

On American Castes

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Castes of the United States

Sunday, May 6, 2007 at 10:46 AM

It's always fun to rethink the world by redefining our terminology. But the brain can only stand so much of this. The cerebrum boils, releasing green gas. The cortex starts to blacken and fray. A shocking, foreign pain arises between the ears. It will not go away.

So it's a relief when there's a backup word, which already has exactly the right meaning, but is disused and carries no (or at least few) political and emotional associations. This word is "caste." The word it replaces is so encrusted in historical nonsense that I won't even say it.

Of course the word "caste" is generally associated with India. The US is not India. So if we meant "caste" in the precise Hindu sense of the word ([varna](#)), there are no castes in the US, except perhaps among some Indian immigrants.

Some redefinition, therefore, is necessary. Let's define a "caste" as a social group with its own internal status system. All hominids crave status and will exchange almost anything for it, but different castes assign status in very different ways — as we'll see.

Here's my taxonomy of American castes. I've picked names from various historical cultures, hopefully without strong emotional associations for modern readers, for these castes. The implicit analogies these names create should be roughly accurate, but certainly not precise. I have ordered them alphabetically to avoid any implicit ranking.

In the *Brahmin* caste, status among both men and women is defined by scholarly achievement, success in an intellectual profession, or position of civic responsibility. The highest-status *Brahmins* are artists and scientists, but *Brahmins* can also be doctors or lawyers, although it is much better to be a doctor than a lawyer, and much better to be a lawyer than a dentist (a trade which was perhaps once *Brahmin*, but is now definitely *Vaisya*). Ideally, as a *Brahmin*, if you are a doctor you should be primarily concerned with caring for the poor; if you are a lawyer, your practice should focus on civil liberties and social justice — cardiology and corporate law are slightly *de trop*. An increasing number of young *Brahmins* consider themselves "activists" and work for "nonprofits" or "NGOs," lending some credence to the theory that the *Brahmins* are our ruling or governing caste. Entry into the *Brahmin* caste is conferred almost entirely by first-tier university admissions, although getting into Harvard doesn't mean you don't still need to make something of yourself.

In the *Dalit* caste, status among men is defined by power, wealth and sexual success, among women by attractiveness and popularity. The favored occupation of *Dalit* men is crime, preferably of the organized variety. However, *Dalit* criminals are not generally psychopathic; they perceive crime as guerrilla warfare

against an unjust society. *Dalit* women may support themselves by crime, welfare (which they consider a right), or payments from men. Both male and female *Dalits* may occasionally support themselves by conventional employment, but this is usually in jobs that other castes (except *Helots*) would consider demeaning, and *Dalits* share this association. The *Dalit* caste is not monolithic; it is divided into a number of ethnic subcastes, such as African-American, Mexican, etc. A few white *Dalits* exist, notably in the Appalachians. There is little or no solidarity between the various *Dalit* ethnicities.

The *Helot* caste is an imported peasant caste, originating primarily in rural Central America. Status among *Helot* men is conferred primarily by hard work, money and power. Status among *Helot* women is conferred by attractiveness, motherhood, and association with successful men. The *Helot* value system does not seem to be sustainable in the US, and the children of *Helots* tend to grow up as *Dalits*. New *Helots*, however, can always be imported to replace them.

The *Optimate* caste has to be mentioned, because it was until quite recently the US's ruling caste. It is not clear, however, that the *Optimate* value system still exists in any meaningful sense, and if it does it is decaying rapidly, with most young *Optimates* becoming *Brahmins*. However, status among any men and women who do still follow the *Optimate* way is conferred by birth, breeding and personal character, with wealth serving as a prerequisite but not a mark of actual distinction. The Bible of the *Optimate* caste is, of course, the [Social Register](#).

The *Vaisya* caste is the most difficult to define. It's tempting to say that a *Vaisya* is anyone who is not a *Brahmin*, *Dalit*, *Helot* or *Optimate*. Status among *Vaisya* men is conferred by productive employment, generally defined in monetary terms; by a successful family life; and by participation in church or other formal social groups. Status among *Vaisya* women is conferred by attractiveness, motherhood, and social participation, with an increasing number of *Vaisya* women entering the labor force, typically in unintellectual white-collar jobs.

(Update: please see the comment by “smb,” whose perspective of the present-day *Optimate* caste is much sharper and clearer than my definition — which on reflection is too antiquated.):

I am, admittedly, a bit wet behind the ears—as I'm still a senior in college—but what I've seen amongst my social set doesn't align very well with your castes. To give some context, I'm at an Ivy; about a third of my friends went to boarding school, a third private/parochial, and a third went public, as did I; about a third was born 'upper class'. two-thirds were born 'middle class' (widely defined), as was I. Altogether we could be defined as a mix of your Brahmin and Optimate classes.

I agree with SFG regarding doctors: cardiology and neurology definitely rank above family practice. Re working with the poor: most doctors I know do pro bono work anyway, rather than dedicating their careers to the 'poor.' However, this profession is overall considerably less prestigious than I imagine it once was. Literally all of my friends who have a parent who is a physician were told, in no uncertain terms, that they should avoid the profession completely. Half of the students I know who

began as pre-meds have decided against pursuing a medical career, many opting for consulting or investment-banking.

As far as those who work at various NGOs and nonprofits: they're mostly considered ne'er-do-wells. They largely belong to the 'trustifarian' set—pseudo-bohemians who will never have to work, never appreciate not having to work, and certainly never suffer the consequences of not working. Granted, there are a good number of folks who work at non-profits and think tanks, who are seen as important parts of some political movement or another (but they will probably end up in politics, or going to business or law school).

For men, banking and consulting are generally considered the jobs to aim for, if one is able to get them. Ambitious women have slightly expanded options: advertising/marketing, PR, auction houses, even teaching (though most of these jobs are considered a spot for women to cool their heels whilst waiting to find a husband; not that anyone dare come out and say so).

If a fellow is ambitious, but unable to get into either finance or consulting or some such field, he will often go the NGO/non-profit route at first. (Another option is government service: CIA, State Dept., military, White House intern.) Down the road he'll apply to business school or law school and begin his career in earnest.

It should be noted that the quality-of-life for corporate lawyers is considered so dismal that most of those who earn law degrees don't actually ever want to practice law. Those too greedy/ambitious for government service will become paralegals, go to top-notch law schools, and slave away as corporate lawyers for most of their salad days. The 'better' set of lawyers takes the degree and heads to Washington, often bouncing between lobbying, staffing, non-profit, bureaucratic sectors etc. These are the ones who will serve as all points in the iron triangle at some time during their lives.

Re Steve: Professional athletes (and Hollywood types) are considered hopelessly vulgar.

Now, regarding entrance into this hybrid Brahmin/Optimate class I've been speaking of:

- Top-tier universities help, but aren't required. Haverford, Trinity, Bucknell will do.
- Personal character is important. Breeding is not.
- Wealth is not a prerequisite to this broader class.
- Good manners are a prerequisite.

I see vestiges of the Optimate system you propose. I certainly know guys who went to Buckley, Exeter, and then a top Ivy. But America's relentless push to meritocracy has made any presumption of themselves as a ruling class appear incurably rude—amongst themselves, too, not just to us middle class visigoths. After their hundreds of thousands worth of schooling are complete, they tend

to strive on the same playing field as those who came from modest suburbs and went to public school.

Granted, these viewpoints will not quickly be admitted by most of those my age. Most will pretend to deeply admire their friends who enter the peace corps or work at some anti-land mine NGO. Their actual employment decisions are far more telling: very few pick altruistic jobs or 'public service' as a first choice, but rather as last resorts.

Also, I would say this view is accepted by roughly 80% of those my age, having studied at similar institutions. Half of those could vaguely be considered 'traditionalists.' They want to find good jobs, earn capital (monetary or political), and start families. The other half could be called 'neoliberals.' These are the ones who are simply ambitious and mostly want material success; they feel fewer personal obligations towards family and community; they love both consumerist capitalism and the welfare state.

The remaining 20% could be called the hangover from the counter-culture. They sneer at most economically productive jobs, and invariably go for the NGO/Peace Corps jobs, or perhaps academe. They would disagree with everything I've written above, but probably admit that most of their fellow students see things more or less as I do.

The BDH-OV conflict

Monday, May 7, 2007 at 7:33 PM

Yesterday I [posted](#) a taxonomy of the conflicting social castes in the US. I outlined five groups (Brahmin, Dalit, Helot, Optimate, Vaisya) in language that was neutral to slightly negative, using a bit of anthro-speak to focus on personal, rather than political, values.

However, it's pretty obvious where the political divisions lie. The Democrats are the party of the Brahmins, Dalits and Helots. The Republicans are the party of the Optimates and Vaisyas. Thus, instead of the red-state / blue-state conflict, which uses meaningless colors and averages geographically in a way that blurs information, we can speak of the "BDH-OV conflict."

The exceptions to the definition of "blue-state" as BDH, and "red-state" as OV, are in many ways the best illustrations of this principle. For example, not all African-Americans and Hispanics are BDH — many are Vaisyas, with careers and value systems very similar to those of the stereotypical "Middle American" (the German [Mittelstand](#), in the 1930s sense of the word, is an even better match). But these voters of course vote overwhelmingly for the Democrats — in other words, they vote by race rather than caste. As Steve Sailer [points out](#), Republican attempts to capture them have been futile and are probably a waste of time.

There is a lot of linguistic delicacy surrounding the BDH-OV conflict. As in any political contest, each side can succeed only by crushing the other — capturing its institutions and converting its followers. But keeping this conflict and its predecessors within the bounds of democratic politics, and preventing any degeneration into actual combat, has been a central concern of American intellectuals for the last 200 years. Obviously they haven't always succeeded, which makes the concern all the more intense.

Therefore, we tend to think in terms of euphemisms that conceal the total and existential nature of this nasty and pointless struggle, which I despise with every particle in my body. One of the main reasons I started this blog is that I don't see how the BDH-OV conflict can end until a lot more people are willing to speak frankly about what's actually going on. Wringing our hands in a vain expression of "unity" will not do the job — especially because some of the most interesting tropes of the conflict are issues on which, in my opinion, *both* sides are profoundly detached from reality.

In my opinion this euphemistic approach to what pretends to be a conflict of ideas and ideals, but is in fact an ordinary and rather tawdry case of [communal violence](#), is inseparable from the disaster of democracy. As Clausewitz observed, war and politics are a continuum. Representative democracy is a limited civil war in which the armies show up, get counted, but don't actually fight. The BDH and OV factions refrain — mostly — from inciting or participating in outright warfare, for one reason: it is not in either's interest. If this ever changes, they'll be at each others' throats like Hutus and Tutsis.

Democracy, like all conventions of limited war, is fragile. It's hard to establish and easy to destroy. One of my main concerns is that I think the principal check that keeps the US from degenerating into actual violence is the 75-year-old informational dominance of "responsible" broadcast and newspaper journalism. This system is dying. It is being replaced by people like Amanda Marcotte and Michelle Malkin. And their followers, if not them personally, seem to have enough pure, 24-karat hate stored up for ten or fifteen really juicy civil wars.

So when people talk about abandoning democracy, they can mean one of two things. They can mean "screw it, let's go to the mattresses," or they can mean abolishing the conflict itself, and designing a system which is based on the rule of law rather than political triumph and defeat. Democratic politics is the middle ground between these options, and I follow Hazlitt (William, not Henry, though they both rock) in refusing to split the difference between right and wrong. This is why I oppose democracy, even though there are many worse alternatives.

Except under circumstances which everyone reading this would consider disastrous, the BDH-OV conflict cannot end in the victory of either side. This should be reason enough for anyone to avoid taking up cudgels on behalf of either. However, because the conflict is at bottom an emotional one, not a matter of facts and figures, I should explain my own emotional response to it.

The hate expressed by BDH or blue-state intellectuals, from Noam Chomsky to Al Sharpton, has a peculiarly smug and contemptuous tone which is instantly familiar to any student of the 20th century, and it leads me — despite my Brahmin upbringing — to side instinctively with the OV faction. I am simply aghast at the hatred of Middle America I see so often in San Francisco. It is pure poison. It is right up there with Streicher in his prime. If it fails to generate actual mayhem, this is a consequence not of tolerance but of sheeplike docility.

But the OVs, the red-staters, have no intellectual institutions worth a damn, since the formerly Optimate universities have all been captured by Brahmins. The Optimate caste is disappearing, and the OV faction is becoming simply V. Since Brahmins tend to be both smarter and better-informed than Vaisyas, there is a tendency — increasing rather than decreasing — for OV perspectives to celebrate ignorance and superstition. You can take the boy out of the library but you can't take the library out of the boy: at heart, I am still a Brahmin.

Also, I believe the actual political tactics pursued by the OV party — that is, the Republicans — have been spectacularly unsuccessful to the point of self-inflicted disaster. I cannot imagine any possible future in which the Republicans actually do recapture Washington — as opposed to the largely-symbolic White House — and if such a thing were to actually happen, I think the results would be so appalling that I'm not sure I could continue to live in the US.

Because we know exactly what a 20th-century OV regime looks like. It looks like Hitler. It also looks like Pinochet, Franco, Salazar, Dollfuss, Verwoerd, Batista, Ian Smith, etc, etc. Hitler ruined it with me when

he murdered the Jews, but I do think these other figures of the 20th-century OV “right” have much worse reputations than they deserve. However, I would not describe their regimes as either desirable or successful. Politically they are a dead end.

This definition of “left” as “BDH” and right as “OV” explains a few things. One of them is the strangely disparate treatment meted out to Nazis and Communists. If the US ever started to persecute neo-Communists the way the [SPLC](#) hunts for neo-Nazis, it would make McCarthy look like Nelson Rockefeller. If neo-Nazis were as influential as neo-Communists, San Francisco would have an Albert-Speer-Strasse. But the actual human rights violations committed by 20th-century Communists were if anything greater than those committed by all the Fascist parties together, so the doctrine of human rights cannot explain this conundrum.

The answer is that, supposedly, the Communists were “well-intentioned,” while the Nazis were simply straight-out evil. This bit of nonsensical sophistry cannot be defended for a minute. The Nazis, for example, won 90% of the vote in the 1935 [Saarland plebiscite](#), which was administered not by them but by the French. It is generally agreed by historians that National Socialism was overwhelmingly supported by the vast majority of Germans from at least 1934 through 1938. The idea that the burghers who lined up to cheer for Hitler were cackling like Dr. Evil is as ahistorical as any ever advanced.

The real cause of the Nazi-Communist conundrum is just that today’s ruling class is Brahmin, it writes the history books as winners always have, and the Nazi regime was OV to the core. Whereas Communism is best understood as a sort of deformed, Russian offshoot of the BDH coalition. Of course, it is simply human nature that people are more likely to be appalled by the crimes of their enemies, and excuse or ignore the crimes of their allies.

The current structure of the BDH-OV conflict dates back to the ’60s, when Vaisyas started to catch on that the New Deal was not, in fact, all about them. FDR’s machine, which of course rules us to this day, was built to a substantial extent on inner-city Irish-Italian-Jewish political machines and their agrarian counterparts. That is, it was built on the votes of Vaisyas who loved the idea of a government that was on their side. But the New Deal in practice was a Brahmin operation from top to bottom, as were its New Frontier and Great Society successors. When this started to become apparent, Nixon’s “silent majority,” the “Reagan Democrats,” etc, etc — in other words, the Vaisya whites — left the party their ancestors had supported for generations. They were replaced by the burgeoning Dalit and Helot castes, and by Optimates whose children were reeducated as Brahmins (in universities captured by [BDH violence](#)), creating the present shape of the conflict.

But the word “Brahmin” has of course been applied to the [New England elite](#) for quite some time now. Ultimately I think the BDH-OV conflict is best seen as the contemporary incarnation of the same volcanic hotspot in Anglo-American culture which gave us the English Civil War, the Jacobite Wars, and the American Civil War. In other words, the Brahmins are the modern Roundheads, whereas the

Optimates are the modern Cavaliers. The other castes, poor schmucks, tend to get the shaft no matter who is in power or what line they preach.

The Utley rule and the BDH alliance

Tuesday, May 8, 2007 at 7:30 PM

Surely one of the most grievously forgotten authors of the 20th century is [Freda Utley](#). In the immortal words of Rutger Hauer, Utley “saw things... you people wouldn’t believe” — she moved to Moscow as a Communist true believer in the 1930s, lost her husband to the Gulag, and never remarried. Her honesty and fearlessness did not make her popular, especially when she spoke out against American abuses in the occupation of Germany, or against Maoism 40 years before it was fashionable.

As Utley put it in her compulsively readable autobiography, *Odyssey of a Liberal*, her friend Edith Hamilton once warned her “not to expect the material rewards of unrighteousness, while engaged in the pursuit of truth.” No such rewards appeared, and today her books are utterly obscure. But when all our “liberals” are Utley’s kind, as they once were and surely will be again, I’ll be proud to wear the label.

Perhaps Utley’s most acute realization in *Odyssey*, though on a trivial subject, is when she notices that her friend Bertrand Russell always uses the word “we” to refer to the government. She points out that this little linguistic tic is an unmistakable mark of any ruling class.

Apparently this “nostrism” (if I can risk another obscure quasicoinage) was more unusual in the ’50s than it is now. Because, although I have tried repeatedly to break myself of the habit, I use exactly the same pronoun. It’s an unmistakable sign of my [Brahmin](#) upbringing. I can’t imagine counting the number of times I’ve heard someone say “we should...” when what they really mean is “the government should...” Language is repetition, and though my considered view is that it’s just as bizarre to define “we” as the US Federal Government, especially for someone who isn’t actually an employee of said entity, as it would be to use the first person plural for Safeway, Comcast or OfficeMax, habits die hard.

Today, Russell-style nostrism is peculiar, I believe, to the Brahmin caste. Certainly Helots, Dalits, and Vaisyas all think of the government as very much “they.” If Optimates go with “we,” it’s probably because they’re so used to having to pass as Brahmins. I find it rather hard to imagine a cardiologist or a hedge-fund hotshot genuinely thinking of Uncle Sam as “we.”

It’s all too easy to see nostrism as a trope of monstrous smugness and arrogance. This is very much one with the view of Brahmins you’ll get from, say, [Lawrence Auster](#) (with whom I often disagree, but who is surely one of the most insightful and principled political writers of our time). To Auster they are all “liberals.” This label, which has meant so many things to so many people, is nothing but a brutal slur on his tongue. Auster sees Brahmins more or less the way most of us see Nazis.

And indeed one can imagine an Austerian future in which “liberalism” is just as “discredited” as Nazism is today (or as it was in the Third Reich, for that matter). There is certainly no shortage of crimes that

such a future (which I find improbable, but not impossible) could blame on the [BDH alliance](#). For example, it is very easy to see today's Dalit caste as essentially a cynical creation of the Brahmins, a weapon of [anarcho-tyranny](#) in the sense of the late Sam Francis, and a key aspect of the ethnic cleansing of the white Vaisya inner-city neighborhoods, which surely if they still existed would be Bushist bastions. From this perspective it's shocking how Europe, in its slavish postwar imitation of the Brahmin system, imported its own Dalit class to fulfill the same essential political function of (often literally) terrorizing the Vaisyas.

In a sense this view is credible. But in another sense, it is completely out to lunch. Because no Brahmin, at least no Brahmin I can imagine, ever thinks that he is (a) the ruling class, (b) allied with criminals and peasants to crush the white working class and the old aristocracy, or (c) a cog in a 75-year-old political machine whose goal is to dominate the world and convert all humans to the worship of a single transnational, bureaucratic superstate in which his caste will play the traditional role of the mandarin priest-oligarch.

Au contraire! He is working for peace and justice. He is fighting against racism, prejudice, corruption and oppression. He has never even considered the possibility of ruling the world. If he can, in some small way, serve it, this will be honor enough. His sincerity is obvious, and it is genuine. No fat salary, no pension plan, no incentive package, is needed to bring him on board. A grown man in his forties, he may work for a sum that is barely a stipend.

Yet to an alien observer, with no understanding of human psychology or motivations, I believe the former interpretation would seem perfectly plausible. Even obvious.

So we have quite a discrepancy to explain. Perhaps our "kernels" and "repeaters" can help us with this puzzle? More later...

Roth, castes, chimps and Rangordnung

Thursday, May 10, 2007 at 5:07 PM

[Conrad Roth](#), whose literary erudition, unlike mine, seems quite genuine (if the masthead isn't warning enough, readers should know that I've never studied any of the subjects I expound upon with such professorial authority, and some commenters have already seen how easy it is to scratch my bogus polymathic veneer) does me the distinct honor of [linking](#).

(I mean, doesn't just the *name* "Conrad Roth" sound like some celebrated literary figure? A man who might have clinked glasses with Svevo in Trieste, slashed Robert Musil with a sword-cane on the Ringstrasse, or consoled Edmund Wilson through his turbulent marriage with Mary McCarthy? I actually get the impression he's barely old enough to drink, but since I myself am a failed child prodigy I can hardly complain. Anyway, his blog, the Varieties, is well worth a visit.)

Conrad, if I may, is most interested by my failure to follow the convention — accepted by Hindu, Marxist and Scholastic alike — of *ranking* the [castes](#). As if they were prepended to some Great Chain of Being, with innocent, big-eyed apes poised just below the squalid Poor, then horses and dogs, those noble beasts, and so on down to amoebas, lawyers and real-estate agents. I admit that this is customary and sensible, and I should explain my deviation.

I'm one of [those](#) who believe human social behavior is not entirely learned. Chimps and other primates exhibit many social patterns that would strike any human as familiar. They form tribes, reciprocate grooming, spring devastating ambushes in routine board meetings, and so on. One of these social patterns is, of course, linear ranking.

In a stable chimp society, every chimp knows his or her rank versus every other chimp. This exacts a mighty mental tax on the little chimp brain, but it enables these natural weightlifters to live together without constantly tearing each others' genitals off. (If you ever find yourself in a fight with a chimp, I recommend the fetal position.) We can think of this *ur-Rangordnung* as a sort of simian version of [formalism](#). The Law of Chimp is that the little chimp shall yield unto the Big Chimp, and all shall get along.

When the system fails and ranks are unclear, chaos ensues. And this goes for humans as well — not just individuals, but castes.

In chimp terms, the history of the last 200 years is a four-way genital-ripping battle royale for reproductive dominance between the old feudal-clerical nobility, the new merchant nobility, various military brotherhoods, and what in Old Regime France they called the *noblesse de la robe* — the scholar or Brahmin caste. The losers in this struggle may keep their actual gonads, but they lose their [repeaters](#),

ie, the institutions which install values and beliefs in the young.

So, since the Brahmin victories of the 20th century, it's very rare for a young Western man to grow up in anything like an aristocratic or militaristic tradition, or to learn business in the traditional apprenticeship style. Instead all are thoroughly Brahminized, and if this doesn't take, they remain *nyekulturny* — Vaisyas, in a word, whatever their tax bracket.

People somehow assume that this change is an automatic consequence of modern technology, as though DVD players were somehow incompatible with fancy-dress balls, sadistic pseudo-Spartan boot camps, or learning a trade by actually practicing it. Of course, military history is for all practical purposes random, and surely if the Luftwaffe had won the Battle of Britain you'd be reading this on the Nazi Internet. I'd have to use delicate circumlocutions to try to convince my readers that young men and women might spend a little more time studying, and a little less giving each other horrible facial scars with obsolete edged weapons.

In any case, during this “modern” period — now ending, mainly because the Brahmins have reached the point where they have no real enemies left, and their credibility in conjuring up an Optimate menace of Colonel Blimps, pedophilic cardinals and servant-eating capitalists isn't what it once was — the linear *Rangordnung* did not apply. Instead there were two or more (I have lumped all the non-Brahmin elites in my “Optimate” caste, simply because otherwise there wouldn't be enough to fill a decent ballroom) castes contending for the Big Chimp spot.

We can see this most clearly when we look at the *emotions* different castes express toward each other. English, at least, uses very different words for group emotional response depending on the rank relationship of the castes involved.

For example, *affection*, as expressed from higher to lower, becomes *caring* or *concern*. So, for example, Brahmins *care* about the poor (Dalits and Helots). But when this same emotion goes from lower to higher, it becomes *loyalty* or *respect*. Not that Dalits have much of either, but I suppose Helots probably do. Historically, the relationship of reciprocal *concern* and *loyalty*, normally felt between elites and their subjects, is very common and remarkably stable.

Likewise, *animosity*, when expressed from higher to lower, appears as *contempt*. Expressed from lower to higher, it comes out as *resentment*. No one could possibly mistake these emotions for each other.

One key lacuna of Brahmin thought is a constant confusion and miscategorization of contempt and resentment. For example, the historical phenomenon that Brahmins call “hate” is most certainly contempt — for example, the attitude of many whites toward many blacks in the Old South. The attitude of many Brahmins today toward many Vaisyas — for example, San Francisco hipsters versus Peninsula suburbanites — is also contempt. And in both cases, the reciprocal animosity was and is resentment.

Yet Brahmins have a hard time engaging with this comparison. And they also have a hard time seeing that the genocidal outcomes of intercaste animosity tend to spring not from contempt, but from resentment. National Socialism, for example, was driven by the animosity of *Mittelstand*, Vaisya Germans for cosmopolitan Jews — resentment in a nutshell. The massacre of the Tutsis was pure resentment. And yet Brahmins, as they inveigh against “hate,” and as they root out any traces of Optimate or Vaisya contempt with the wiccaphobic fury of their Puritan progenitors, seem to put an awful lot of energy into cultivating Dalit resentment.

What is so unusual about the Brahmin-Optimate conflict is that the emotion is, or at least was, contempt on both sides. Their view of the conflict is perhaps the less recorded, but I’m sure the late high Victorians lampooned by Lytton Strachey felt exactly the same way about him as he felt about them. In other words, they found him pathetic, just as he found them pathetic. In every hominoid species this is a recipe for titanic violence, and so indeed it proved.

Ultimately this is a major reason why I don’t consider myself a “conservative” or a member of the “right.” It is not that I don’t agree with many of the thoughts of people like Larry Auster. But my goal is not to crush the Brahmins — not at all. My goal is to try, in my own small way, to remind them that they actually are the ruling caste, that their enemies basically no longer exist, that they can come down from their 20th-century insane chimp rage without getting their genitals ripped off and eaten by a lurking band of equally-enraged Optimates.

I regard the strategy of trying to engage Vaisyas (Pat Buchanan’s “peasants with pitchforks”) in democratic politics, as especially counterproductive. What makes a Vaisya a Vaisya is that he or she is a sensible normal person who takes an appropriate and healthy interest in his or her own life. Trying to involve these people in the disaster of democracy, in some sort of attempt to restore a Brahmin-ravaged Optimate culture that can no more be restored than Albigensian Provence or Mughal India, and which in any case was no more perfect than either of these wonderful and deceased societies, strikes me as an enormous mistake. It enrages the Brahmins and it achieves nothing, as the West has been run by its civil servants, not its politicians, since World War II. What is the glory and culmination of 40 years of American conservative politics since Barry Goldwater? The Bush Administration? Your honor, I rest.

If Vaisya votes are needed to help abolish our profoundly dysfunctional and moribund system of government according to proper legal procedure, fine. But let them vote once, on a proposition that is unambiguous and final, and prevents them from ever having to concern themselves with the ridiculous high-school absurdity of electoral democracy (so brilliantly satirized by [Alexander Payne](#)) ever again. Until there’s an election in which one box is a clear mandate for abolishing the New Deal, if not Washington itself, democratist conservatives are wasting time and annoying the pig.

Why conservatives never quite catch the boat

Thursday, June 21, 2007 at 7:44 PM

In a sad effort to boost my sagging stats (only twelve people visited UR last week — seven of them were commenters, and the other five were me), I have decided to begin attacking other bloggers. I thought I'd start with one of the wisest and most perceptive conservatives around, Lawrence Auster, and one of his excellent frequent correspondents, "Thucydides."

Thucydides writes in, apropos of nothing (the sheer brainpower in Auster's salon is enough to carbonize an ox, especially if the ox is pro-immigration):

It occurs to me that one reason most liberals refuse to recognize the problems of illegal or excessive legal immigration, even though some of the effects, for example, driving down wages for the lowest earners, should attract their concern, is that their utopianism prevents them from acknowledging that we have a culture worth preserving. Their dreams are of some universal rationalist civilization in which human difference will evanesce, by comparison to which our existing culture seems lacking. They gain an elitist self satisfaction on the cheap by positioning themselves as critics of what actually exists; it is unjust, discriminatory, racist, etc. The minute they would acknowledge that we do have a culture that, whatever its flaws, compares favorably to most others in the world, that we do have things to be thankful for, that we have reason for gratitude, they are out of business as superior critics and morally worthy people who imagine a better world. Since their whole sense of identity is bound up in this posture, they cannot for a minute think of abandoning it, even when it clashes with their other goals.

Being unable to acknowledge that there is anything worth preserving about our culture, their universalism takes complete control. Since all people are the same in all places and times, regardless of their particular historic inheritances, any sort of division or border seems in need of rational justification, and they, given their assumptions, cannot find one.

Auster replies:

Very well put. They cannot ever allow themselves to be in the position of defending *our* particular culture, because then they would not be superior to *all* cultures.

In my opinion, it's not well put at all. Its logic is almost right, but it's not quite right.

Who, for example, is "we"? What is "our culture"? Why should subjects of a particular political entity have anything particular in common? What is the difference between this set and the set, say, of all the people whose names start with the letter A, or the set of all people with brown hair?

Not that I am a universalist (a word I like a lot, along with [Brahmin](#), [idealist](#), [progressive-idealist](#), [ultracalvinist](#), or any other names I may invent, or others may submit, in UR's ongoing name-that-death-star contest, whose prize is as usual a bottle of Laphroaig; the referent is the same thing Auster means when he says "liberal," a word I dislike intensely).

Au contraire. I recognize that the section of North America ruled by the government in Washington, DC, is very different both in geography and population from, say, the section of West Africa ruled by the government in Abuja. In fact I feel as if I'd have a great deal of trouble assimilating into any of the many cultures in Nigeria, and I see no reason to assume the converse would be any different.

But the US, too, has many cultures. What do Thucydides and Auster even mean by "culture?" I am really not sure. I prefer to think of America's major social divisions as *castes*; here is my [taxonomy](#), here is my analysis of the [conflicts](#).

Surely, if one attempts to construct some description which combines all these castes — Brahmin (liberal, Democrat), Dalit (ghetto, Democrat), Helot (laborer, Democrat), Optimate (old-school aristo, Republican), and Vaisya (middle American, Republican) — you get mixed nuts with maraschino cherries and calamari. If this is somehow a single "culture," a description I doubt can be defended with any conceivable definition of the word, its main common denominators are McDonalds, "public" schools and CNN. Pound, Hamsun and Celine, come back, we miss you, all is forgiven.

In fact, when you look at the actual issue Thucydides is concerned about, but use my framework rather than his, you see (IMHO) a very clear and intelligible pattern.

The Brahmins, universalists, ultracalvinists, etc, do not hate "our culture" at all. They have a very distinct culture of their own — with a family tree that spends a remarkable amount of time in Massachusetts, upstate New York, etc, etc. (In Charles Royster's excellent and only mildly neo-Unionist picture of the Civil War, [The Destructive War](#), he mentions a foreign traveler in 1864 who asked some random American to explain the war. "It's the conquest of America by Massachusetts," was the answer. Massachusetts, of course, later went on to conquer first Europe and then the entire planet, the views of whose elites as of 2007 bear a surprisingly coincidental resemblance to those held at Harvard in 1945. But I digress.)

No, the Brahmins love their own Brahmin culture. And they hate the culture of their enemies, the Optimates and Vaisyas. I mean, where does a bear shit? Not in the Vatican, that's for sure.

As for Brahmin feelings on the Dalits and Helots, opinions are more complex. Orthodox ultracalvinists idolize Dalits and Helots (as this [hilarious study](#) reveals), but most of them do not know any Dalits, and converse with Helots only occasionally and in their professional capacity. They certainly do not want to live in the same neighborhoods as Dalits — although some daring ultra-Brahmin youth do use this as a social selection device, especially with Dalits of the Hispanic variety, who for some reason are less

violent. (The principle is much the same as that which leads young Yanomamo warriors to torture themselves with [bullet ants](#); the decision to accept the various discomforts of living in a Dalit neighborhood is the rite of initiation into an exclusive social circle. Though it also of course tends to be cheaper, allowing our “hipster” to attend more assiduously to his various unproductive pursuits.)

But if Brahmins needed to work up a lather of hate against Dalits and Helots, they probably could. However, this is not presently useful. It is quite the contrary. And so instead we see a lather of love. Again, we are not talking about the Pope doing his business in the woods, here.

The Dalit and Helot castes are wonderful allies for the Brahmins. First, they provide, of course, votes. If we counted just B versus OV votes, the OVs would win in a walkover. As a very rough proxy, the last US president to win the white vote was Lyndon Johnson.

Almost if not quite as important, the high crime rates of both Dalits and Helots (if illegal immigration isn't a crime, what is?) make them such useful allies. These entire castes can be deployed as crude but effective demo-armies in the grand old leftist style.

Here, for example, is a major presidential candidate deploying them — [rhetorically, at least](#) — as a direct threat in order to extract money. (“It would be really nice if all riots would be quiet riots,” and it would be really nice if you could put your hands on your head and accompany me to the nearest ATM.) In fact, the only reason the riots are quiet (that is, pretty much nonexistent), is that sometime around 1975, the black man started to get a little tired of being used as the white man's pawn — if I may indulge in a little blast of retro-rhetoric.

Therefore, what is going on is simple. Brahmins don't really believe all cultures are equal. They believe their culture is superior, and they have a system of thought (“multiculturalism”) that contradicts all other systems of thought on the planet, past and present. Again, the Pope and the bear, etc. All cultures are brutal, aggressive predators, and all are positively orgasmic, Highlander style, at the prospect of eliminating any of their competitors. Certainly the Brahmin culture, which as I've described is the current heir to the American and Western European [mainline Protestant](#) tradition, is the leading contender and going strong.

Ultracalvinism, this modern descendant of the Puritans, is an aggressive cultural predator that has evolved a cool new trick. It likes to partially reanimate or reinvent the corpses of its smaller and more-decayed victims, as “Aztlán” reinvented the Aztecs, “Kwanzaa” the Ashanti or “Ossian” the Celts, and pretend they're real. Since there is actually no prospect at all of any actual revival of the Aztec, Ashanti or Celtic cultures, this is safe, and it demonstrates ultracalvinism's so-called “tolerance.” Come into my parlor, said the spider to the fly!

And ultracalvinism is also “tolerant” to branches of other religions which it has in fact taken over, such as Reform Judaism or “moderate” Islam. In fact, no “moderate” of any modern faith could find any

conceivable reason to raise his voice in any conversation with any randomly selected Unitarian, which while it may not be entirely conclusive is pretty good evidence that they are actually devotees of the same religion. It's the old zombie maneuver.

So we end up with a very simple and quite mundane (exit the Pope, pursued by the bear) reason why the Brahmins are trying to augment the US's Helot population: everyone always needs more allies. (Especially when your stagnant empire is crumbling.)

Of course this is not a conscious thought. But it doesn't need to be a conscious thought. It just needs to be adaptively successful. In other words, it just needs to work. And boy, does it.

So, again, I'd say Thucydides is not quite right. Perhaps he agrees with this logic, perhaps he doesn't (if he finds this post he's welcome to comment). But it is certainly not what he said. And "not quite right" may be almost right, but that "not quite" is the difference between the ventilation shaft and the ventral asteroid plate.

Which may not matter at all if you just want to fire up a mob. But dissidents in the West today cannot win by firing up a mob. They can only win by convincing young smart people, who will otherwise be convinced by the numerous extremely convincing official sources of information that are constantly competing for access to their tender eyes and ears.

Conservatives: if Washington could be conquered by peasants with pitchforks, don't you think it would have happened by now? Do you think there are more peasants with pitchforks, or fewer, than there were ten years ago? Do you have any strategy for reversing this trend? If not, aren't you just wasting time and annoying the pig?

In my opinion, it is not Larry Auster's words that we can learn from — although those words are often remarkably cogent and well-informed. It is his actions. He may think in terms of a strain of American nationalism that hasn't been effective since Robert Taft was a little boy, but his blog tells a different story. Compare it to National Review's Corner someday, and you'll see the difference. Auster's random emailers (he hand-moderates everything, and only accepts comments via email) are much smarter and better-informed than most of NRO's pros.

Auster is collecting the smartest people around. So why does he keep pursuing rhetorical strategies that appear calculated only to rally people who already support his movement — rather than strategies designed to compete with and defeat ultracalvinism's own reproductive system, capturing the cream of their youth and turning them to the dark side of the Force? Excuse me, I meant away from the dark side, of course.

If there is one general weakness in the conservative strategy, it strikes me as this unwillingness to admit that "liberalism" is actually mainline Protestantism, which is actually Christianity. Whether or not it obeys any specific detail of Christian or Protestant doctrine, such as the validity of the Holy Trinity, the

existence of God, the divinity of Jesus, the predestination of the elect, etc, etc, etc, is entirely irrelevant. We are talking about a continuous cultural tradition whose superficial features constantly mutate. It's a waste of time to generate antibodies to metaphysical doctrines. (I will say more about this in a bit.)

Of course, if you are a Christian, you don't believe these features are superficial. But doesn't that make a nice trap? Neither side can call a spade a spade. The ultracalvinists need to hide the fact that they are spades, and the conservatives, since they believe that only conservative spades are true spades, refuse to bestow upon their enemies the prized status of spadefulness.

Whereas if you can make it past this trap, you are rewarded with an enormous store of clear and easy-to-apply metaphors for religious persecution, an entirely quotidian and extremely common phenomenon which everyone understands.

For example, if ultracalvinists are Christians, "political correctness" is *religious orthodoxy*. Hm, where have we seen this before? Perhaps in Massachusetts? I mean, is it any surprise that Ivy League schools are acting, in effect, as ultracalvinist seminaries? Isn't that exactly what they were founded as?

And what are "multiculturalism" and "diversity" but *religious tests for office*? Hm, I don't know anything of the sort in history. Maybe in Nepal? Nah.

In fact, religious conservatives, whose Christianity is generally of the non-mainline sort, although not every single one of them is an actual practicing snake-handler, have basically taken over the traditional role of Catholics in the British political system.

For example, Brahmins are all in a tizzy that the Justice Department under Bush has hired [eight lawyers](#) from conservative Christian law schools (Ave Maria and Regent). Of course, in the same period, it hired sixty-three from Harvard and Yale, but once the camel's nose is in the tent, etc. It invites contamination. You can't just let your institutions be captured like that, and the New York Times is very wise to object. I mean, they should know, shouldn't they?

And this is why conservatives never quite catch the boat. They do not want to admit that what they are fighting is, in fact, a very old religious war, in which their side holds and has always held the losing hand. Conservatives cannot admit that conservatism is futile, because then they'd have nothing to do. No man will willingly abolish his own occupation.

So conservative political activists, too, do good service as their enemies' pawns. Because the only winning political strategies I can imagine for conservatives, at least in the near term, involve things like boycotting elections. Since conservatives believe in "America" and in democracy, they will never do this. Therefore, they lose, and they will continue to lose.

This castrated pseudo-opposition is of enormous use to the ultracalvinist [blue government](#). It disguises the essentially one-party nature of the [Polygon](#), the vast majority of whose servants are Democrats, and

whose bizarre idea of apolitical or “post-partisan” government would otherwise not withstand two chimpanzee-seconds of actual mental cogitation.

Furthermore, the conservative movement is remarkably effective as a scare puppet. The American political system consistently promotes the most idiotic, backward and ridiculous “conservatives” it can find. Every year, mainstream American conservatives are stupider, more venal, and more crass. The gradient from Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn and Albert Jay Nock to Jonah Goldberg and John Podhoretz, let alone to Michael Savage or Ann Coulter, is simply pathetic. Again, this is not somebody’s “plot,” it is not a conscious design, it is an adaptive pattern whose beneficiary is quite obvious.

Stupid conservative foreign policies are wonderfully useful as well. The war in Iraq has been the greatest boon to the Polygon since — well, since the war in Vietnam, in fact. Gee, isn’t it funny how that works?

Moreover, any such conversation has to involve you converting them, rather than them converting you — something by no means guaranteed with your average “South Park conservative.” And no, you are not going to convince them to handle snakes or speak in tongues. Focus on the basic fact that while they may think they’re rebels, they’re actually loyal servants of a theocratic one-party state, and you might even get somewhere.