia, then to England, and finally to France. Jászay Antall became Anthony de Jasay, but the memory of the feisty, self-indulging face of the communist functionary, the grimace of the state, haunted him ever since. In his crystal-clear analyses, he diagnosed without sentimentality that democratic and communist regimes are not categorically but only gradually distinct along the same spectrum: the larger the state, the less liberty. Without private spheres, the individual is a victim of the powers that be — whether they are constituted democratically or dictatorially.

Up at Oxford — at that time a citadel of ‘Keynesianism’, the young economist felt out of place. In 1962 he gave up on academia and went to Paris where he worked as financial advisor to European and American banks. Profitable investments enabled him to retire, with his wife Isabelle, to a house in Normandy in 1979. There, far away from real power (like Machiavelli after his flight from Florence), Anthony de Jasay began his second life.

His own experience in communist Hungary and the events in Poland in the early 1980s inspired him to write his first book, *The State* (1985), in which he explored the very substance of political power. The State has been translated into several languages and has been reprinted at least twice since then. James Buchanan, the 1986 Nobel Prize laureate in economic sciences, was the first to recognize its importance.

Buchanan shared Jasay’s view that it would be a folly of monumental proportions to ignore the self-interest of the state and its agents. He admitted that the increase of political interventions corroborates the author’s hypothesis, yet he still placed his hopes on setting constitutional limits to the state. Buchanan’s American optimism clashed with
The European pessimism of the Hungarian expatriate whose work mirrored the historical catastrophes of the 20th century. Jasay did not believe that in the long run constitutionalism could effectively constrain the state. He compared the constitution to a chastity belt, whose key is held by the lady. Even if she lost the key, she could always find a locksmith to open the belt — and then let nature take its course.

"The outcomes a given political system produces depend not only on the system itself but on the kind of people and the kind of historical conjuncture to which it is applied," wrote Jasay in one of his essays, "The Best of the Worst", in 2010. Democracy does not offer the best combination of good and bad; it is the only system "whose worst possible outcome is better than the worst possible" outcome of any other system.

In a way, Anthony de Jasay was an anarchist, though he did not believe that anarchy would be possible here and now. He was closer to those who seek to create ‘social order’ through private contracts than to the so-called ‘minarchists’ who hope to restrict state activity to a minimum. But he believed that neither goal was politically realistic.

It is one of the paradoxes of liberalism that its engagement to strengthen individual rights — even if carried out with the best intentions — contributes as much to the growth of state activity (and to the restriction of liberty) as socialist and nationalist collectivism. After all, ‘duties’ are the downside of ‘rights’. Any change in rights that is not based on free contract and the mutual exchange of agreements but is imposed by a “collective choice act” is nothing but state-sponsored redistribution (backed by the implicit threat of the coercive power of the state). Jasay felt pity for liberalism and its futile effort to pursue incompatible aims simultaneously.

Due to this effort, liberalism suffers from a greater confusion than any other ideology, including socialism. Although he had not read Carl Schmitt, let alone Pierre Manent or Jean-Claude Michéa, Jasay’s contributions to the critique of liberalism was at least as valuable as theirs — and no less radical.

In his work, Jasay did not spare even the most prominent figures of modern liberalism. He accused Karl Popper — who demanded that the state should protect the weak — of making use of infinitely elastic words like “weak”, “strong”, and “unequal” in ways that opened the door to practically any political intervention. His criticism of Friedrich August von Hayek was equally pronounced in that he rejected Hayek’s assumption that only the state could produce desirable public goods like safety without considering the need to impose limits on this process.

In one of his most brilliant essays, Jasay borrowed Lewis Carroll’s image of the ‘Cheshire cat’ gradually disappearing from his tail to the tip of its nose, until only its grin remained, to characterize a process that is happening every day and in full sight: that of a ‘property’ being sliced up into numerous ‘special rights’, which are then, through political restrictions, regulations, and other impositions, gradually withdrawn from the holder of the property — until nothing remains of the property but its empty hull.

When The State came out, its author’s fortunes were already dwindling as swiftly as they had come to him. He lost his sight because of medical error. He earned a living by writing essays and giving lectures. This brought him regularly to Vienna, as well as Zurich and St. Gallen. It was an enormous pleasure to listen to him as he developed his thoughts in open conversation, step-by-step, as if he were writing in print. Jasay presented his thoughts with the esprit of Frédéric Bastiat, added to it a critique of the abuses of language, and added a measure of that ironic distance that characterizes Central European intellectuals — particularly those who survived the horrors of Hitler’s and Stalin’s totalitarianism.

Karl-Peter Schwarz worked as a political correspondent for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung before he retired. He was a friend of Anthony de Jasay for many years.
On December 10, 2018, the renowned German philosopher Robert Spaemann passed away. His was a distinctive voice among contemporary thinkers, a voice that eschewed attention-seeking brilliance but instead offered calm and deep reflections on the most important matters for human beings. Spaemann’s trajectory of thought spanned about 70 years of engagement with crucial questions that refer, as the German phrase has it, Über Gott und die Welt (‘to God and the world’). This is also the title of an intriguing autobiography, written in conversational form, based on a 2012 dialogue Spaemann had with journalist Born in Berlin on May 5, 1927, to parents who would convert to Catholicism a few years later, Spaemann grew up under the National Socialist dictatorship, a regime that he considered to be a break with the 2,000-year-old tradition of the West. He would also always remember from this period his teacher’s anti-National Socialist teachings, which were transmitted through a reading of Adalbert Stifter’s novella Kalkstein. In this way, from the point of view of the revolutionary Nazis, Spaemann was introduced into counter-revolutionary thinking.

Significantly, his early readings during this time also included some of Plato’s dialogues as well as the writings of Josef Pieper. Nevertheless, after the war he considered himself to be more a left-wing Catholic. (Years later, however, he would write a preface to the 2005 French edition of Martin Mosebach’s La Liturgie et son ennemie: L’Hérésie de l’informe, which was originally written in German in 2003 in defence of the Latin liturgy.)

As a young man in 1945, Spaemann wanted to become a Benedictine monk but was advised to attend university first. So he went to study at the University of Münster in Westphalia, soon switching from theology to philosophy. His first published monographs are an indication of Spaemann’s non-conventional choice of topics: His 1952 dissertation dealt with Louis de Bonald and the origins of sociology based on the ‘spirit of restauration’. It was later published as Der Ursprung der Soziologie aus dem Geist der Restauration (1959).

In 1963, Spaemann’s ‘Habilitation’ thesis presented several studies on the French bishop François Fénelon (under the title Reflexion und Spontaneität). In this work, Spaemann analysed the last theological debate of European significance — that between Fénelon and Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet concerning the true nature of the love of God: Should one love God for God’s sake alone (Fénelon)? Or was it legitimate for human beings to love God in order to become happy themselves (Bossuet)? Spaemann claimed that both theologians, however, were unable to understand Thomas Aquinas because they shared Cartesian assumptions and a non-teleological understanding of nature. This was, for Spaemann, the starting point for his later attempts to recover a proper teleology.

Spaemann — who taught at the universities of Münster, Stuttgart, Heidelberg, and Munich — was to become one of the most prominent members of the philosophical circle formed around Joachim Ritter, a thinker of singular importance for German philosophy in the second half of the 20th century, despite his rather limited written output. Some of Ritter’s students — such as Hermann Lübbe, Odo Marquard, Reinhart Maurer, Günter Rohrmoser, or Bernard Willms — contributed to a trend in thought that was sometimes more liberal, sometimes more conservative, in its orientation. But they were always well aware of the traditions going back to Aristotle and Plato, as well as Hobbes and Hegel, while following paths that differed from the other dominant philosophical schools at the time: the critical theory people of Frankfurt and the followers of Heidegger (including Gadamer).
This became quite relevant once the political developments of the late 1960s and 1970s in the West presented the spectacle of left-wing utopianism and deeply seated hatred for Bürgerlichkeit (a term that is hard to translate into English without losing all its various connotations). Whereas left-wing thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas (who was not uncritical of some aspects of the student movement) gave support to the utopian notion of herrschaftsfreier Diskurs (‘rule-free discourse’), it was philosophers like Lübbe, Marquard, Maurer, and, of course, Spaemann, who criticized the attempt to control the universities and the schools by means of imposing left-wing ideologies. Spaemann soon became a prominent voice of the so-called Tendenzwende (‘trend to turn things around’) in the 1970s, which tried to reign in — and roll back — the widespread left-wing ideologies, especially in the educational sector.

In 1978, a major conference called “Mut zur Erziehung” (“Courage to Educate”) took place in Bonn, which Spaemann had co-organized and for which he had co-authored various papers that rejected the major tenets of ‘emancipatory’ pedagogy. Instead, Spaemann and his colleagues emphasized the continuing relevance of old anthropological wisdom concerning the virtues of discipline, industry, and order. These could not be jettisoned to achieve some easy and equally distributed happiness, as was often suggested by those refusing to accept any kind of ‘repression’.

As a philosopher, Spaemann aimed at presenting “rational objections against the abstract utopia of the radical emancipatory rule of reason”. This could only be regarded by critics as a dangerous vision that would ultimately undermine plurality and provide the ideological legitimation for the use of violence against those resisting this alleged rule of reason. But Spaemann repeatedly raised his voice in defence of the freedom of the press and argued against political correctness. He was neither a partisan of the left nor of the right, which he saw as modernist phenomena: “I am not modern,” he once declared in an interview. And recently, in October 2017, Spaemann was one of the co-signers of the so-called “Paris Statement”, the conservative manifesto formally titled “A Europe We Can Believe In”, which is a re-statement and affirmation of the civilizational inheritance of Europe which was promulgated by a group of European philosophers and thinkers in opposition to the “fashionable abstractions of our age”.

Spaemann also criticized other developments in areas beyond mere philosophy. In modern science, the concept of nature had undergone a significant change: It became ‘de-teleologized’. Beginning with Francis Bacon, philosophers had suggested that one should never ask the question ‘why?’ in connection with natural phenomena. Only causal explanations were acceptable, so that in the course of the modern era, a teleological understanding of nature became anathema. Spaemann, in contrast, together with his colleague Reinhard Löw, opened up the debate on the meaning and ‘directedness’ of nature and human beings by examining the history — and the re-discovery — of teleological thinking in a work entitled Die Frage Wozu? Geschichte und Wiederentdeckung des teleologischen Denkens (1981). In this and later works, nature as such again became an issue, with immense consequences also for ecological thinking. Spaemann’s ‘conservatism’, therefore, always put a strong emphasis on the protection of the environment.

The concept of nature also relates to another feature of Spaemann’s ethical and political thought — namely, that which can perhaps be called a ‘modern version’ of natural right. He did not suggest that this could take the form of a ‘catalogue of norms’ but rather should be considered a way of thinking that enables human beings to ask about the justice of laws and their justifications. Understood in this way, ‘natural right’ remains vitally important.

One of the major fields in which Spaemann has certainly left his biggest mark is ethics. In his various writings on ethics, he offered reflections on major issues of modern society, such as the ethically problematic character of nuclear power, assisted suicide, and the biological manipulation of human beings — particularly abortion. Spaemann was one of the most emphatic defenders of the right to life. He also did not refrain from producing popular radio lectures (his “Moralische Grundbegriffe” of 1982 is notable) as well as a handy anthology of key ethical texts titled Ethik-Lesebuch: Von Platon bis heute (1987).

The character of human beings as persons became a focal point for Spaemann’s later thought, particularly in his
1996 work, Personen: Versuche über den Unterschied zwischen ‘etwas’ und ‘jemand’ (Persons: Essays on the Distinction between ‘Something’ and ‘Someone’). For Spaemann, this implied the recognition of all human beings as persons, even if not all thinkable criteria for personhood should be actualized in a given case. Especially in these cases, he argued, we should recognize the other’s humanity; and a test case for a civilized society, according to Spaemann, is ensuring that this humanity — even of retarded or handicapped people — is not put into question.

Spaemann’s deeply humane reasoning offers important succour against all attempts to negate the value of some people’s lives by claiming that they are not ‘proper’ persons. Many of his ethical reflections, as well as his more overtly political interventions, were later collected in a volume significantly titled Grenzen: Zur ethischen Dimension des Handelns (Limits: On the Ethical Dimension of Actions), published in 2001. To think about ‘limits’ implies taking a critical distance towards modernity. This also led Spaemann to criticize attempts to preserve ‘tradition’ without asking the crucial question whether what Plato said is true. Thus, the actual content of our intellectual traditions needs to be taken seriously instead of merely talking about secondary issues, such as the question over what the functions of a given body of thought might be under certain conditions. According to Spaemann, it is not enough to say that prima philosophia (metaphysics) is important; one actually has to practice it.

In his later years, Spaemann not only wrote about spiritual issues (two volumes of Meditationen eines Christen on the Psalms, published in 2014 and 2016) but also proffered what was eventually published as Der letzte Gottesbeweis (The Last Proof of God’s Existence) in 2007. This was not actually a ‘logical proof’ properly understood but an attempt (unsuccessful, to my mind) to suggest that our use of the grammatical structure of futurum exactum somehow involves the necessity to posit an absolute consciousness (which is called ‘God’) in which all things that ever happened will be remembered once they are part of the past. Spaemann suggested that everything that happened or will have happened in the future can only be regarded as real as long as it is remembered. But as human memory at some point in the future will cease to remember these things, only an absolute consciousness secures the reality of everything that has happened.

The non-sequiturs involved in this reasoning need not concern us here. What should be emphasized is rather the courage on Spaemann’s part to at least make the effort, in the early 21st century, to reconstruct a notion of God by means of reason.

Spaemann was more successful, however, as a critical commentator of some of the follies in modern ethics and politics. Not only did he stress, against powerful currents of thought, the necessity of referring to the concept of the Good for ethics and politics, he also dissected erroneous and potentially harmful notions — such as the utopian idea of anarchy (Herrschaftsfreiheit).

Possibly the most important gesture Spaemann made was his rejection of the idea that one cannot go back behind this or that modern conception of reality: He believed that such slogans were fashionable phrases to which he reacted with great opposition. Progress in philosophy, according to him, always consists in going back to something that had already been there earlier. Later thinking, he claims, never integrates everything that was thought before. Therefore, traditions need to be kept in sight, so that older ways of thinking may develop a new life when their time comes.

Perhaps the best starting-point for discovering the wealth of Spaemann’s thinking are the two volumes of collected speeches and essays published under the title Schritte über uns hinaus (Steps Beyond Ourselves), which appeared in 2010/2011. The title confronts head-on David Hume’s famous claim to the contrary — namely that “we never advance one step beyond ourselves”. Spaemann could never consent to this view — which he thought imprisoned human beings in the here and now.

Till Kinzel is a humanities scholar and currently a member of the board of the Förderstiftung Konservative Bildung und Forschung (FKBF) in Berlin.
Professor Norman Stone, the renowned historian who died aged 78 on June 19 this year, was an outstandingly colourful figure on a British intellectual landscape that has long had an accelerating tendency to the flat, dull, monochrome, and ideologically uniform. Norman Stone spoke his mind and lived as he pleased, for which he was both admired and disdained. For some people, nothing is more displeasing than someone who lives on his own terms and yet is rewarded with worldly success. Such people should at least have the decency to suffer poverty.

I was among Norman Stone’s admirers. You could not be in his company for very long without realising that you were in the presence of a deeply erudite man whose fund of historical anecdote was seemingly inexhaustible, always apposite to whatever happened to be under discussion, and brought forth for its own intrinsic interest and relevance, never merely to display how learned he was or to make you feel ignorant. To be at his feet where history was concerned was not so much a humiliation because one knew so little, comparatively speaking, as to be at a delightful and never-ending feast. Moreover, if you happened to know something that he didn’t, he was delighted to learn it.

His brilliance was natural, which is not, of course, to say effortless. No one could write as much as he without effort. At the end of his life he was planning a biography of Count Gyula Andrassy, the great Hungarian statesman, which would have been a labour of considerable difficulty and magnitude for anyone, let alone an elderly man in a poor state of health. It was indicative of his indomitable spirit that he should even have contemplated it.

Professor Stone was very witty and no mincer of words; but he was not malicious towards living individuals, however harsh he could be in his judgment of the dead. Moreover, he knew that, being a controversialist, he was open to criticism and even insult, all the more so as for many years he wrote successfully in the general press, always a source of envy and disdain among academics who believe that penury is a duty, dryness is seriousness, and solemnity a guarantee of profundity. But he took criticism, in good part, almost as a joke. I was once present when he was traduced in public and he did not grow angry, as most of us would have been inclined to do, but rather laughed. As I knew him, at any rate, he was always good-humoured.

He made you laugh out loud even on recondite subjects. Writing of E. H. Carr, the prolix historian of the Russian Revolution in many volumes whose prose would make the Apocalypse seem dull and Armageddon uneventful, he wrote: “As a reviewer [of books], Carr was sometimes just and never fair. He resembled a remote, irascible potentate who would not hesitate to put a whole town to the sword if one of its inhabitants ate his peas with his knife.”

Such is the decline in the British sense of humour that proof would probably now be demanded that there had ever been such a potentate, and if so where and when. People would take his ironical obiter dicta as if they were intended as literal truths and then use them to attack him as a bigot with the worst prejudices.

In fact, what he most disliked (though he attacked it with humour rather than bitterness) was piety, to which, perhaps, his Scottish protestant background had sensitised him. Since he regarded life as fun (as well as serious) he particularly disliked the modern form of political puritanism with its heavy leavening of humbug. Indeed, humbug was his public enemy number one; it was not just an unpleasant personal failing but dangerous, in as much as it led to foolishness at best and disaster at worst when it was the basis of policy. Just because religion was dead did not mean for him that piety had died: it merely transferred to something else: politics mainly.
Conservatives such as Professor Stone are usually taken by their opponents to be narrow-minded, enclosed in their little worlds and hating foreigners for being different and therefore worse from themselves. But no man was less narrow-minded than Norman Stone.

His experience of life was extremely wide, and even his detractors had to admit that he was a brilliant linguist. He learnt Russian in Haiti and Hungarian in prison in Hungary. He learnt Turkish at the age of 55, when most of us have given up learning anything and struggle against forgetting the little that we have learnt. His Hungarian (he told me) he learned from a Transylvanian gypsy when he spent six months in a Hungarian prison for having tried to smuggle a Hungarian across the border to Austria. He was lucky, he said, because if he had tried to do so a few months earlier he would have been sentenced to nine years rather than six months, and if he had done so a few months later he would merely have been expelled from the country; six months in prison was just right.

His knowledge of literature was immense and he could quote reams of French poetry. He did not disdain statistics, but his history was essentially humanistic, mistrusting grand historiographical generalisations. He never forgot that history is about human beings, about agents rather than forces. His understanding was quick. I mentioned to him one day that I was interested in Haitian history because it contains all the tragicomedy of human existence in peculiarly concentrated form. He replied that we were the only two people who understood that the history of Haiti was the most important of all: a typical example of his feline mental elegance.

The fact that he lived to be 78 rather surprised me, from the purely medical point of view. He was, of course, famous for the amount he drank, and he regarded cigarettes, as well as books, as the precious life blood of a master spirit. My advice to him as a doctor fell on deaf ears, as I knew that they would; my warnings went unheeded, as I also knew that they would. And far from being irritated by this, I rejoiced in it: here was a man who had the courage to live as if the purpose of life was not to live as long as possible, but as well and enjoyably as possible. He was the kind of man who, if he had done so a few months later, would have been expelled from the country; six months in prison was just right.

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His judgment (in my judgment) was not infallible. I think he was slow to recognise the potential threat or danger that Mr. Erdogan posed to Turkey and elsewhere. This was perhaps surprising because he was no friend of political religion in the modern world. But no man, overall, ever defended common sense in so many human spheres with more wit, panache, and erudition.

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