

A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations

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(part 1)

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I thought it'd be fun to kick off the year by retro-introducing the blog — for the benefit of innocent new readers, and crazy old ones as well.

Continuing UR readers: obviously, you are not crazy. It is everyone else who is crazy. Thanks for coming back in 2009. If you need a link to introduce your other crazy friends to UR, this may be a good one.

New UR readers: unfortunately, I'm lying. There is no such thing as a gentle introduction to UR. It's like talking about a "mild DMT trip." If it was mild, it wasn't DMT.

UR is a strange blog: its goal is to *cure your brain*. We've all seen *The Matrix*. We know about red pills. Many claim to sell them. You can go, for example, to any bookstore, and ask the guy behind the counter for some Noam Chomsky. What you'll get is blue pills soaked in Red #3.

Since we provide the genuine article, UR is pretty much the anti-Chomsky. (As a broad generalization, UR's stance in any controversy will be the opposite of Chomsky's.) Take one of our red pills — heck, split one in half — and you'll be in a completely different world. Like DMT, except that the DMT reality is prettier than your old reality. UR's is uglier. Also, DMT wears off.

Alas, our genuine red pill is not ready for the mass market. It is the size of a golfball, though nowhere near so smooth, and halfway down it splits in half and exposes a sodium-metal core, which will sear your throat like a live coal. There will be scarring. What can we say? That's what you get for being an early adopter. At least you didn't buy a Newton.

When we think about red and blue pills in the real world, obviously, we are thinking about the Orwellian mind-control state. We are not going to cure your *whole* brain. After the treatment, for instance, you may still be a Celtics fan. Our chemical interest is solely in the *political* lobe.

Unfortunately, this organ is unusually large and proliferating fast. After the treatment, it will return to its normal marble-like size, and you may hear a hollow sound if you knock your fist hard on the back of your head. That's because now you know the truth, and you never need to think about any of that crap ever, ever again. Since the shape of your skull is unchanged, the resulting void is percussive.

When we think about the Orwellian mind-control state, we generally think of a few big, obvious examples. The Nazis. The Soviet Union. And so on. These regimes, of course, specialized in implanting

bizarre, sometimes murderous, instructions in their subjects' brains. If you must visualize these implanted Orwellian modules, you can think of them as little worms, like in *Wrath of Khan*, that crawl into the ear and stay there.

One imagines writing a letter to a dedicated National Socialist, explaining why he should expel his evil neural parasite and instead become a good liberal, signing it "Das Future" and emailing it through a time machine to 1938. Perhaps this could be the original red pill.

Here at UR we have many sinister devices, but a time machine is not one of them. And fortunately, you do not live in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, or 1938. And even more fortunately, your democratic education has vaccinated you to perfection against the first, and to an adequate if unimpressive level against the second. And most fortunately of all, your government is nothing like either Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. All good. But -

But in 1938, three systems of government were contending for global supremacy. One of them is still around: yours. Anglo-American liberal democracy. Had military luck favored either of the others — National Socialism or Marxist-Leninism — we can also be sure that it would have discovered and revealed in its foes' every misdeed, and that it would have approached its own, if at all, tentatively and ambiguously.

If only one can survive, at least two must be illegitimate, and irredeemably criminal. And the survivor will certainly paint them as such. But suppose all three are irredeemably criminal? If the third is an Orwellian mind-control state as well, its subjects are unlikely to regard it as such. It will certainly not prosecute itself.

The third, our third, is very different from the other two. We must remember that American democracy is categorically distinct from National Socialism and the people's democracies in too many ways to count. Since there *are* too many ways to count, we will not bother counting them. We remain entitled to notice parallels. (For instance, it is almost more aesthetic criticism than political or economic analysis, but do read Wolfgang Schivelbusch's [*Three New Deals*](#).)

But no number of categorical distinctions from the other two can alter our estimate of the third's criminality. There are as many ways to be a criminal as there are crimes. That we hang the murderer does not mean we must award a prize to the thief.

I.e: the assumption that, since the Third Reich was Orwellian, and Barack Obama is not Adolf Hitler, Washington must not be Orwellian, is completely fallacious. Socrates is a cat; Ribbentrop is not Socrates; therefore, Ribbentrop is not a cat.

(Comparing the totalitarian dictatorships of the mid-20th century to the OECD democracies of the early 21st is like comparing a reptile to a mammal, a propeller plane to a jet plane, or a flashlight to a laser. We may learn something about the latter from the former, but we may not, and we are easily misled. But

they are what we think of what we think of Orwell, and the association must be tackled first.)

Anyway, let's define this vague charge. What do we mean by *Orwellian*?

I'd say a fair definition of an Orwellian government is one whose principle of public legitimacy ([Mosca's political formula](#), if you care) is contradicted by an accurate perception of reality. In other words, the government is existentially dependent on systematic public deception. If it fails in its mission to keep the lie alive, it at least stands some chance of falling.

The basic premise of UR is that *all* the competing 20th-century systems of government, including the Western democracies which came out on top and which rule us to this day, are best classified as Orwellian. They maintain their legitimacy by shaping public opinion. They shape public opinion by sculpting the information presented to the public. As part of that public, you peruse the world through a lens poured by your government. Ie: you are pwned.

Thus the red pill: any stimulus or stimulant, pharmaceutical or literary, that fundamentally compromises said system of deception. That sounds very medical, but let's be clear: you are not taking our pill as a public service. At least with our present crude packaging, the remedy is not accessible to any politically significant percentage of citizens. Rather, you are dosing up because you'd rather be high. Despite the agony of ingestion, it's just too much fun to see your old reality from the outside. This, rather than "society," is why you will return to UR again and again.

Seen from outside, the Western democracies are particularly elegant examples of Orwellian engineering. They function in the context of a free press and fair, contested elections. They operate no gulags. Not only has UR never been bothered by the authorities, I have not received a single private communication that I would describe as in any sense unfriendly. So how on earth can the system be described as Orwellian?

Easily. Of course, everyone describes it as Orwellian. Professor Chomsky, for one. But UR gets the same result in a *very* different way.

You now enter a journey from which your soul may not return. Don't say we didn't warn ya. The back button is up and to the left. Like yourself the way you are? You might just want to press it.

Okay! It's actually quite simple to demonstrate how you've been pwned. Let's start the show with one of UR's earliest Sith mind tricks. (Jedi mind tricks are blue pills. Sith mind tricks are red pills. Suffice it to say that you've been exposed to a lot of anti-Sith propaganda.)

We'll start with a point of agreement. As a good citizen of America, which is the greatest country on earth, one thing you believe in is *separation of church and state*. I too am an American, and it so happens that I too believe in *separation of church and state*. Although one might argue that my interpretation of the formula is a little different than yours.

So let's understand what we mean by the formula, word by word. What do we mean when we say *state*? We mean, "the government." I trust that is sufficiently clear.

What do we mean by *separation*? If A and B are *separated*, A has nothing to do with B. Eg, whatever *church* and *state* are, if *separated*, they have as much to do with each other as the Albanian Golf Federation and the Alaskan Alliance for Beef, ie, nothing. I think that's pretty clear. If the Alaska cattlemen can rent that course outside Durazzo, so can anyone else. Presumably, the opposite, bad if *separation* is good, would be *union of church and state*.

What do we mean by *church*?

Bueller? Bueller? Bueller....

Clearly, if we have some general objection to *union of church and state*, these objections must in some way be derived from some generic definition of the word *church*. But when we use words like *church*, *religion*, etc, while it is very easy to think of examples (the Catholic Church, Islam, etc, etc), it is considerably more difficult to construct a description which includes all the examples, and excludes all the non-examples. Of course one may have a perfectly reasonable prejudice against the Pope, Muslims, etc — but if so, why not just say so?

For example, it is very easy to include God or gods in one's definition of *church*. In that case, we throw out Buddhism, which is surely a legitimate religion. I assume your version of *separation of church and state* includes separation of Buddhism and state. Mine [sure does](#). And what about Scientology? Shouldn't we have separation of Scientology and state? I'm guessing you'll sign up for this one as well.

The question seems difficult. So let's procrastinate. For a straw definition of *church*, though, let's say a *church* is an organization or movement which specializes in telling people what to think. I would not inquire into this definition too closely — lest you ruin the suspense — but surely it fits Scientology, the Southern Baptists, Buddhism, etc. That's close enough for now.

This definition of *state*, *separation*, and *church* gives us three interpretations of why *separation of church and state* is such a good idea.

One: our definition of *church* might include the stipulation that a church is an organization that distributes *misinformation* — ie, lies, unfalsifiable hypotheses, and other bogus truths. This sounds very sensible, because we don't want the state to distribute misinformation.

On the other hand, this is not a very useful definition. It is equivalent to a restriction that union of church and state is okay, so long as the state church teaches only the truth. Naturally, according to the church, it teaches only the truth. But it is difficult to imagine a clause in the Constitution which states: "Congress shall establish a Church, which shall Teach only the Truth." From an engineering perspective, the restriction is more effective if it does not depend on some process for distinguishing true churches

from false churches. Ya think?

Two: we might say that whether they teach the truth or not, churches are just a bad idea, period. People should think for themselves. They should not have thoughts broadcast into a little antenna in the back of the skull. Therefore, the state should separate itself from the church, just because a good state should separate itself from all evil things.

But fortunately or unfortunately, there is no kingdom of philosophers. Most people do not think for themselves, should not think for themselves, and cannot be expected to think for themselves. They do exactly what they should be doing, and trust others to work out the large philosophical truths of the world for them. This trust may be well-placed or not, but surely this mechanism of delegation is an essential aspect of human society — at least with the humans we have now.

Three: we might believe that a government should not tell its subjects what to think. Since this is the only option I have left, it is the one I follow. I'd like to think you follow it as well.

If not quite for the same reason. Let's think about it. There are two kinds of government: those whose formula of legitimacy depends on popular consent, and those whose doesn't. Following contemporary usage, we can classify these as *authoritarian* and *democratic*.

An authoritarian state has no need to tell its subjects what to think, because it has no reason to care what they think. In a truly authoritarian government, the ruling authority relies on force, not popularity. It cares what its subjects do, not what they think. It may encourage a healthy, optimistic attitude and temperate lifestyle proclivities, but only because this is good for business. Therefore, any authoritarian state that needs an official religion must have something wrong with it. (Perhaps, for example, its military authority is not as absolute as it thinks.)

A democratic state which tells its citizens what to think is a political solecism. Think about the motivation for democracy: it consigns the state to the collective responsibility of its citizens, because it feels this is an independent and well-anchored hook on which to hang the common good. Once the republic has an established church, this hook is no longer independent, and the (postulated) value-add of democracy is nullified.

Without separation of church and state, it is easy be for a democracy to indulge itself in arbitrarily irresponsible misgovernment, simply by telling its bishops to inform their congregations that black is white and white is black. Thus misdirected, they are easily persuaded to support counterproductive policies which they wrongly consider productive.

A common syndrome is the case in which a purported solution is in fact the cause of the problem. As a Russian politician once said of his opponents: "These people think they are the doctors of society. In fact, they are the disease." (It is indeed surprising that Nassim Taleb has [just learned](#) the word *iatrogenic*. BTW, if you know Taleb, please point him at UR. If you know someone who knows Taleb, please...)

Union of church and state can foster stable iatrogenic misgovernment as follows. First, the church fosters and maintains a popular misconception that the problem exists, and the solution solves it. Secondly, the state responds by extruding an arm, agency, or other pseudopod in order to apply the solution. Agency and church are thus cooperating in the creation of unproductive or counterproductive jobs, as “doctors.” Presumably they can find a way to split the take.

The root problem with a state church in a democratic state is that, to believe in democracy, one must believe that the levers of power *terminate* with the voters. But if your democracy has an effective state church, the actual levers of power *pass through* the voters, and go back to the church. The church teaches the voters what to think; the voters tell the politicians what to do. Naturally, it is easy for the politicians to short-circuit this process and just listen to the bishops.

Thus the government has a *closed power loop*. With the church at its apex, of course. Which is exactly what we were hoping to avoid when we decided to make our state democratic, rather than authoritarian — an independent and unaccountable authority, which is in charge of everything else. In this case our authority is, of course, the church itself. Oops! We have engineered ourselves a big bucket of *FAIL*.

In other words, our so-called democracy is dependent not on the wisdom of the people, but on the internal power politics of the official church. If these politics produce a political platform which translates to responsible and effective actions, the government will be good. If they don't, it will suck. Either way, we have consigned the state to an unaccountable conclave of bishops. Why this is an improvement on monarchy, or any other form of autocracy, is unclear.

This political architecture, an abortion by any standard, is commonly known as a *theocracy*. Oddly enough, the classic historical case of a theocracy is... wait, hang on, I'm forgetting... oh, yes! *Right here*, in North America. Under those strange people we call the “Puritans.”

(A more precise label would be [Brownist](#) — I'm with Shakespeare on this one. Note that, cladistically speaking, we are all Brownists now. And [Carter Van Carter](#) has told us all about [Whitby](#) — let Daniel Wait Howe fill you in on [Scrooby](#).)

For those who prefer their history fresh rather than aged, we can turn to [Darren Staloff](#), whose [*Making of an American Thinking Class: Intellectuals and Intelligentsia in Puritan Massachusetts*](#) is badly-written but quite informative. Professor Staloff writes [*italics mine*]:

The Puritan ministers [...] created a completely new form of political authority — in the Weberian sense of legitimate power — which I have called *cultural domination*. Cultural domination, as here conceived, requires four formal supports.

of all, like charismatic authority, it requires recognition in the form of ritual election or some similar mechanism of oath swearing or covenant signing. Fealty is sworn to the “correct” cultural formation,

in this case Puritan biblicism, and the officeholder is empowered only as the specially trained bearer and interpreter of that cultural tradition. The “laity” generally conceive of this high cultural training — whether centered around biblicism or some other intellectually legitimating principle like reason or rationality — as being endowed with an automatic efficacy that need simply be applied to any problem to generate a univocal solution. The biblical truth is eternal and immutable, claimed Thomas Hooker, “but the alteration grows, according to God’s most just judgment, and their own deservings.”

Such belief gives rise to the *second* formal requirement, that officially authorized bearers of the cultural tradition must always agree in their public formulations or at least not disagree. If this condition is violated, the laity may come to see the cultural tradition as an amorphous collection of expressions or principles manipulated by “mandarins” for their own aggrandizement.

The *third* requirement is that all public expression of the culturally able must be bestowed on these public acts, including forced attendance, titulary homage, and silent obedience. *Finally*, to ensure the stability of the entire system, unauthorized cultural expressions must be carefully monitored and severely suppressed when they contradict or threaten to “desacralize” the authorized formulas.

The crafty Professor Staloff, like all good historians, is trying to sneak a message about the present into his narrative of the past. Note that quibble: *or some other intellectually legitimating principle like reason or rationality*. Why would he say this? Professor Staloff, who has clearly been reading too much H.P. Lovecraft, provides a clue in his [introduction](#):

How could an educated elite of ministers (and magistrates, as I learned from Timothy Breen) hold such dominant power in a fledgling colonial settlement? Granted the deference normally accorded a university degree, these educated leaders lacked the large-scale property interests normally associated with a ruling stratum. What were the institutional arrangements and practices that facilitated this remarkable empowerment? Finally, why did this elite choose to use their power to impose an order on Massachusetts derived from academic theology? What did it mean that the Bay Colony was patterned after a high cultural theory?

I sought the answer to these questions in the library of Miskatonic University. Two works in particular — Falconer’s three-volume *Cryptomenysis Patefacta*, and von Junzt’s strange *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* — confirmed my *most unsettling hunches*.

Professional intellectuals and intelligentsia comprised a *collective interest*. They were the *great unexamined class in modern political history*, whose will to power occasionally took the form of *revolutionary ideological politics*. I had a greater appreciation for the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred’s claim that the Puritan divines were the precursors of the Jacobins and the Bolsheviks.

Professor Staloff, we see, speaks elliptically but with great urgency. What, exactly, is his message to the

initiated? How can we translate this dark prophecy into the plain, Saxon tongue?

I'm afraid the proposition Professor Staloff is hinting at is that we *do* have a state church. It just doesn't call itself that. By this simple twitch of the hips, like a receiver dodging a linebacker, it has faked your intellectual immune system off its feet. Not to worry! Our red pill is here to help.

Like Professor Staloff, I have constructed my definition of *church* as a trap. If you have been following along without suspicion, you are in the trap. Let us now close the lid.

Notice that our definition of *church* has not invoked any of the typical attributes of *religion*. In particular, we have avoided any requirement that (a) the doctrines of the *church* be either partially or entirely supernatural in nature (think of Buddhism or Scientology — or, for that matter, Nazism or Bolshevism), or (b) the structure of the *church* be in any way centrally organized (a Quaker theocracy is just as excluded as a Catholic theocracy — and once your church is united with the state, there is no shortage of structure).

We have just said: a *church* is *an organization or movement which tells people how to think*. A broad definition, but it turns out to be perfectly adequate to validate our case for *separation of church and state*. And it contains all our test cases.

There's just one problem. The definition is slightly *too* broad. It captures some cases which we obviously don't want to include. You see, under this definition, Harvard is a *church*.

And we surely can't mean that there should be separation of Harvard and state. Yet somehow — this is the result the computer keeps giving us. Perhaps there is some mistake?

We have stumbled, of course, into Professor Staloff's definition. Unlike the Harvard of 1639, the Harvard of 2009 bases its authority not on the interpretation of scripture, but on *some other intellectually legitimating principle like reason or rationality*. Everything else is the same.

It could be, of course, that Harvard of 2009's application of *reason or rationality* is inherently accurate, ie, *endowed with an automatic efficacy that need simply be applied to any problem to generate a univocal solution*. Whether or not this is the case, many behave as if it were.

But even if it is, all we are looking at is a condition we rejected earlier as unsatisfactory: a state church which *teaches only the truth*. Perhaps Harvard of 2009 teaches only the truth. And Harvard of 2010? 2020? We resign the answer to the tempests of academic power politics. If this is transparent and accountable, so is mud.

The basic security hole is this word, *education*. *Education* is defined as the inculcation of correct facts and good morals. Thus an institution which is *educational* and *secular*, such as Harvard, simply becomes a "Church, which shall Teach only the Truth." Like the Puritans of old New England, in seeking to

disestablish one state church, we have established another.

It is also hard to argue that we enjoy *separation of Harvard and state*. Harvard is conventionally described as a “private” university. This term is strictly nominal. Vast streams of cash flow from the taxpayer’s pocket into Harvard’s — as they do not flow to, say, the Vatican.

And we can see easily that Harvard is attached to *something*, because the perspective of Harvard in 2009, while wildly different from the perspective of Harvard in 1959, is not in any way different from the perspective of Stanford in 2009. If a shared attachment to Uncle Sam isn’t what keeps Harvard and Stanford on the same page, what is? It’s not football.

Except for a few unimportant institutions of non-mainstream religious affiliation, we simply do not see multiple, divergent, competing schools of thought within the American university system. The whole vast archipelago, though evenly speckled with a salting of contrarians, displays no factional structure whatsoever. It seems almost perfectly synchronized.

There are two explanations for this synchronization. One, Harvard and Stanford are synchronized because they both arrive at the same truth. I am willing to concede this for, say, chemistry. When it comes to, say, African-American studies, I am not quite so sure. Are you? Surely it is arguable that the latter is a legitimate area of inquiry. But surely it is arguable that it is not. So how is it, exactly, that Harvard, Stanford, and everyone else gets the same answer?

I’m afraid the only logical alternative, however awful and unimaginable, is the conclusion that Harvard and Stanford are synchronized because both are remoras attached, in some unthinkable way, to some *great, invisible predator of the deep* — perhaps even Cthulhu himself.

Certainly, the synchronization is not coordinated by any *human* hierarchical authority. (Yes, there are accreditation agencies, but a Harvard or a Stanford could easily fight them.) The system may be Orwellian, but it has no Goebbels. It produces *Gleichschaltung* without a Gestapo. It has a Party line without a Party. A neat trick. We of the Sith would certainly like to understand it.

And we are again reminded of the half-mad words of the late Professor Staloff:

... officially authorized bearers of the cultural tradition must always agree in their public formulations or at least not disagree. Cthulhu R’lyeh wagh’nagl fhtagn! If this condition is violated, the laity may come to see the cultural tradition as an amorphous collection of expressions or principles manipulated by “mandarins” for their own aggrandizement.

But if Harvard in 2009 fits this description, how exactly is said agreement enforced? If you’ve ever met any of the *officially authorized bearers*, you know that the last thing they think of themselves as being is “officially authorized bearers.” And it is one thing to say they *must always agree* — another to make them do so.

No one does. And yet, they agree. Their views change over time — and they all change in the same direction, at the same rate. There is a strange *self-organizing* quality about this design. Does the American university system's maintenance of broad unanimity, despite the clear absence of anything like a coordinating executive authority, make it seem *less* creepy to you? Or *more*? I'm afraid I'll have to go with "more" on this one.

Moreover, if we broaden our focus from the university system to the entire system of "education," from grade schools to journalism, we see this effect again and again. What, exactly, is the "mainstream media?" If we accept the ecclesiastical metaphor, the newspaper is a perfect analogue of the church proper. It is simply the latest transmission technology for your worm's daily or weekly security update. And here again, a coordinated message — without any central agency.

Dude, if you don't find this creepy, I gotta ask: why not? But maybe it is all an abstraction to you. Let's make it slightly more concrete.

In 1963, a long time ago but in the lives of many now living, the citizens of California, by a majority of nearly two-thirds, voted to pass a law called [Proposition 14](#). This amended the state constitution to add the following:

"Neither the State nor any subdivision or agency thereof shall deny, limit or abridge, directly or indirectly, the right of any person, who is willing or desires to sell, lease or rent any part or all of his real property, to decline to sell, lease or rent such property to such person or persons as he, in his absolute discretion, chooses."

In other words: if you don't want to live with persons of color, you don't have to. The amendment, obviously, turned out to be [unconstitutional](#), just like [this one](#); and we have persons of color to this day in California. In fact, we have so many of them that California in 2008 elected Barack Obama, noted person of color, by almost the same margin that its 1963 predecessor passed Prop. 14.

Part of this political change was due to said demographic shift. But not all. So: how, exactly, did California change from a state that would vote for Prop. 14, to one that would elect Obama? Was this change predictable? Was it inevitable in some sense? Again, we are seeing the movement of a bobber on the water. What is the bobber attached to? A bluegill? Or Cthulhu?

If you are still clinging to the Matrix, you might say the change happened because Prop. 14 was *wrong*, and the election of Obama was *right*. Suppose we agree with you. But why, exactly, should we have been so confident in expecting a change from *wrong* to *right*? If there is some mechanism large and powerful enough to drag the public opinion of California, in 45 years, from Prop. 14 to Obama — maybe not Cthulhu, but definitely not a bluegill — shouldn't we expect to be just as easily dragged back from *right* to *wrong*? Will segregation make a comeback in San Francisco? If not, why not?

Whatever our Cthulhu may be, it is interesting to note that there is an algorithm for predicting the movement of the bobber. On a number of subjects — not just segregation — I note that the public opinion of California in 2008 is quite similar to the public opinion of Stanford in 1963.

This is easy to explain: in post-1945 America, the source of all new ideas is the university. Ideas check out of the university, but they hardly ever check in. Thence, they flow outward to the other arms of the educational system as a whole: the mainstream media and the public schools. Eventually they become our old friend, “public opinion.” This process is slow, happening on a generational scale, and thus the 45-year lag.

Thus whatever coordinates the university system coordinates the state, through the transmission device of “public opinion.” Naturally, since this is 100% effective, the state does not have to wait for the transmission to complete. It can act in advance of a complete response, as in this case the Supreme Court did in 1967, and synchronize directly with the universities.

This relationship, whose widespread practice in the United States dates to [1933](#), is known as *public policy*. Essentially, for everything your government does, there is a university department full of professors who can, and do, tell it what to do. Civil servants and Congressional staffers follow the technical lead of the universities. The residual democratic branch of Washington, the White House, can sometimes push back feebly, but only with great difficulty.

(What’s neat is that because of our armies’ great success in the early 1940s, the governments of *other countries* respond to American public policy as well. The synchronization is international. Some of America’s little friends overseas, such as Britain, have universities in the second rank. But there is only one global postwar academic system, the American one, and all top-tier universities are in the United States. The con by which policies devised by this system are passed off as global, transcending mere nationality, is sometimes called *transnationalism*. But I digress.)

The triangle of professors, bureaucrats, and public opinion is stable, because the professors teach as well as advise. Of course, there is a time lag. The system experiences some strain. But it will stay together, so long as the polarity does not randomly reverse — ie, because Cthulhu decides to suddenly swim right rather than left.

But no. Cthulhu may swim slowly. But he only swims left. Isn’t that interesting?

In the history of American democracy, if you take the mainstream political position ([Overton Window](#), if you care) at time T₁, and place it on the map at a later time T₂, T₁ is always way to the right, near the fringe or outside it. So, for instance, if you take the average segregationist voter of 1963 and let him vote in the 2008 election, he will be way out on the wacky right wing. Cthulhu has passed him by.

Where is the John Birch Society, now? What about the NAACP? Cthulhu swims left, and left, and left.

There are a few brief periods of true reaction in American history — the post-Reconstruction era or [Redemption](#), the [Return to Normalcy](#) of Harding, and a couple of others. But they are unusual and feeble compared to the great leftward shift. Nor, most important for our hypothesis, did they come from the universities; in the 20th century, periods of reaction are always periods of anti-university activity. (McCarthyism is especially noticeable as such. And you'll note that McCarthy didn't exactly win.)

The principle applies even in wars. In each of the following conflicts in Anglo-American history, you see a victory of left over right: the English Civil War, the so-called “Glorious Revolution,” the American Revolution, the American Civil War, World War I, and World War II. Clearly, if you want to be on the winning team, you want to start on the left side of the field.

And we are starting to piece the puzzle together. The leftward direction is, *itself*, the principle of organization. In a two-party democratic system, with Whigs and Tories, Democrats and Republicans, etc, the intelligentsia is always Whig. Their party is simply the party of those who want to get ahead. It is the party of celebrities, the ultra-rich, the great and good, the flexible of conscience. Tories are always misfits, losers, or just plain stupid — sometimes all three.

And the left is the party of the educational organs, at whose head is the press and universities. This is our 20th-century version of the established church. Here at UR, we sometimes call it the *Cathedral* — although it is essential to note that, unlike an ordinary organization, it has no central administrator. No, this will not make it easier to deal with.

This strange chiral asymmetry implies some fundamental difference between right and left. What is that difference? What does it even mean to be left rather than right? How can an entire system of independent thinkers and institutions, without any central coordinating agency, recognize that everyone should go left rather than right?

First, we need to define left and right. In my opinion, obviously a controversial one, the explanation for this mysterious asymmetric dimension is easy: it is political entropy. Right represents *peace, order and security*; left represents *war, anarchy and crime*.

Because values are inherently subjective, it is possible to argue that left can be good and right can be bad. For example, you can say that the Civil War was good — the North needed to conquer the South and free the slaves.

On the other hand, it is also quite easy to construct a very clean value system in which order is simply good, and chaos is simply evil. I have chosen this path. It leaves quite a capacious cavity in the back of my skull, and allows me to call myself a *reactionary*. To you, perhaps, it is the dark side. But this is only because the treatment is not yet complete.

Whatever you make of the left-right axis, you have to admit that there exists some force which has been pulling the Anglo-American political system leftward for at least the last three centuries. Whatever this

unfathomable stellar emanation may be, it has gotten us from the Stuarts to Barack Obama. Personally, I would like a refund. But that's just me.

It is time to understand this force. My theory is that what we're looking at is the attraction of *power itself*. The left attracts a natural coalition because it always attracts those whose only interest is in the pure thrill of domination. Most will join them through peer pressure alone, leaving only the misfits.

Let's look, for a minute, at the minds of the people who hold these positions of power. Your R1 professors, your Times reporters, and so on. These are, of course, very competitive jobs, and only a tiny minority of the people who want them and are capable of doing them will get to have them. They have certainly worked very hard to get where they are. And they perceive that effort as one made in the interest of humanity at large.

I think the salaries at this level are reasonable, but it is not money that makes people want these jobs. It is power, which brings with it status. I define power as *personal influence over important events*; I don't know of any other definition.

One of the key reasons that intellectuals are fascinated by disorder, in my opinion, is the fact that disorder is an extreme case of complexity. And as you make the structure of authority in an organization more complex, more informal, or both — as you fragment it, eliminating hierarchical execution structures under which one individual decides and is responsible for the result, and replacing them with highly fragmented, highly consensual, and highly process-oriented structures in which ten, twenty or a hundred people can truthfully claim to have contributed to the outcome, you increase the amount of power, status, patronage, and employment produced.

Of course, you also make the organization less efficient and effective, and you make working in it a lot less fun for everyone — you have gone from startup to Dilbert. This is Brezhnevian sclerosis, the fatal disease of organizations in a highly regulated environment. All work is guided by some systematic process, in which each rule was contributed by someone whose importance was a function of how many rules he added. In the future, we will all work for the government. Individually, this is the last thing your average intellectual wants to do, but it is the direction in which his collective acts are pushing us.

In short: intellectuals cluster to the left, generally adopting as a social norm the principle of *pas d'ennemis a gauche, pas d'amis a droit*, because like everyone else they are drawn to power. The left is chaos and anarchy, and the more anarchy you have, the more power there is to go around. The more orderly a system is, the fewer people get to issue orders. The same asymmetry is why corporations and the military, whose system of hierarchical executive authority is inherently orderly, cluster to the right.

Once the cluster exists, however, it works by any means necessary. The reverence of anarchy is a mindset in which an essentially Machiavellian, tribal model of power flourishes. To the bishops of the Cathedral, anything that strengthens their influence is a good thing, and vice versa. The analysis is completely

reflexive, far below the conscious level. Consider [this comparison of the coverage](#) between the regime of Pinochet and that of Castro. Despite atrocities that are comparable at most — not to mention a much better record in providing responsible and effective government — Pinochet receives the full-out two-minute hate, whereas the treatment of Castro tends to have, at most, a gentle and wistful disapproval.

This is because Pinochet's regime was something completely alien to the American intellectual, whereas — the relationship between *Puritan divines* and *Bolshevism* being exactly as the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred, says — Castro's regime was something much more understandable. If you sketch the relative weights of the social networks connecting Pinochet to the Cathedral, versus Castro to the Cathedral, you are comparing a thread to a bicep.

We also see the nature of the blue pill here. After completing the UR treatment, it is interesting to go back and read your Chomsky. What you'll see is that Chomsky is, in every case, demanding that all political power be in the hands of the Cathedral. The American system is very large and complex, and this is certainly not the case. The least exception or (God forbid) reversal, and Chomsky is in on the case, deploying the old principle of "this animal is very dangerous; when attacked, it defends itself." The progressive is always the underdog in his own mind. Yet, in objective reality, he always seems to win in the end.

In other words, the Chomskian transformation is to interpret any resistance, by a party which is inherently much weaker, as oppression by a magic force of overwhelming strength. For example, we can ask: which set of individuals exerts more influence over American journalists? American professors, or American CEOs? American diplomats, or American generals? In both cases, the answer is clearly the former. Yet any hint of corporate or military influence over the press is, of course, anathema.

If anyone is in an obvious position to [manufacture consent](#), it is (as [Walter Lippmann](#) openly proposed) first the journalists themselves, and next the universities which they regard as authoritative. Yet, strangely, the leftist has no interest whatsoever in this security hole. This can only be because it is already plugged with his worm. The complaint of the Chomskian, in other words, always occurs when the *other team* is impudent enough to try to manufacture a bit of its own consent. Hence: the blue pill.

And there is another card I've been holding back on. You see, the problem is not just that our present system of government — which might be described succinctly as an atheistic theocracy — is *accidentally* similar to Puritan Massachusetts. As anatomists put it, these structures are not just analogous. They are [homologous](#). This architecture of government — theocracy secured through democratic means — is a single continuous thread in American history.

An excellent historical description of this continuity is George McKenna's [Puritan Origins of American Patriotism](#) — it gets a little confused in the 20th century, but this is to be expected. However, as a demonstration, I am particularly partial to one particular primary source — [this article](#) from 1942, which I found somehow in Time Magazine's wonderful free archive.

The nice thing about reading a primary source from 1942 is that you are assured of its “period” credentials, unless of course someone has hacked Time’s archive. The author cannot possibly know anything about 1943. If you find a text from 1942 that describes the H-bomb, you know that the H-bomb was known in 1942. One such text is entirely sufficient.

What’s great about the “American Malvern” article is that, while it describes a political program you will place instantly, it describes it in a very odd way. You are used to thinking of this perspective, which is obviously somewhere toward the left end of your NPR dial, as representative of a *political* movement. Instead, the anonymous Time reporter describes it as a *religious* (“super-protestant,” to be exact) program. Isn’t that just bizarre?

We have caught the worm in the act of turning. The political program and perspective that we think of as *progressive* is, or is at least descended from, the program of a religious sect. Unsurprisingly, this sect, best known as ecumenical [mainline Protestantism](#), is historically the most powerful form of American Christianity — and happens to be the direct, linear descendant of Professor Staloff’s Puritans. (You can also see it in abolitionism, the Social Gospel, the Prohibitionists, and straight on down to global warming. The mindset never changes.)

For a brief snapshot of where it is today, try [this article](#). Note that [Congregationalist](#) and Puritan are basically synonyms, and American Unitarianism is a spinoff of Congregationalism. Of course, these belief systems have evolved since the time when these labels meant anything. Since the 1960s they have merged into one warm, mushy, NPR-flavored whole, which we here at UR sometimes refer to as *Universalism*. [Michael Lerner](#) is perhaps the ultimate Universalist.

Thus we see the whole, awful picture merge together. It is Cthulhu. We don’t just live in something vaguely *like* a Puritan theocracy. We live in an *actual*, genuine, functioning if hardly healthy, 21st-century Puritan theocracy.

What this means is that you can trust *hardly any* of your beliefs. You were educated by this system, which purports to be a truth machine but is clearly nothing of the sort. Since the US is not the Soviet Union, hard scientific facts — physics, chemistry, and biology, are unlikely to be wrong. But the Soviet Union actually did pretty well with hard science.

Other than that, you have *no rational reason* to trust anything coming out of the Cathedral — that is, the universities and press. You have no more reason to trust these institutions than you have to trust, say, the Vatican. In fact, they are motivated to mislead you in ways that the Vatican is not, because the Vatican does not have deep, murky, and self-serving connections in the Washington bureaucracy. They claim to be truth machines. Why wouldn’t they?

The Cathedral, with its informal union of church and state, is positioned perfectly. It has all the advantages of being a formal arm of government, and none of the disadvantages. Because it formulates

public policy, it is best considered our ultimate governing organ, but it certainly bears no responsibility for the success or failure of said policy. Moreover, it gets to program the little worm that is inserted in everyone's head, beginning at the age of five and going all the way through grad school.

Worst of all, this system is not a new one. It dates at least to FDR. Nor was the pre-FDR system of government in the United States particularly savory. Nor was the one before that — etc. If you want to be completely disillusioned with mythic Americana, I recommend [Peter Oliver](#). It is certainly interesting to know that, ultimately, the reason the Star-Spangled Banner waves o'er the home of the free and the land of the brave is that [James Otis](#)'s father was not given a job.

So it is no use deciding that the solution is to be a “conservative.” It is wonderful that you've gotten past progressivism, but you still need the red pill. The problem is much, much older and deeper than you think. I once teased the infamous Larry Auster, proprietor of [View from the Right](#) — the Web's most thoughtful hard-line conservative — that his blog should be called VFR1960, because he sides with the right in every conflict after 1960. Before 1960, however, VFR could be accurately renamed *View from the Left*. Larry, bless his soul, didn't like that at all. But it still happens to be true.

This is slightly daunting. But only slightly. We have not even gotten to the active ingredient in our red pill yet — certainly not that awful sodium core. We have presented an alternate picture of reality, in which you live not in the free, post-Orwellian world, but in an Orwellian mind-control state which is a nasty, nasty hangover from the old, weird past. To verify this conviction, however, we need to catch said mind-control state in the act of actually controlling our minds.

Therefore, since we cannot trust our existing beliefs, we need to look at the areas in which our Universalist “educations” may have caused us to misperceive reality, reassess our beliefs, and compare the reassessment to the orthodox or received truth. If we see discrepancies, we confirm the Orwellian interpretation. If we see no discrepancies, perhaps the Cathedral is just a truth machine after all.

Next week, we'll complete the not-so-gentle introduction. The red pill will then be in your possession, and all you need to do is swallow it.

(And yes, I know, I promised to respond to the comments on the Patchwork series. I will spend one more week, only, on this introduction, and then get to it.)

A gentle introduction to Unqualified Reservations

(part 2)

Thursday, January 15, 2009 at 3:44 AM

We have swallowed the red pill, which now makes its way to the stomach. The coating dissolves. The rotor spins up and the device begins to operate. Inside, the sodium-metal core remains intact.

And we begin the treatment. Again, our goal is to detach you — by “you,” of course, I mean only the endogenous neural tissue — from the annelid parasite which now occupies a significant percentage of your cranium, and of course is fully integrated with your soul.

This worm goes by many a name, but today we’ll just call it *democracy*. Once we’ve severed its paradendritic hyphae, you can remove your little guest safely in your own bathroom — all you need is a Dremel tool, a Flowbee and a big plastic bag. Pack the cavity with Bondo, wear a wig for a few weeks, and no one will suspect you’ve become a reactionary imperialist.

Of course, you came to us. So the worm must be a little loose already, or otherwise unwell. Which is great — but doesn’t really assist us in the procedure. UR is a *scientific* operation. Everyone gets the same cuts on the same dots. So for the purposes of our red pill, we’ll assume you remain an orthodox, NPR-loving progressive. Continue reading at your own risk.

We’ll start by detaching you from the party line, your parasite, *democracy*, on exactly *one point*. You’ll feel a kind of faint plucking sensation behind your right ear. It might hurt a little. It is not the sodium core. We are certainly not solving the problem here and now. Yet our point is a substantial one, and detaching it should give us plenty of slack to pull on.

What we’re going to do is to replace your perspective of a major historical event, one which you have never considered controversial, but one which is vital to your understanding of the world you live in. And how will we accomplish this? By the most orthodox of scholarly methods. The only tools in our little black bag are (a) [primary sources](#), (b) forgotten works by reputable historians of the present, and (c) modern works by respected academics.

When all I knew of surfing was surf videos, I used to wonder how surfers swim through all those big broken waves out to where it’s glassy. When I learned to surf (I am a terrible surfer), I learned the answer: there’s no trick. At least, not one that works. You just have to paddle out faster than the crazy, roaring mess can push you in. (Okay, if you’re a shortboarder, you can duck-dive. But shortboards are for teenagers.)

Similarly, there is no magic key to history. If you want to make up your own mind about the past, you cannot do so by going there. So you have to find sources you trust. The [Sith Library](#) makes this about as easy as it's going to get, but it will always be work.

Anyway. Our point is the conflict you call the *American Revolution*. For a quick self-test, ask yourself how close you are to agreeing with the following statement. (You're not expected to take this on faith — we will demonstrate it quite thoroughly.)

Everything I know about the American Revolution is [bullshit](#).

Orwellian antihistory, at least high-quality antihistory (and remember, kids, *democracy* is anything but mildly evolved), tends to fit Professor Frankfurt's handy definition: bullshit is neither truth nor fiction. It is bullshit. If it uses any factual misstatements, it uses them very sparsely. If it has any resemblance to reality, the match is a coincidence.

The typical structure of antihistorical bullshit is an aggregate of small, accurate and unimportant facts, set in a filler of nonsense and/or active misinterpretation. This mix hardens quickly, can support tremendous architectural loads, and looks like marble from a distance.

Especially if you've never seen actual marble. When I find out, or at least flatter myself that I have found out, the actual picture behind my 10th-grade matte-painting view of some event, I am always reminded of something that happened to me in 10th grade. I was listening to a shitty '80s Top 40 station — *in the actual '80s*. Presumably in a desperate attempt to familiarize myself with actual American culture. When, as some kind of game or promotion, they played a Stones song — *Paint It Black*, I think. And that was basically it for Cyndi Lauper. This is the difference between real history and antihistory: the difference between Mick Jagger and Cyndi Lauper.

Of course, unlike Cyndi Lauper, antihistorical bullshit has an adaptive function. It exists to fill the hole in your head where the actual story should be. Duh. If everything you know about the American Revolution is bullshit, you know nothing about the American Revolution. This is the basic technique of misdirection, popular with magicians everywhere since time immemorial. You can't see the rabbit going into the hat if you're not looking at the hat.

So: let's put it as bluntly as possible. At present you believe that, in the American Revolution, good triumphed over evil. This is the aforementioned aggregate. We're going to just scoop that right out with the #6 brain spoon. As we operate, we'll replace it with the actual story of the *American Rebellion* — in which evil triumphed over good.

Yup. We're really going to do this. You're on the table. It's the real thing. In the terms of the time, at present you are a Patriot and (pejoratively) a *Whig*. After this initial subprocedure you will be a Loyalist and (pejoratively) a *Tory*. Obviously, a challenging surgical outcome. But hey, it's the 21st century. If not

now, when?

Some would just try to split the difference, and convince you that it wasn't black and white — that the "King's friends" had a point, too. Your modern academic historian (as opposed to his more numerous colleague, the modern academic antihistorian) is terribly good at this trick of dousing inconvenient truths in a freezing, antiseptic bucket of professional neutrality.

This is pretty much why you can't just walk into your friendly local bookstore and buy a red pill. It *was* black and white. It was just black and white in the *other direction*.

How on earth can we possibly convince you of this? We'll read an old book or two, that's all. No actual incision is needed. The metaphor is just a metaphor. Relax and breathe into the mask.

Let's call our first witness. His name is [Thomas Hutchinson](#), and he is the outstanding Loyalist figure of the prerevolutionary era. His *Strictures upon the Declaration of the Congress at Philadelphia* is [here](#). It is not long. Please do him the courtesy of reading it in full, then continue below.

Now: what do you notice about Hutchinson's *Strictures*? Well, the first thing you notice is: before today, you had never read it. Or even heard of it. Or probably even its author. What is the ratio of the number of people who have read the *Declaration* to the number who have read the *Strictures*? 10^5 ? 10^6 ? Something like that. Isn't that just *slightly* creepy?

The second thing we notice about the *Strictures* is its tone — very different from the *Declaration*. The *Declaration* shouts at us. The *Strictures* talk to us. Hutchinson speaks quietly, with just the occasional touch of snark. He adopts the general manner of a sober adult trapped in an elevator with a drunk, knife-wielding teenager.

Of course, as Patriots (we are still Patriots, aren't we? Sorry — just checking), we would expect some cleverness from the Devil. Everyone knows this is the way you win an argument, right or wrong. Pay no attention to Darth Hutchinson's little Sith mind tricks. But still — why would Congress make it so easy? Why are we getting stomped like this? Because ouch, man, that was painful.

The third thing we notice is that Hutchinson actually *explains* the *Declaration*. As he begins:

The last time I had the honour of being in your Lordship's company, you observed that you were utterly at a loss as to what facts many parts of the Declaration of Independence published by the Philadelphia Congress referred...

In other words: these Congress people are so whack-a-doodle-doo, half the time your Lordship can't even tell what they're *talking about*. Presumably "your Lordship" is [Lord Germain](#). Dear reader, how does your own knowledge of the *Declaration* compare to Lord Germain's? Weren't you amused, for instance, to learn that

I know of no new offices erected in America in the present reign, except those of the Commissioners of the Customs and their dependents. Five Commissioners were appointed, and four Surveyors General dismissed; perhaps fifteen to twenty clerks and under officers were necessary for this board more than the Surveyors had occasion for before: Land and tide waiters, weighers, &c. were known officers before; the Surveyors used to encrease or lessen the number as the King's service required, and the Commissioners have done no more. Thirty or forty additional officers in the whole Continent, are the *Swarms* which eat out the substance of the boasted number of three millions of people.

or, most intriguingly, that

The first in order, *He has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good*; is of so general a nature, that it is not possible to conjecture to what laws or to what Colonies it refers. I remember no laws which any Colony has been restrained from passing, so as to cause any complaint of grievance, except those for issuing a fraudulent paper currency, and making it a legal tender; but this is a restraint which for many years past has been laid on Assemblies by an act of Parliament, since which such laws cannot have been offered to the King for his allowance. I therefore believe this to be a general charge, without any particulars to support it; fit enough to be placed at the head of a list of imaginary grievances.

What is this *fraudulent paper currency*? Hutchinson is referring to [this episode](#). The experienced UR reader may well ask: what is it with America and paper money? We'll definitely have to revisit the question.

But suffice it to say that you, *personally*, do not have the knowledge to produce any kind of coherent response to Hutchinson's brutal fisting of our sacred founding document. You can't say: "actually, Governor Hutchinson, I was in Boston in 1768, and I can tell you exactly why the Assembly was moved to Cambridge. What really happened is that..." For all you or I know about Boston in 1768, of course, Hutchinson could just as easily be the one yanking our chains. But why, then, are we so sure he's wrong?

Of course, you don't really think of the *Declaration* as a list of factual particulars. You think of it as a deep moral statement, about humanity, or something. Nonetheless, it does contain a list of particulars. Isn't it odd that it strikes us as odd to see these particulars closely examined? One simply doesn't expect to see the *Declaration* argued with in this way. And, reading the *Strictures*, one gets the impression that the authors of the *Declaration* didn't, either.

Which should not surprise us. What we learn from the *Strictures* is that, as in the rest of American history, there is absolutely no guarantee that a detailed and rational argument about a substantive factual question will prevail, whether through means military, political, or educational, over a meretricious tissue of lies. So why bother — especially if you're the one peddling the lies? Perhaps Hutchinson *is* yanking our chain, and King George really did dispatch hordes of ravenous bureaucrats to

America, etc, etc. But one would expect to have seen the point at least disputed.

But, okay. Whatever. We *are* still Patriots. So let's advance to the second primary: Peter Oliver's [*Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion*](#).

Peter Oliver was Chief Justice of Massachusetts and Hutchinson's brother-in-law. His brother Andrew was Hutchinson's lieutenant governor. Like Hutchinson, the Olivers spent most of the '60s and '70s trying to survive the Boston mob, by whom Andrew Oliver was more or less [hounded to death](#). Hutchinson and Peter Oliver died in exile.

The *Origin & Progress* was written in 1781, but not published properly until 1961 (with an excellent introduction by the historian [Douglass Adair](#)). The copy on archive.org is a bank error in your favor, as Adair's edits should still be under copyright. I recommend downloading the PDF. If Hutchinson has already sold you on Toryism, great. Otherwise, please read the whole book, then Adair's introduction.

If you are feeling especially impatient, and/or confident in your knowledge of 18th-century political theory and the history of early New England, I suppose you can skip Oliver's "procathartick *Porch*" and go straight to chapter II (page 57), where the story starts to really motor. But I don't recommend it. As Oliver writes:

Methinks Sir! I hear you ask me, why all this Introduction? Why so long a Porch before the Building is reached? Let me answer You by saying, that you desired me to give You the History of the american Rebellion, because You thought that I was intimately acquainted with the Rise & Progress of it; having lived there for so many Years, & been concerned in the publick Transactions of Government before the Rebellion burst its Crater. I was very willing to answer your Request. I, on my Part, must ask you to oblige me, by permitting me, in the epistolary Walks, to indulge my Fancy in the Choice of my Path. Besides, you may perhaps, in the Sequel, find some Analogy between the Porch & the Building, & that they are not two detached Structures; altho' a good Architect might have produced a better Effect, by making either or both of them a little more tasty. However, if you will excuse the *Hibernicism*, you need not enter the House by its Porch, but open the Door of the main Building which hangs at the End of the Porch, & adjoins to it.

Before I introduce you to the House, let me remind you, that I shall confine myself, chiefly, to the Transactions of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, as it was this Province where I resided, & was most intimate to the Transactions of; & as it was the Volcano from whence issued all the Smoak, Flame & Lava which hath since enveloped the whole British american Continent, for the Length of above 1700 Miles. If I deviate into other Colonies, my Excursions will be few & short. I promise You that I will adhere most sacredly to Truth, & endeavor to steer as clear as possible from Exaggeration; although many Facts may appear to be exaggerated, to a candid Mind, which is always fond of viewing human Nature on the brightest Side of its Orb.

The *Origin & Progress* is obviously a very different animal from the *Strictures*.

What's so neat about Peter Oliver's little book is that, besides being a primary source of considerable historical value, it is also an artistic work of considerable literary merit. The tone, as we see, is almost postmodern. Oliver has a *voice*, and even here in the benighted 21st century (where we think "candid" means "honest," rather than "naive"), we can hear it. This is a man you could have a beer with. Even from the strongest revolutionary characters, TJ and John Adams, it is hard to get such a three-dimensional presence.

The past, as they say, is a foreign country. Imagine you were a hippie backpacker visiting, say, Armenia, having read a few newspaper stories about how the Armenian Democratic Front is struggling nobly against the iron oppression of the Armenian People's Party — this being roughly comparable to the average American's knowledge of prerevolutionary Massachusetts politics. But leaving the airport in Yerevan, you meet Vartan ("call me Varty!"), a die-hard APP man, and wind up drinking with him and his boho friends until four in the morning. Of course, you'll leave Armenia a dedicated supporter of the APP. This is roughly how we intend to convert you into a Loyalist. You can't actually have a beer with Peter Oliver, but you can read his book.

Speaking of John Adams, there's actually another point of contact: you can rent the first disc of the HBO miniseries by that name. I gave up after an episode and a half — I have put a little work into my picture of the 1770s, and I don't want it contaminated with Hollywood's. But I will say this: HBO's Samuel Adams, as a sort of 18th-century Al Sharpton, is *dead on*. As Oliver puts it:

I shall next give you a Sketch of some of Mr. *Samuel Adams*' Features; & I do not know how to delineate them stronger, than by the Observation made by a celebrated Painter in *America*, vizt. "That if he wished to draw the Picture of the Devil, that he would get *Sam Adams* to sit for him:" & indeed, a very ordinary Physiognomist would, at a transient View of his Countenance, develope the Malignity of his Heart. He was a Person of Understanding, but it was discoverable rather by a Shrewdness than Solidity of Judgment; & he understood human Nature, in low life, so well, that he could turn the Minds of the great Vulgar as well as the small into any Course that he might chuse; perhaps he was a singular Instance in this Kind; & he never failed of employing his Abilities to the vilest Purposes.

His beer sucks, too. And few will forget this portrait of John Hancock, as the dim young Trustafarian, and general Wallet of what Oliver calls "the Faction":

Here I am almost necessarily led into a Digression upon Mr. *Hancock*'s Character, who was as closely attached to the hindermost part of Mr. *Adams* as the Rattles are affixed to the Tail of the Rattle Snake. Mr. *Hancock* was the Son of a dissenting Clergyman, whose Circumstances in Life were not above Mediocrity, but he had a rich Uncle. He was educated at Harvard College, was introduced into his uncles Warehouse as a Merchant, & upon his Death was the residuary Legatee of

60,000 pounds Sterling. His understanding was of the Dwarf Size; but his Ambition, upon the Accession to so great an Estate, was upon the Gigantick. He was free from Immoralities, & Objects of Charity often felt the Effects of his Riches. His Mind was a meer *Tabula Rasa*, & had he met with a good Artist he would have enstamped upon it such Character as would have made him a most usefull Member of Society. But Mr. *Adams* who was restless in endeavors to disturb ye Peace of Society, & who was ever going about seeking whom he might devour, seized upon him as his Prey, & stamped such Lessons upon his Mind, as have not as yet been erased. Sometimes, indeed, by certain Efforts of Nature, when he was insensible of the Causes of his self, he would almost disengage himself from his Assailant; but *Adams*, like the Cuddfish, would discharge his muddy Liquid, & darken the Water to such a Hue, that the other was lost to his Way, & by his Tergiversations in the Cloudy Vortex would again be seized, & at last secured.

Put your John Hancock on that! Of course, *dissenting* doesn't mean Mr. *Hancock's* father was an open-minded dissident, like me. It means he was a [Dissenter](#) — ie, a Puritan, and thus a member of what Mr. *Otis* called his *black Regiment*. (The *Olivers* and *Hutchinsons* were Anglicans.) Don't miss Peter Oliver's discussion of the role of the Puritan clergy in the disturbances, which will not be even slightly surprising to the experienced UR reader.

And yes, the *Origin & Progress* really is pretty much all this good. Read the whole thing. Consider it a small revenge on your 10th-grade history teacher. And chuckle along with Peter Oliver, when he writes:

I have done Sir! for the present, with my Portraits. If you like them, & think them ornamental for your Parlour, pray hang them up in it; for I assure You, that most of them justly demerit a [Suspension](#).

Black humor — *cheap* black humor — from the 18th century. And there is more to Oliver than his Portraits. If you want action, skip to the Stamp Act (chapter III, p. 76):

In this Year 1765, began the violent Outrages in *Boston*: and now the Effusions of Rancour from Mr. *Otis's* Heart were brought into Action. It hath been said, that he had secured the Smugglers & their Connections, as his Clients. An Opportunity now offered for them to convince Government of their Influence: as Seizure had been made by breaking open a Store, agreeable to act of Parliament; it was contested in the supreme Court, where Mr. *Hutchinson* praesided. The Seizure was adjudged legal by the whole Court.

This raised Resentment against the Judges. Mr. *Hutchinson* was the only Judge who resided in Boston, & he only, of the Judges, was the Victim; for in a short Time after, the Mob of *Otis* & his clients plundered Mr. *Hutchinsons* House of its full Contents, destroyed his Papers, unroofed his House, & sought his & his Children's Lives, which were saved by Flight. One of the Riotors declared, the next morning, that the first Places which they looked into were the Beds, in Order to murder the Children. All this was Joy to Mr. *Otis*, as also to some of the considerable Merchants who were

smugglers, & personally active in the diabolical Scene. But a grave old Gentleman thought it more than diabolical; for upon viewing the Ruins, on the next Day, he made this Remark, vizt. “that if the Devil had been here the last Night, he would have gone back to his own Regions, ashamed of being outdone, & never more have set Foot upon the Earth.” If so, what Pity that he did not take an Evening Walk, at that unhappy Crisis; for he hath often since seen himself outdone at his own outdoings.

You see what I mean by “evil.” You probably also remember, dimly, your 10th-grade history teacher plying you with propaganda that glorified this kind of spontaneous popular action. If you want to know how decent people can support evil, find a mirror.

Enough of Peter Oliver. Perhaps he is just not your style, and you remain a Patriot. In that case, there is no further escape. You will have to cope with the long S, and read Charles Stedman’s *History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American War* ([vol. 1](#), [vol. 2](#)), our third primary source.

I regret to report that there is no such thing as a neutral primary source. Charles Stedman, though, is Colonel Stedman to you. Call him Chuck, and you’re shit out of luck. Not only was he a Colonel in the British Army, he was *born in Philadelphia* — and commanded a Loyalist corps against the rebel forces. Moreover, he is a trained lawyer and clearly has read his Thucydides, of whom his tone and content are quite reminiscent.

Colonel Stedman’s history is accurate, clear, and not at all dry. Like Governor Hutchinson, he lets only a few cold digs slip through. The following is a fair sample:

When the assembly of this province [Massachusetts, of course] met in the month of January [1773], the governor [Hutchinson] probably intending to give them an opportunity, if they were so disposed, of doing away the evil impressions which might have been made by the unqualified resolutions of the town meeting at Boston, took occasion in his speech to insist on the supreme legislative authority of the king and parliament.

But if he hoped to benefit government by bringing on this discussion, he was entirely disappointed. The assembly, instead of endeavouring to moderate and qualify the doctrines contained in the resolutions of the town meeting, seized the opportunity of the address which was to be presented, to fix them more firmly and in their utmost extent. They openly denied the authority of parliament, not only to impose taxes, but to legislate for them in any respect whatsoever; adding, “that if there had been in any late instances a submission to acts of parliament, it was more from want of consideration or a reluctance to contend with the parent state, than a conviction of the supreme legislative authority of parliament.”

This address also recapitulated a number of new grievances which had not heretofore been complained of. And such was its improper tendency, even in the opinion of the Assembly, upon

cooler reflection, that six months after, in a letter to the earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State for American affairs, they thought it necessary to apologize for it, imputing the blame of their intemperate proceedings to their governor, who had unnecessarily brought the subject of parliamentary authority under their consideration.

In this letter they say, “that their answers to the governor’s speech were the effect of necessity, and that this necessity occasioned great grief to the two houses;” and then, in a style truly characteristic of puritanical duplicity, they exclaim, “For, my lord, the people of this province are true and faithful subjects of his Majesty, and think themselves happy in their connection with Great Britain.”

Trust me: if you have actually read all three of these selections, you will be under no illusion whatsoever as to what style is, or is not, truly characteristic of puritanical duplicity.

If not, please do so. Feel free to stop reading Colonel Stedman as soon as you are sold, or if you get to the point where the war has actually started and you still are not sold. In that case, we move on to the secondary sources: W.E.H. Lecky’s [American Revolution](#) (Britain, 1898), Sydney Fisher’s [True History of the American Revolution](#) (1902, US). And if you are still a Patriot after that, we have to get into the tertiary sources. (Anything post 1950 deserves the “tertiary” warning label, I feel.) Read Bernard Bailyn’s [Ideological Origins of the American Revolution](#) (1967).

If you actually read all this, yet remain a damn’d *Whig* — congratulations Sir! You are poffeffed of an unusually thick *Skull* — not unlike yr. ancestor, the *Pithecanthropus*. Indeed *Samuel Johnson* put it best: the *Devil* was the first *Whig*. And to him with you Sir! For the *Remedy* hath *failed*.

Otherwise, congratulations on completing the first step of the procedure. Don’t worry — the worst is still to come. Also, we need to quickly install your new Tory history.

The outcome of our little reading list is that, if even a tenth of what Hutchinson, Oliver and Stedman say is true, your desire to remain a Whig is now somewhere between your desire to join the Crips and your desire to volunteer for the Waffen SS. Whereas you formerly thought of the values of the American Revolution as liberty, truth and justice, you now see the hallmarks of the American Rebellion as thuggery, treason, and — above all — hypocrisy.

Therefore, since you can no longer be a Whig, you have no option but to become a Tory. The conflict was, after all, a war. No one was neutral. There is no third side.

But what — since we are now Tories — actually happened? What truth are we to install in the freshly-scraped neural cavity?

What happened is that the executive cohesion of Great Britain had weakened considerably since the golden age of [Pitt](#). For most of the 18th century, there was no such thing as a Tory in British politics. The country was a one-party Whig state. As Colonel Stedman puts it: “... that party distinction of Whig and

Tory, which had been dormant since the reign of Queen Anne.” It may (or may not) surprise you to know that this was considered a bad thing.

The event that triggered the Rebellion was an attempt by certain elements of the British leadership, a group not at that time distinguished by any great talent, to restore full lawful authority to the American colonies. Especially in New England, smuggling was rife, and it was not at all clear how far the king’s writ ran.

Moreover, Massachusetts in particular was swarming with unreconstructed Puritans, who had never been properly disciplined for the failure of the previous republican revolution. In contrast to the home country, which had enjoyed 28 years of restored Stuart rule, the attempted New England restoration of the [Andros period](#) had lasted only three years, at which point it was terminated by the [treasonous Whig coup](#) of 1688.

British politics in the 1760s was coming out of its one-party phase and had stretched out a good bit, developing Whig radicals on the left and proto-Tory “King’s friends” on the right. Naturally, the former tended to be [low-church](#) and Dissenter/Nonconformist, the latter tended to be [high-church](#) and Anglican. George III never pretended to anything like Stuart authority, but he was making the last ever attempt to render the British monarchy a serious arm of politics.

Therefore, everyone had a reason to do what they did. The King and his friends had a reason to try to reassert authority over the colonies. The colonies had a reason to try for independence. Note, however, that the law was entirely on the side of the former. This gave the rebellion the generally mendacious and criminal quality described above, which is why we are Tories. The rebels could rebel or they could think, speak and write honestly, but not both.

Humans being what they are, it is not terribly surprising that quite a few took the former path. Fortunately, this included many individuals of genuine character and substance, such as George Washington and John Adams, who may have been deluded by ideology but were not seduced by cupidity. The rebellion could easily have ended up where France’s did, and its failure to do so is more than anything due to the High Federalists, who once they saw what republicanism meant in practice ended up with very similar attitudes toward mob politics that we see in Hutchinson and Oliver — twenty years before the Thermidorean reaction that created the Constitution. Most of history consists of going around in circles, learning nothing.

As Colonel Stedman says, the rebels could and should have been crushed easily. In a fair fight, their real chances against the British military were slim to none. As the Union later found, suppressing guerrilla warfare, even in the wilds of North America, is not difficult given sufficient energy. Britain failed because it lacked that crucial ingredient in every war: the will to win.

Britain in the Revolution was politically divided. Large numbers of mainstream political figures — most

famously, both Pitt and Burke — sympathized with the Americans. Moreover, although the tea outrage finally created a nominal consensus for a military response, and finally made it imprudent for a British politician to openly urge surrender, a new lobby developed which urged conciliation, conciliation, and more conciliation.

What we see, in other words, is the familiar pattern of two conflicting prescriptions for maintaining the integrity of the state. The Whig prescription says: conciliate the truculent, assuage their grievances whether real or feigned, loosen the ropes at every complaint. The Tory prescription says: enforce the law, and do not bend an inch in response to violence or any other extralegal pressure. As Oliver puts it (p. 125):

Timidity, in Suppression of Rebellion, will ever retard the Subdual of it.

With our corrected Tory vision, we see the answer clearly. In every case, concessions made to dispel conspiracy theories, reassure the Americans of Britain's fundamental benevolence, and in general appease a fit of calculated insanity, have the obvious effect of displaying Timidity and encouraging further demands. First internal taxation is a violation of American rights, then all taxation, then all parliamentary legislation. The only actual principle that can be discerned is one of unremitting chutzpah and hypocrisy.

The relationship between Britain and Massachusetts, in particular, was much like that between a parent and a teenager. Independence or loyalty: it could go either way, at least for the moment. Scenario: your teenager starts cutting class. So you take her car keys away. So she throws your widescreen TV out the window. So you give her car keys back. Is this pattern of behavior more likely to result in independence, or loyalty?

But this is basically the American policy that the Whigs prescribed. And with the repeal of the Stamp Act, thanks to Burke (who at least later learned better) and the [Rockingham Whigs](#), it's the policy they enacted. And even when the left Whigs were not, precisely, in the driver's seat, they were in the passenger seat, yelling. While sold as a policy for the reconciliation of Britain and America, Burke's policy could hardly have been a better design for the encouragement of an American rebellion and the prospects of its success — which was, of course, achieved.

For example, [General Howe](#) among other British military figures is known to have had strong Whig sympathies. His role in America was also twofold: he was there to either defeat the rebels, or make peace with them. Obviously, the latter would have been greatly to his political advantage. Whether his failures in the war were the result of this conflict of interest, or of simple incompetence, can never be known. But the former is surely a reasonable suspicion.

Colonel Stedman, in his dedication, sums it up both well and not impolitically:

The pain of recording that spirit of faction, indecision, indolence, luxury, and corruption, which

disgraced our public conduct during the course of the American war...

What, from the historiographic perspective, is particularly galling, is that the explanation that was generally accepted, *even in Britain*, for most of the 19th century is the Whig one. The rebellion succeeded not because it was not dealt with quickly and decisively, but because the Americans were not conciliated *enough*. (Alternatively, it succeeded because the Americans were militarily invincible — another common Whig trope.)

This is the secret of puritanical duplicity: no shame, none whatsoever. Every quack who hopes to outlast chance must learn the trick. If you bleed the patient and he dies, obviously you didn't draw enough blood. Never concede error. Counter every criticism with a barrage of even more gloriously inflated claims. You can see why the likes of Hutchinson and Oliver had no chance at all against the *black Regiment*.

Evil is typically more powerful than good. Bad men delight in weapons that good men spurn. Success in past conflicts, political or military, is not Bayesian evidence of moral superiority. It is just the opposite. Which is why it's a problem that the winners write the history books.

So: we've completed the operation, at least as far as the American Rebellion is concerned. We've created a clean separation between the parasite, *democracy*, and your understanding of the 18th century, and we've replaced the infected Whig mass with a small dose of healthy Tory history. Presumably the counter-democratic nature of the latter is obvious, if not definitive.

In retrospect, your former support for the Whig cause was a classic received opinion, installed without any sort of thought on your part. In other words, it is not something you were reasoned into. It is to your credit as a thinker that you've let yourself be reasoned out of it. If you think of *Patriot v. Loyalist* as a lawsuit and yourself as a juror, not only had you never heard a single word from the defense, you hadn't even really heard a proper prosecution. There was never any need. The annelid just raised your hand to convict. [*Megaloponera foetens*](#), thy name is you.

Note, from an almost military perspective, the curious weakness of your convictions in this regard. What made the "Revolution" an easy target is that you had no particular emotional attachment to it — at least, not compared to some other wars we could mention. Your attachment to the Patriot cause seemed rock-solid. But it disintegrated on contact with the enemy. It was all hat and no cattle.

But our red pill is most certainly not an information-warfare device — at least, not a democratic one. It is a tool for your personal enlightenment only. As we can see easily from this first target. If UR were, say, a political party, would the first plank in our platform be repudiation of the American Revolution? This should attract about twelve supporters, all of whom are homeless schizophrenics. It will repel many more, of course.

Of course, this only makes it easier for you to swallow the red pill. The parasite has strong defenses

against most attacks of this kind — certainly all which are of democratic relevance. This position is intellectually significant, yet undefended because of its negative political value. Turning you into a Loyalist does not solve the whole problem by any means, but it's a foothold, and we can use it to excavate other annelid coprolites in more delicate areas of your brain.

Reversing this one point is not sufficient to replace your entire picture of American history. In fact, it's entirely possible that, if you stop reading UR immediately, you'll eventually relapse and become a Patriot again. (Some may prefer this outcome.)

What we've done, however, is to establish a *second narrative*. You now have two realities in your head. You have the reality in which there was an American Revolution, which was a triumph for liberty, truth and justice. You may no longer believe in this reality, but you have no way to forget it. And you have the reality in which there was an American Rebellion, which was a triumph for thuggery, treason, and hypocrisy.

So, for example, we can now then ask the question: in the second narrative, the one in which the American Rebellion was a disaster, what is happening in 2009? Whatever the answer is, the two seem quite unlikely to have converged.

But surely we've done enough for this week. I'm afraid the series will require a third.

A gentle introduction to Unqualified Reservations

(part 3)

Thursday, January 22, 2009 at 6:07 AM

Okay, so you're a Loyalist now. So what?

The story of the American Rebellion, as told by Hutchinson, Oliver, and Stedman, is hardly without lessons for today. Most are subtle, and we'll save them for later. But one is obvious: bogus, self-serving, fraudulent antihistory is being installed, as we speak, at taxpayer expense, in the tender forebrains of America's youth. An outrage!

Indeed, by many reasonable standards, an outrage. To the Pupulupi, of Zargon Four, who have such a great respect for truth that they never say "good morning" unless they mean it — an unthinkable crime of epic proportions. To us, of Planet Earth — jaywalking. If a little official antihistory, especially surrounding the origin myth of the state, is our only problem, we don't have a problem.

As we'll see today, we *do* have a problem. But let's get back to the Loyalism.

You don't really need to be a convinced Loyalist to continue processing the red pill. It's not trivial to carve a lifetime of revolutionary propaganda out of your head in one operation. Not everyone has a natural knack for self-directed neurosurgery. Realistically — there are probably a few antennae, tentacles or hyphae left in the cavity. But this is okay: we just need a hole to dig in. Now we have one, and we're on the offensive.

What's essential is that, after your beer with Peter Oliver, you *understand* Loyalism. You may not be completely sold, you may not see how simple and obviously right the Loyalist story of the American Rebellion is, but you can see how a reasonable person might see things that way.

But the Loyalist perspective remains an isolated outlier. Everything else you believe about reality is consistent with the American Revolution. With the American Rebellion — maybe not so much. Our goal today is to slide a hemostat jaw into this little tear between your parasite and the endogenous neural tissue, grab the former by its dorsal fin, and pull. There may be bleeding.

In other words: Loyalism gives us an extremely foreign perspective of the present world. There are no other Loyalists in 2009. So, when we think as Loyalists, we have no choice but to think for ourselves.

What should a Loyalist make of X, or Y, or Z, in 2009? Let's say, for example, that Peter Oliver had spent the last 200 years asleep in Rip van Winkle's cave, and woke up for the inauguration of Barack Hussein

Obama. Can we imagine his reaction? We can try.

If we want to get really imaginative, we can imagine what I call a “reverse counterfactual.” First, imagine that the military dice had fallen otherwise and the American Rebellion was suppressed. Second, perform the standard counterfactual exercise of imagining what an intact British Empire would look like in 2009. Third, imagine the counterfactual universe invents some device that can send invisible observers into *our* 2009, and make a documentary for the edification of the Imperial audience — showing this awful alternate 2009, in which the Massachusetts disturbances of the 1770s were not quashed with firm, manly vigour.

What’s neat is that such a documentary could be made, with existing technology, in the *real* 2009. If you don’t find this a frightening exercise — try replacing the British Empire with the Confederacy or Nazi Germany. (These variants are only for battle-hardened space admirals.)

Today, we’ll expand this fresh alternate reality to three more points — each of which, unlike 18th-century history, is of considerable relevance in the real world today. To preserve some suspense, we’ll give them secret acronyms: *AGW*, *KFM*, and *HNU*.

Each of these acronyms represents, so far as I can tell, a democratic feedback loop between public misperception and official malpractice. In other words: between lies and evil. Lies persuade well-intentioned voters to support policies which are in fact evil. Evil, being evil, has both the power and the incentive to maintain the lies. As we’ll see, these loops are quite stable, and they can be almost arbitrarily pernicious.

For each case, we’ll describe the misperception and the resulting malpractice, and suggest a new policy regime which breaks the loop. These new policies are every bit as far off the institutional map of your present government as Loyalism is off its political map, and they are not likely to happen. If you find yourself liking them — tough. That’s democracy for ya.

AGW: anthropogenic global warming

There is no surprise behind this acronym. You probably already have an opinion about AGW. If it’s the right opinion, please feel free to skip this section.

Adopting the pejorative tone we are shortly to encounter, and reflecting it in the opposite direction, we can call a believer in the organized scientific consensus behind AGW an AGW *credulist*. An unbeliever, of course, is an AGW [*denialist*](#).

You’ll notice — this is a property of each of today’s cases — that there is a vast intellectual gap between the credulists and the denialists. There is no moderate position on AGW. You believe, or you don’t believe. One of the two sides is extremely right, and the other is extremely wrong. I like using pejorative terms for both, because one will turn out to be hip and ironic, and the other will turn out to be richly

deserved.

As the page behind that link so helpfully explains:

Almost every denialist argument will eventually devolve into a conspiracy. This is because denialist theories that oppose well-established science eventually need to assert deception on the part of their opponents to explain things like why every reputable scientist, journal, and opponent seems to be able to operate from the same page. In the crank mind, it isn't because their opponents are operating from the same set of facts, it's that all their opponents are liars (or fools) who are using the same false set of information.

But how could it be possible, for instance, for nearly every scientist in a field be working together to promote a falsehood? People who believe this is possible simply have no practical understanding of how science works as a discipline.

A fabulous question. We'll answer it in a moment. But for now, keep the suspense. Dear reader, if you are comfortable with this tone, I suggest you read the entire post linked above. It has lots of good information about denialists, cranks, and other enemies of science.

If something strikes you as not quite right about the Hoofnagels' tone, good. That means your head is screwed on right. However, as part of the procedure, we'll need to expose you to an even more extreme example of it.

Warning: this may increase your heart rate. Warning two: please don't click through [this link](#) to the blog *Climate Progress*, provided solely for reference purposes. Warning three: yes, the author of the words below is (as we'll see) an influential man of real public authority.

Diagnosing a victim of anti-science syndrome (ASS)

In this post I'm going to present the general diagnosis for "anti-science syndrome" (ASS). Like most syndromes, ASS is a collection of symptoms that individually may not be serious, but taken together can be quite dangerous — at least it can be dangerous to the health and well-being of humanity if enough people actually believe the victims.

One tell-tale symptom of ASS is that a website or a writer focuses their climate attacks on non-scientists. If that non-scientist is Al Gore, this symptom alone may be definitive.

The other key symptoms involve the repetition of long-debunked denier talking points, commonly without links to supporting material. Such repetition, which can border on the pathological, is a clear warning sign.

Scientists who kept restating and republishing things that had been widely debunked in the scientific literature for many, many years would quickly be diagnosed with ASS. Such people on the

web are apparently heroes — at least to the right wing and/or easily duped (see “The Deniers are winning, but only with the GOP”).

If you suspect someone of ASS, look for the repeated use of the following phrases: [...]

Individually, some of these words and phrases are quite useful and indeed are commonly used by both scientists and non-scientists who are not anti-science. But the use of more than half of these in a single speech or article is pretty much a definitive diagnosis of ASS.

When someone repeats virtually all of those phrases, along with multiple references to Al Gore, they are wholly a victim of ASS — in scientific circles they are referred to as ASS-wholes.

A newly prominent ASS-whole is Harold Ambler, who managed to get this article past a HuffingtonPost intern over the weekend: “[Mr. Gore: Apology Accepted](#).” I was not originally planning to post on this (unsourced) collection of long debunked denier talking points since, as regular readers know, my policy is not to waste time on the umpteenth debunking. Anyone who might be persuaded by Ambler’s tripe can do a simple search for each myth on RealClimate or on this blog. [...]

As deniers or ASS-wholes go, Ambler is quite lame. Separate from his long list of long-debunked denier talking points, who could possibly take seriously somebody who wrote the following:

Mr. Gore has stated, regarding climate change, that “the science is in.” Well, he is absolutely right about that, except for one tiny thing. It is the biggest whopper ever sold to the public in the history of humankind.

Such a statement is anti-scientific and anti-science in the most extreme sense. It accuses the scientific community broadly defined of deliberate fraud — and not just the community of climate scientists, but the leading National Academies of Science around the world (including ours) and the American Geophysical Union, an organization of geophysicists that consists of more than 45,000 members and the American Meteorological Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (see “Yet more scientists call for deep GHG cuts”).

Such a statement accuses all of the member governments of the IPCC, including ours, of participating in that fraud, since they all sign off on the Assessment Reports word for word (see “[Absolute MUST Read IPCC Report: Debate over, further delay fatal, action not costly](#)”). And, of course, Ambler’s statement accuses all of the leading scientific journals of being in on this fraud, since the IPCC reports are primarily a review and synthesis of the published scientific literature.

Now, as Loyalists, what do you hear when you hear this tone? I know what I hear. What I hear is Samuel Adams, James Otis, Jr., and Joseph Hawley. The distinctive whining scream of the Puritan, speaking power to truth as is his usual fashion. Recognizable in any century.

Follow those last two links above, if you dare. Or don't bother. What we see quickly is that, at least as regards AGW, we live in what might be called a *scientific theocracy*. You cannot slip a sheet of paper between Science and State. They are one and the same. Especially with our new, improved, [pro-science administration](#), the only legitimate source of public policy on AGW happens to be... *the very scientists who research it*. ([Professor Hansen](#) is a fine example.)

Note that, if we substitute Science for Scripture, this is exactly the political structure of your Puritan theocracy, or your Persian theocracy for that matter. The same experts perform the intellectual analysis and dictate the resulting policies. Simple, clean, no muss, no fuss.

Of course, there is a considerable difference between Science and Scripture. And what, exactly, is that difference? We shall see in a moment. More suspense.

As always for the historian and general student of reality, the first question becomes: *do we trust these people?* It is possible that Science is such powerful juju that untrustworthy people, so long as they are Scientists, can be trusted. On the other hand, we would certainly want some support for this claim. And it can't hurt to start with an assessment of individual credibility.

Normally, when we're deciding whether to trust (say) Peter Oliver versus John Adams, we have only their words to go on. Dear reader, I invite you to test your critical faculties on the effusion above. Does it strike you as trustworthy? But fortunately, we are operating not in the past but in the present, and not in the domain of history but that of geophysics. We have more to go on.

The author of *Climate Progress* is one Joseph Romm. Who is Joseph Romm? His [about box](#) explains:

Joseph Romm is the editor of Climate Progress. Joe is a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress and was acting assistant secretary of energy for energy efficiency and renewable energy during the Clinton Administration. In December 2008, Romm was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science for "distinguished service toward a sustainable energy future and for persuasive discourse on why citizens, corporations, and governments should adopt sustainable technologies." [Read what Wikipedia has to say about Joe.](#)

(Do read what Wikipedia has to say about Joe. It has a distinctly, um, self-edited flavor.)

Here's the problem, AGW credulists. The problem is: *I know Joe Romm*. And I know, without a doubt, that he is a *foul creature of the night*. Sadly, I cannot share this deep truth through direct osmosis, but we will arrive at it by and by.

Okay, I don't know Joe Romm. But my mother knows Joe Romm — to be more exact, she worked for him at DoE — and I trust my mother. Here is her recollection:

Oh, yes. Romm was one of three who loaded me with work for my first few months with Energy

Efficiency and Renewable Energy. He was Deputy Assistant Secretary, and ran the show with Christine Ervin (Assistant Secretary) and Brian Castelli. Christine finally got two inches from my face and announced that I was supposed to be working for her alone. Romm promulgated the idea that he was the smartest person to ever enter [Forrestal](#). He used to regularly win the Washington Post contests for creating the best caption for captionless cartoons. Maybe that was it. At any rate, he got annoyed with me the time three of us went up to the Hill to one of the staffers on an authorization committee trying to gain turf. I was supposed to be carrying budget analysis to help, but there had been little time to prepare. The meeting was a disaster (the staffer being a lot smarter than Romm), and in the taxi back I had to listen to him blaming me for getting the numbers wrong (I can't even remember whether they were). Shortly afterwards I was assigned a windowless office during a general office move and had plenty of time on my hands. By the way, he once borrowed from me your copy of Easterbrook's [A Moment on the Earth](#), apparently in order to disparage the "opposition."

What does this tell you? Not a lot. It is just a snapshot of the world Joe Romm lives in. Notice, however, that my mother's snapshot of Joe Romm's world does not, in any way, resemble the image of Joe Romm's world that you get from Joe Romm's blog.

Basically, my mother got involved with this world by accident. More or less everyone else in EERE was there because they were true believers. My mother was there because her kids had gone to college, and she needed a job. So she wound up as a budget and policy analyst, working for the true believers.

This drove my mother up the wall. She is basically an honest person. She does not have the skill sets to work effectively as a member of a criminal organization, and she certainly did not expect the United States Department of Energy to be anything of the sort.

Yes: that's exactly what I said. Joe Romm should be in *prison*. James Hansen should be in *prison*. [Michael Mann](#) should be in *prison* (and not for making [Heat](#)). These people are *criminals*. Sadly, no one will be arresting any of them any time soon.

What my mother found at EERE was a sort of giant, Potomac-shaped hog-trough, dispensing a billion or two a year to grunting [Beltway bandits](#) packed shoulder-to-shoulder around a vast open sewer of hot, juicy, delicious cash. This is, of course, the [iron triangle](#) of Washington fame. (I think the triangle should include at the very least the press, making it a square, which would let us add [Andrew Revkin](#) to our fantasy arrest list. All you coup plotters out there, listen up. These guys are all buddies — you can probably nab all four at the same Super Bowl party.)

In order to keep said open sewer open, EERE planners (such as my mother) had to go through the following process: they had to analyze a constant flow of scientific and engineering information from the renewable-energy researchers they supported (typically experienced recipients of such grants, which is why they call them "Beltway bandits"), decide which technologies seemed promising and which did not,

support the former and cut the latter.

Now: my mother was at DOE in the mid-90s. How many successful renewable-energy technologies can you name that came out of DOE in the mid-90s? Or came out of anywhere in the mid-90s? Or came out of anywhere at all? What are the successes of renewable energy?

For that matter, even today, how many press releases have you seen reprinted in your newspaper of choice, promising that renewable-energy technology X — algae biofuel, perhaps, or Stirling engines, or thin-film solar-panels; the list is endless — would hit the market a year from now, two years from now, five years from now? For how many years have you been seeing these types of announcements? How many renewable-energy technologies have hit said market?

The reason, of course, is that most of these technologies simply don't work. At least, not in the sense of being even remotely cost-effective. Of course, one can still tinker with them, and one never knows how tinkering will turn out. But what would happen at EERE, over and over again, is that some research program would promise result X by year Y, fail, add 1 to Y, and get more money for next year.

My mother's job was not to evaluate renewable-energy technologies. It was to *pretend* to evaluate renewable-energy technologies — creating the essential illusion of science-driven public policy. Since everyone involved in this process understood that it was a farce, you can imagine the quality of the data. Meanwhile, as usual in Washington, how much money you got depended on how many friends in the right places you had. This tends not to change from year to year, resulting in remarkably consistent budget allocations.

In other words, my mother's work was *bullshit* in the best Frankfurtian sense. Some might get a kick out of this, but she is just not the type. And at the time, AGW was not the big thing it is now. So the open sewer seemed picayune. A billion here, a billion there. It sounds big to the hoi-polloi, but of course it isn't. What was not obvious in the late '90s is that, if you can steal billions, you can steal trillions. And that is a big deal.

But I am just describing the perspective from which I, personally, arrived at AGW. You don't know me, my mother, or Joe Romm. So we'll need to actually consider the science — or Science, as the case may be.

But first, I want to praise Joe Romm. Because, unlike the paladins of light in this department (foremost, of course, the great [Steve McIntyre](#) — note the difference in tone), Joe Romm *knows what's at stake*. Read this again:

Such a statement is anti-scientific and anti-science in the most extreme sense. It accuses the scientific community broadly defined of deliberate fraud — and not just the community of climate scientists, but the leading National Academies of Science around the world (including ours) and the American Geophysical Union, an organization of geophysicists that consists of more than 45,000 members and the American Meteorological Association and the American Association for the

Advancement of Science.

Exactly.

And it's very interesting that we hear this from the AGW credulists, rather than the denialists. Your average AGW denialist does not want to go there. He wants the problem to be isolated. The last thing he wants is for *the scientific community broadly defined*, or even worse *all the member governments of the IPCC*, to appear in his crosshairs. (For example, McIntyre, probably quite wisely, snips all political discussion in his comments.)

For UR, the matter is just the opposite. We *already suspect* that these governments are Orwellian and corrupt. After all, once you're a Loyalist, the question is settled by definition. So we are happy to hear Joe Romm's description of the stakes. For once, he is exactly right.

Again, the problem is boolean. There is no continuum, only two perspectives.

From the viewpoint of the AGW credulist, AGW is a critically serious problem, perhaps even an emergency; AGW research is essential spending; public concern about AGW is a sign of prudent, educated citizenship; and the public-policy measures recommended by AGW researchers, such as carbon controls, are a matter of national importance.

Let's consider, for a moment, the amazing position of the AGW credulist — not the researchers and the bureaucrats, just the ordinary schmoe who is asked to believe in this stuff. The credulist is seriously, deeply, personally concerned at a political level about *the concentration of gases in Earth's atmosphere*.

My favorite introduction to American history is [this 1901 essay](#) by [Charles Francis Adams, Jr.](#), in which our historian examines the controversial issues in every Presidential election from 1856 to 1900, lamenting somewhat over their general detachment from reality. I suspect that Adams, despite his obvious sang-froid, would be truly amazed by the appearance of atmospheric chemistry in the American political mind.

But this proves nothing. As promised, we need to consider the matter from scratch. What is the Loyalist position on AGW? What we've established is that it walks like Puritan hysteria, it talks like Puritan hysteria, and it smells like the Devil himself. But we are better than that. We'd like to actually evaluate the matter.

What, exactly, is AGW? What is science? And what is the relationship between the two?

AGW is the result of an effect described by [Arrhenius](#) in the late 19th century, in which CO₂ in the atmosphere reflects outgoing infrared radiation back at the earth. There is no dispute as to the existence of this effect, or [the increasing levels of CO₂](#) in Earth's atmosphere, or the fact that this trend is produced by people burning fossil fuels.

Important facts to remember are (a) that the temperature increase is proportional not to the CO₂ level but to its *logarithm* (this is undisputed, but I have never, ever seen an AGW credulist mention it directly), meaning that each doubling of CO₂ produces a constant increase in total radiation; (b) that at present rates of fossil fuel use, CO₂ will be double its present value by [2255](#) (of course, fossil fuel use could increase, which would bring this number in — let's pull a round figure out of our asses, and call it 2100); and (c) that doubling CO₂ increases total radiation by roughly [3.8 W/m²](#) over the present value of 1366 W/m², or about 0.3%.

And how much temperature increase will this cause? The answer to this question is called the [climate sensitivity](#) — the function that maps an increase in incoming radiation to an increase in atmospheric temperature. (The link is to a denialist site, but there is no argument over the concept.) What is the best scientific estimate of Earth's climate sensitivity?

Let's postpone this question for a moment. It requires us to define *science*. Or *Science*.

Here, sadly, we must part from Joe Romm. His definition of Science is clear. Science is that which is done by scientists. Scientists are people employed, with the title of professor, by the universities. The universities are accredited by Washington. Therefore, Science, in Joe Romm's mind, can be defined as *official truth*. Let's stick with the capital letter for this one.

Note that if we replace Science with Scripture and scientists with ministers, we are back in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. We've reduced the scientific method to the following statement: *Washington is always right*. But surely not even the sage who gave us "ASS-whole" is crass enough to endorse this principle.

The conventional explanation of why *science*, with miniscule s, works so well, is due to Karl Popper and his concept of [falsifiability](#). Whole forests have been cut down over this issue, but here at UR we have a very simple interpretation of falsifiability, which we'll now share.

The unusual trustworthiness of *science*, despite the fact that scientists are humans and humans are not generally trustworthy, exists when (a) hypotheses are falsifiable, and (b) the professional institutions within which scientists operate promote, broadcast, and reward any falsification. We can trust a consensus of scientists on a problem for which (a) and (b) are true, because we are basing our trust on the fact that, if the hypothesis is false, a large number of very smart people has tried and failed to discover its error. This is not, of course, impossible. But it is at least unlikely.

So we have two definitions, and our \$64,000 question: is *Science science*? That is: is the official truth of AGW, which claims the high credibility produced by Popperian falsifiability in a functioning system of critical feedback, in fact justified in claiming this credibility?

The answer is easy: *no*.

To understand the impact of increased CO₂, we need to know the climate sensitivity. Q: how can scientists, at least Popperian scientists, evaluate the climate sensitivity? A: they can't. There is no falsifiable procedure which can estimate climate sensitivity.

To estimate climate sensitivity, all you need is an accurate model of Earth's atmosphere. Likewise, to get to Alpha Centauri, all you have to do is jump very high. The difference between the computing power we have, and the computing power we would need in order to accurately model Earth's atmosphere, is comparable to the difference between my vertical leap and the distance to Alpha Centauri. For all practical purposes, climate modeling is the equivalent of earthquake prediction: an unsolvable problem.

If you want to see this argument laid out in detail, read [Pat Frank's article in Skeptic](#). To my mind, all this detail about error bars simply obfuscates the fact of an unsolvable problem. The GCMs that purport to simulate climate are interesting experiments, and it's not unimpressive that they can be made to produce results that look at least reasonable. But they model the atmosphere with grid cells 100 miles on a side, and attempt to use this to predict the state of the atmosphere — a chaotic system — for the next century. This does not pass the laugh test.

There is simply no scientific way to verify or falsify the accuracy of any such piece of software. It is not practical to perturb Earth's climate, perturb your model's climate, and test that they both respond in the same way. And there is no other way to test a model. In the end, all you have is a curve that records past temperature, and a piece of software that generates future temperature. Perhaps if we could watch the predicted and actual curves match up for a century or so, we could generate something like statistical significance. But we can't. And hindcasting — fitting the models to data from the past — [overfits](#), and is completely worthless.

There are two fields of Science which contribute to the AGW conclusion: climate modeling and paleoclimatology. Michael Mann pioneered the construction of "hockey stick" graphs which appear to show "unprecedented" increases in temperature in the late 20th century. Even supposing that Mann was not a charlatan (see below), these curves would have no scientific meaning whatsoever.

It is fairly clear that Earth's temperature has been increasing over the last few centuries, and that in the 20th century it rose from 1900 through the '30s, fell from the '30s through the '70s, rose from the '70s through the '90s, and has been flat since the '90s. What would it have done in the absence of increasing CO₂? Again, we have no way to know. We have no model. We cannot separate the curves. ([This paper](#) [large PDF] by [Syun-Ichi Akasofu](#) makes the point quite elegantly.)

Besides the fraud, what's creepy about the hockey stick is that it implicitly argues causality by mere visual analogy. We see increasing temperature and increasing CO₂, so the two must be related. WTF? This is not the kind of argument that appeals to a scientist. It is the kind of argument that appeals to a voter.

What we are looking at here, I think, is what Feynman called [cargo-cult science](#). GCMs and paleoclimatology look — to your average voter — like *science* with a small s. They perform huge numbers of intricate calculations, they collect vast quantities of data, and of course they are *Science* with a big S. It's just that their efforts have no falsifiable predictive value. And what is much worse, they claim predictive value and are driving policy off it.

The justified arrogance of falsifiable science is such that, when science goes bad, it goes extremely bad. Langmuir's description of [pathological science](#) is worth reading. Note that GCMs fit this profile quite well — they produce results where there should be only noise. However, it is not at all necessary to resort to erudite mathematical abstractions to catch these people in a lie. The [mens rea](#) is easy to find.

If you have any remaining doubt in the matter, [here](#) is one of Joe Romm's posts in which, as usual, he accuses his opponents of being lying Trotskyist wreckers. In this post we see the following statement:

But I find it hilarious that the deniers and delayers still quote Christy/Spencer/UAH analysis lovingly, but to this day dismiss the 'hockey stick' and anything Michael Mann writes, when his analysis was in fact vindicated by the august National Academy of Sciences in 2006.

What is Romm talking about? To understand the issue, read [this](#) [PDF], then [this](#). You'll see that the word "vindicated" is — um — *extremely* unjustified. For those tempted to defend Romm on the grounds that he is a mere bureaucrat and doesn't know better, note that he has a Ph.D in physics from MIT. As I said: *prison*.

So: not only is the research behind AGW not falsifiable science, and thus not entitled to deference regardless of the personal trustworthiness of its promoters, its promoters are — in fact — snakes. It never rains but it pours. In fact, if you read Climate Audit on a regular basis, you see examples of gross scientific misconduct that would be career-ending in any legitimate field, perhaps once or twice a month. Mann's (repeated) statistical manipulation is especially egregious, but not at all unusual.

We also have (one) answer to the first question of the AGW credulists: how a scientific consensus can produce a fraudulent result. The answer is simple: the *entire field* is fraudulent. In a fraudulent pseudoscience, there is no incentive at all for uncovering error, because the only result of a successful dissent is to destroy your job and those of your peers.

We can see this effect in the experience of climate modeler [Judith Curry](#), who to her great credit dealt with McIntyre the way a real scientist would: inviting him to give a talk. She [wrote](#):

I am taking some heat for all this from my peers outside Georgia Tech. The climate blog police were very upset by my congratulations to Steve upon winning the best science blog award. A recent seminar speaker was appalled to be included in the same seminar series as Steve and Pat, and told me I was misleading my students. I got some support for what I am doing from a program manager

at NSF who I spoke with recently, who appreciated my “missionary work” over at climate audit. Another NSF program manager is apparently not at all happy about this. Some people think that my participation over here in some way “legitimizes” CA; my participation over here is not all that relevant in the overall scheme of CA. I am fully aware that many of my peers think I am crazy for doing this.

Cargo-cult scientists have to circle the wagons like this. If they piss off the NSF program managers, their life expectancy as successful grantwinners is not impressive. Real scientists have no such need to be defensive, because their program managers actually *want* them to expose any errors in their field.

Thus we answer the initial Hoofnagel question: the source of coordinated error is not, at all, a conspiracy. It is simply the funding source. *Nearly every scientist in a field* can be *working together to promote a falsehood* because they all get their money from Joe Romm and company. And if the falsehood is exposed rather than promoted, there is no field left. It is no more surprising that all USG-funded scientists are unanimous in promoting AGW as a global emergency, than that all Philip Morris-funded scientists are unanimous in promoting tobacco as a vitamin.

What we’re looking at here is *mainstream pathological science*. This is a basic and unfixable flaw in the entire [Vannevar Bush](#) design for federally-funded science. Once cranks, quacks, or charlatans get a foothold in the NSF and/or the universities, and establish their quack field as a legitimate department of Science, they are there to stay.

The mainstream cranks will not expel themselves, and there is no mechanism by which another department can attack them. In theory they are vulnerable to the democratic political system (or, at least, the Republican political system), and as we’ve seen they play up this fear quite a bit. In practice, of course, they did quite a bit more damage to Bush than he did to him.

The incentive of all federally-funded science is the same: keep your funding, and try to get more. It is not that most scientists are “in it for the money.” It is that you cannot be a successful scientist, in this era, without being a successful bureaucrat. As such you respond to bureaucratic incentives, such as the feelings of your NSF program manager.

And we start to see how this entire disaster developed. First: out of genuine curiosity, people started trying to build climate models, measure CO₂, and the like. Second: since USG is not a charity, they had to apply for grants and describe the importance of their work. Third: they noticed, consciously or subconsciously, that an easy way to make their work seem more important was to predict disastrous consequences. Fourth: the same evolutionary feedback process that, in a falsifiable science, eradicates error, operated to promote it. Researchers and fields which produced more alarming results received more funding — because, by definition, their work was more important. Iterate to the point of sheer insanity, and you have the AGW research community we have today.

There remains one loophole by which AGW credulists may defend their position. They can say (although they don't) that, even though there is no scientific way to estimate climate sensitivity, the fact that we are poking Earth's climate with a stick and we have no knowledge of its effect is itself egregious. This is the famous [precautionary principle](#).

Note that now we have completely abandoned the pretense of scientific public policy. This is excellent, because it allows us to think [phronetically](#) — using the ordinary tools of common sense — about whether CO₂-triggered warming is, or is not, a genuine problem.

Here is a thought-experiment that will resolve this easily for you. In a world with no fossil fuels and a stable CO₂ level, scientists studying the sun announce that they have (never mind how) scientifically determined that its intensity will increase by 0.3% between now and 2100. You are Dictator of Earth. How do you react to this information?

Do you (a) do nothing at all; (b) keep an eye on the problem, treating it as of roughly the same significance of, say, the possibility of a Sri Lankan tea blight; or (c) immediately embark on a [geoengineering scheme](#) to counterbalance the brightening sun and keep Earth cool?

Recall from [Shaviv's math](#) that, if we ignore feedbacks and treat Earth as a black body, the expected climate sensitivity is about 1 degree Celsius. Perhaps this is in the rough neighborhood of the actual result, and perhaps it isn't. We also need to consider the most obvious effect of global warming, sea-level rise. The sea is rising at about [two millimeters per year](#).

First, realize how thoroughly un-terrifying these figures are. Even if you triple them. If, as Dictator of Earth, your worst problem is oceans that will rise a foot in a century, or air that will become three degrees warmer, you simply don't have much of a problem. What ever happened to the Nazis? Perhaps aliens could invade? Being Dictator of Earth has to be more challenging than this. If your subjects can't handle oceans that rise by a half-centimeter a year, perhaps you need to focus on breeding more intelligent subjects.

Our trick here was to replace the "artificial" increase of CO₂ with a "natural" brightening of the sun. These have identical effects on the Earth, and identical consequences for its residents. But only one has a narrative of guilt and redemption. What we see is that the results, stripped of their Puritan moral baggage, are just not all that terrifying. Environmentalists often play this game; in the classic Jesuitical fashion of the good old black regiment, they will talk guilt and redemption to those who want to hear guilt and redemption, and practical consequences to those more receptive to reality. The guilt and redemption are drivel; the practical consequences, as we see when we look at them on their own, are just not that serious.

Worse, we can even question the proposition that the human consequences of a mild warming are negative. For most of the 20th century, students of global climate made a simple assumption: warmer

was better. We can see this in the names that previous generations of scientists applied to past warm periods, such as the [Holocene Optimum](#) and the [Medieval Optimum](#). “Optimum” does not mean “worse.” To the researchers who invented these names, it was just obvious that a warmer climate meant warmer temperate regions, a more fertile Earth, and more human prosperity. This perception, reached without thought of controversy by serious researchers in the 20th century, is a genuine consensus that deserves our respect.

But in the age of AGW, there is no professional incentive for researchers to study the positive effects of warming climate, and a tremendous incentive for them to study the [negative effects](#). Of course, if you only look at the research rather than the incentives which produce it, you will come away with the conclusion that warming’s negative effects vastly outnumber its positive ones. (Indeed, in the age of Puritan environmentalism, we can barely even express the thought that a human alteration to the environment might be in some sense benign.)

Again, we see both scientific and public opinion changing not to follow the truth, but to follow the funding. The entire AGW industry is thus best explained as an intellectual pathology of the 20th century’s disastrous decision to convert disorganized, decentralized, and unofficial science into organized, centralized and official science.

This gives us our policy prescription: end *all* official funding of science, especially in cases in which the output of the science drives public policy. If a government to rely on the advice of scientists, it must make sure that it is relying on actual, falsifiable science, and that the institutions producing that science have no incentive to produce anything other than the truth. The obvious way to do this is to separate science and state, for the health of both.

In a healthy society, people would still study the Earth’s climate. They might even try to model it. But they would do so for the original motivation of science: *curiosity*. Today, bright young people go into the environmental sciences because they offer quite a different attraction: *power*. The sense of status and importance held by a James Hansen, or even a Joe Romm, is hard for such as you or me to even imagine.

A key aspect of this is not merely that the AGW researchers, their proteges, and their little academic empires survive and grow, but that their advice is taken by the State — and, as a result, has what many people in the trade call *impact*. Of course this is just a name for power, and those who have it find it so pleasant that they are seldom inclined to consider whether they are using it for good or for evil.

If you surf from Climate Progress to Climate Audit, the change from the world of *funding* and *impact* to the world of skepticism and curiosity is unmistakable and infinitely refreshing. The former is an NGO, supported by nameless and sinister fat cats. The latter has a tip jar. ’Nuff said. Someday, all of science will return to the attitude and methodology of a Steve McIntyre, and its Washingtonian captivity will seem like no more than a bad dream.

KFM: Keynes-Fisher macroeconomics

It is almost embarrassingly easy to debunk 20th-century macroeconomics. Indeed, by failing to predict yet another vast cataclysm, one might think the field had met its end.

And indeed when we see mainstream articles with names like [“How the Entire Economics Profession Failed”](#), we might seduce ourselves into the pleasant, Candidean belief that the “entire economics profession” was ready to resign its sinecures, and seek new employment in the lawn-care industry. Ah, if only. [Yves Smith](#) has links to a couple more pieces in this vein. Alas, they are all equally clueless.

For example, it is remarkably easy for Professor Madrick (above) to escape from the titanic disaster he seems to describe. Not counting Marxists, there are three significant schools of economic thought today: one founded by [Lord Keynes](#) and revitalized by [Paul Samuelson](#) (also known as “economics”), one founded by [Irving Fisher](#) and revitalized by [Milton Friedman](#) (also known as the Chicago School), and one founded by [Ludwig von Mises](#) and revitalized by [Murray Rothbard](#) (also known as the Austrian School).

As a rough guess, there are ten Keynesian professors for every Fisherite, and twenty Fisherites for every Misesian. Only Keynesians and Fisherites have an influence on public policy today. And, if you read Professor Madrick’s article, he is a Keynesian and not interested in quitting his job at all. Oh, no. What he turns out to mean is that *monetarist* (ie, Fisherite) economics has failed. What appears to be a mea culpa is simply a dishonest attack on the competition, rendered in the same sneering, Stalinist tone we have just seen in our AGW section, by a bureaucrat whose resume makes him sound exactly like the Joe Romm of economics. (If nothing else, dear reader, you now know what it sounds like when power is spoken to truth.)

You may ask: why is it that Misesian economics has no influence on government policy? There are many ways to divide the profession (and I’m sure some would quibble with the classification above), but there is one simple division: we can divide economics into *orthodox economics* and *new economics*. Keynes and Fisher are *new economics*. Mises is *orthodox economics*.

These terms may seem a little strange. Why is *new economics*, which dates to the ’20s, mainstream, and *orthodox economics* — which also dates to the ’20s — shunned? And from the tone that the Keynesians and monetarists use to describe Austrians — when they deign to describe them at all, which isn’t often, you’d think orthodoxy was the other way around.

But in fact, I am using the term *orthodox* in much the same way as Keynes himself. As anyone who has read Hazlitt’s essential [Failure of the New Economics](#) [book-length PDF] knows, the Baron was anything but a precise thinker, but he generally uses the term *orthodox* to describe 19th-century or at least pre-WWI economics. This certainly would include Mises, whose school is the only real 20th-century survival of anything like what Victorians called economics.

I have a very simple, precise definition of *orthodox* and *new*, which matches Keynes' usage and seems reasonably serviceable to me. Let's say an *orthodox economist* is an economist who believes that any supply of money is adequate, and the money supply should be either fixed or bound to a commodity whose supply is very difficult to expand, such as gold. A *new economist* is a believer in an "elastic currency": he believes that the amount of money in a country should expand as the country "grows." Typically this involves a belief in paper money.

By this definition, it is indeed the new economics (of Keynes and Fisher) which has failed. It has failed totally and completely, it is morally and intellectually bankrupt, it has inflicted vast suffering on humanity, and if there was any justice its acolytes would be packing their bags one jump ahead of the law. They're not, of course.

When we remember that the world did, in fact, exist before 1914, we find it quite easy to justify the term *new economics*. Returning to our favorite [Charles Francis Adams essay](#), for instance, we find the following trenchant passage:

The currency debate presented three distinct phases: first, the proposition, broached in 1867, known as the greenback theory, under which the interest-bearing bonds of the United States, issued during the Rebellion, were to be paid at maturity in United States legal tender notes, bearing no interest at all. This somewhat amazing proposition was speedily disposed of; for, early in 1869, an act was passed declaring the bonds payable "in coin." But, as was sure to be the case, the so-called "Fiat Money" delusion had obtained a firm lodgment in the minds of a large part of the community, and to drive it out was the work of time. It assumed, too, all sorts of aspects. Dispelled in one form, it appeared in another. When, for instance, the act of 1860 settled the question as respects the redemption of the bonds, the financial crisis of 1873 re-opened it by creating an almost irresistible popular demand for a government paper currency as a permanent substitute for specie.

This passage was written in 1901. Note Adams' perception of the paper-money advocates: they are insane, demagogic monetary cranks. Curiously enough, this is exactly how the responsible mainstream intellectual of today regards a Misesian, or any other gold-standard advocate.

Isn't this an interesting reversal? Doesn't it remind you slightly of our last case? Remember how the AGW promoters, shepherding a pseudoscience which has become mainstream, are so eager to dismiss their critics as pseudoscientists. These reversals happen for a reason: if you are a quack, quackery is what you know, so the obvious way to dismiss your critics is to label them as quacks. The approach is especially attractive for the mainstream quack, who knows that faced with a pair of arguing experts, each of whom claims the other to be a quack, most spectators will pick the one who has wormed his way into the most prestigious position.

Thus we have our hypothesis already: the "Fiat Money delusion" somehow worked its way into the mainstream, displacing the old, orthodox "hard money" economics. Since it is clear that, 75 years or so

later, *some* school of economics has failed, and since hard-money economics has been long displaced from the temples of power, the simple answer seems clear. Now, let's try to understand it.

First, both the Keynes and Fisher schools are what a Misesian would call *inflationist*. (Adams would probably use the same word, too.) That is: they believe that expanding or otherwise debasing the currency is on some or all occasions beneficial to the health of the State. Again, we note the accuracy of our terms: before the 20th century, in both European and Greco-Roman times, monetary debasement was considered the pathetic act of a sick, decaying polity.

We can separate the Keynes and Fisher schools based on their preferred vehicles for inflation. Keynesians think governments should inflate the money supply through deficit spending — the “stimulus” we have grown to love so dearly. Fisherites think the best way to inflate the money supply is by fixing interest rates, a policy sometimes known as “easy” or “cheap” money. I'm afraid that, with [AmeriZIRP](#) in full swing, the Keynesians have rather the best of it. Perhaps we can give Professor Madrick credit for being right about that.

So the “new economics” does, after all, live up to its name. It is a product of the 1920s and '30s, when Britain discovered that her World War I debts would not allow her to stay on the classical gold standard that she once had established — at least, not at the now-overvalued prewar parity. There was too much paper and not enough gold. The failure cascaded, the world switched to paper money, and a new economics was needed. Under which “going off gold” was not a failure at all, but in fact a step into a brighter new world.

Who was right? Was the end of the classical gold standard a disaster? Or were the old orthodox economists just a bunch of no-fun fuddy-duddies, who didn't get it at all? And if so, how did they metamorphose from fuddy-duddies into nutball cranks?

First, it's easy for us to dismiss the inflationists on logical grounds. Inflationism simply cannot be right. It violates logic. Nothing can violate logic.

Second, an orthodox economist need not be a goldbug. The difference between paper and gold, as monetary goods, is immaterial. People hold money to defer consumption into the future, not for the industrial qualities of the money itself. Gold makes a good monetary system not because gold is “intrinsically” valuable in some sense, but because the supply is strictly limited. Ideally, there would be no new gold mining at all. And we can duplicate this effect with paper money, by issuing a certain number of notes and double-promising not to issue any more. (The advantage of gold is that the promise is a lot more credible.)

Rather, the difference is between a hard or inelastic currency, and a soft or “elastic” one. The former cannot be inflated; the latter can. An ideal hard currency has no new supply.

The key fact about money is that what matters to you is not how much money you have, but what fraction of the total money supply you have. It is the latter than determines your power to exchange money for other goods, in competition with present moneyholders. Eg: if, following Hume's Archangel Gabriel, we turn every dollar into two dollars (being careful to adjust debts as well), we have changed nothing.

Even simple inflation — printing money and spending it, Keynesian style — can be emulated with an ideal hard currency. To “print” new money in this currency, simply confiscate it pro rata from all present holders of the currency. Eg, if you want to print 1/100th the present money supply, find every dollar in the world, pay its owner 99 cents, and use the leftover pennies to fund your plan.

The effect of this policy is precisely the same as that of inflating an elastic currency, although the elastic implementation is much more straightforward. Perhaps this is the advantage of elasticity. But it avoids the critical question, which is *why* we'd want to do this in the first place. Oddly enough, although we know they are semantically identical, the inflation option seems much more fair and reasonable. Oddly, too, even Adams seems to acknowledge that, although an elastic currency may be pernicious, it is desired by many.

Keynes and Fisher did not propose inflation as an all-purpose stimulant for general fun. They proposed it as a cure for economic recessions and depressions, which were certainly in no short supply at the time. We are entering a recession or depression now, so it seems wise to revisit the issue. Is cocaine a good remedy for depression? Why do so many people want to inflate?

Again, the answer is easy. What we see in a recession or depression is a drop in consumer spending. Since spending is the flip side of production, we can think of the GDP (the sum of the prices of all goods and services sold by businesses to consumers) for any country as the amount of money spent on that country's goods and services. If that number falls by, say, 5%, the average business in the country has produced 5% too many goods and services.

Obviously, this is quite painful. And it also gives rise to calls for inflation — or, to use a more precise term, *monetary dilution*. There is an easy way to correct the situation to our business's satisfaction: print 5% more money, and spend it on goods and services. Hence the “stimulus.”

If we switch back to hard-currency mode and look at what we're doing, it is even weirder. In order to prop up consumer demand, we steal one nickel from every holder of a dollar, add it all up, and spend it on goods which we throw away. Is this healthy? Keynes thought it was.

Basically, the way to perceive the “new economics” is in exactly the same way that Adams perceived it: not a sane government policy, but a response to pressure groups. Fortunately or unfortunately, those pressures were a lot stronger after WWI than before it, and sound money went the way of the dodo. So, for example, our pressure group here is the business owner. Farmers in debt also tend to do quite well

with inflation. But, again: any monetary debasement can be modeled as a monetary transfer.

As in the case of AGW, we ended up with “new economics” because that was what Washington wanted to hear. The case is the same today: Barack Obama’s “stimulus” proposal involves *doubling* Federal discretionary spending, ie everyone’s budget. Obviously, this makes quite a few people very happy. And it probably spreads the loot around a little better than if we were just to give it all, up front, to Tony Rezko.

Hence the death of orthodox economics. The orthodox economists of the 19th century, the believers in sound money, were not in general policymakers. They viewed their task as one of describing the economy, not controlling it. But in the ’20s and ’30s, when university men started to move into government, politically palatable solutions were needed. The Austrians and other orthodox historians had nothing of the sort. So they were left out of the pie when all the power got distributed, and today they have no government jobs and only a few marginal academic ones.

What at least the Austrians had, however, was an accurate understanding of the disease that the Keynesians and Fisherites were trying to treat — the pattern of repeated booms and busts. The “new economists” called it the “business cycle,” a term implying some endogenous origin in the commercial community — which, coincidentally or not, tended to align with Harding and Coolidge rather than Hoover and FDR. Bankers and economists tend to be more left-wing.

“Business cycle” is an extremely misleading phrase. A better phrase would be *banking cycle*. As I discussed [here](#), the cause of the recurrent panics and collapses is a bad accounting practice in the Anglo-American banking system, generally known as *maturity mismatching*.

A maturity-mismatched bank, which is any bank today, writes promises of money it doesn’t have — yet. It “borrows short and lends long,” balancing short-term liabilities (such as checking deposits, whose term is zero, as they can be withdrawn at any time) with long-term assets (such as mortgages paid over 30 years). Sometimes appearances can be deceiving. Sometimes something that sounds like a bad idea is actually just a bad idea.

Without going into too much detail, suffice it to say: while a maturity-mismatch structure is not quite the same thing as a Ponzi scheme, they both have a tendency to collapse catastrophically in a cloud of dust, leaving investors with a lot less money than they thought they had. Effectively, maturity mismatching lets banks teleport money from the future into the present. What’s bad is that this is inflationary, and what’s worse is that — when the scheme collapses — the inflation reverses. This creates your recessions, depressions, etc.

So we now have a perfect understanding of the origins of Fisher-Keynes inflationism. It exists not because it makes sense but because politicians desire it. Politicians desire it as a palliative for the deflationary conditions of a maturity crisis (or any other crash). In the 19th century, such crashes were often described as “shortages of money” (meaning shortages of present money). And printing will

certainly solve that.

It's important to note that while maturity-mismatch inflation has a reverse gear, and so do the open-market operations used for Fisherite monetary policy (these can either create money or retire money), Keynesian spending does not. This is a pattern that leads to long-term monetary decay: first, maturity mismatching inflates the economy and creates a huge amount of debt; second, a maturity crisis triggers a panic, the debt goes bad, and the country enters depression; and third, massive doses of Keynesian heroin are injected into its aorta, waking it up. Sadly, it will need more heroin tomorrow — and so on.

What a sane and healthy government tries to avoid is *inflation dependency*. This addiction is a state in which a substantial percentage of consumer spending originates in newly printed or lent money. For example, before the real-estate crash, about 5% of US GDP was home-equity withdrawals — money teleported out of the future, and into thin air. Most banks have stopped providing this service, leaving a mortgage-equity-withdrawal-shaped hole in US GDP. But President Obama will fix it, of course, with his wonderful stimulus.

We start to see how appalling the Keynesian stimulus is. First, it replaces one addiction — the vanished “home ATM” — with a new one, Federal money. Second, budgets in Washington do not get cut, at least not routinely. The stimulus will be permanent, which means we've replaced one addiction with another.

And third, when we do this, we shift a substantial percentage of private economic activity into the hands of Washington's finest, who never turn down either money or power. It is probably a coincidence that the inauguration of The One coincides with the Congressional murder of America's [handmade toy industry](#) (thanks, Ralph Nader — no, really). But it is a bit symbolic. We are heading for Brezhnev faster than most of us think.

At a higher level, both monetary policy and Keynesian stimulus pretend to be cures for the banking cycle. Neither claims to understand it at all, but both have been promising to eliminate it for the last 75 years. This has not happened, of course. The remedies are *palliatives* for the destructive effects of the collapses, but this is like taking cocaine for your strep throat. What it really needs is a *specific* cure, ie, antibiotics.

To end the banking cycle permanently, our existing structures of long-term debt which back short-term liabilities need to be restructured. One way to do this is the classic Austrian approach: let everything collapse. If we were actually on the gold standard, this might well be our only option — but we're not. It is much easier to transition to a fixed-supply fiat currency, which is in fact harder than gold (because there is no new production at all).

Basically, the only painless, specific, and lasting way out of the banking cycle is to purchase all financial assets with freshly-issued dollars, then sell the assets and destroy the dollars paid for them, and start lending back up with new banks and maturity-matched accounting. This is a full reboot of the financial system. Accept no substitutes. Yes, it involves some inflation, but the inflation is (a) one-time, and (b)

pointed at the actual problem.

Once again, this is not going to happen — despite the fact that it should be obvious. There is simply no power in the world, not even obviousness, that can displace our present economics faculty, or dislodge them from their lock on policy.

They have tenure, after all. They're scientists, which means that if you oppose them you're an ASS. And they will remain in power until someone drives a tank or two into Harvard Yard — which, come to think of it, doesn't sound like such a bad idea at all.

HNU: *human neurological uniformity*

And last but not least: our third case study in adaptive mendacity under the democratic system, HNU or *human neurological uniformity*.

An HNU credulist believes that modern human subpopulations are neurologically uniform. In other words, genetic differences between races (if the term is even acknowledged) are of no behavioral significance. Especially committed credulists may believe that genetic differences between individuals are of no behavioral significance, or even that human behavior has not been shaped at all by evolutionary history — both forms of the “Blank Slate” hypothesis. (If you are new to the issue, you could do a lot worse than starting with [Pinker's book](#).)

You may, for instance, hear phrases like “we are all the same under the skin.” [Are we?](#) (And consider the [behavioral correlates](#).) I suppose one could step back to a less-falsified point: “we are all the same under the skull.” Evolution, in this theory, is somehow attenuated by tissue depth. Do you want to go there?

As the authors of [this new book](#) put it: given the genetic history of the human species, global equality in *any quantitative trait* — physical or behavioral — is about as likely as dropping a handful of quarters and having them all land on edge. Of course, as reasonable thinkers, we are prepared to consider improbable propositions. If presented with extraordinary evidence.

What, sir, is your evidence for HNU? Oh, you don't have any. I see. Once again, we find our new friend — the mainstream crank.

You'll note the familiar chutzpah of quackery. Lacking any positive factual argument for their hypothesis, how do the spinmeisters of HNU credulism — from Stephen Jay Gould down — operate? The answer is a one-paragraph textbook in charlatanship. This maneuver takes a gallbladder the size of a basketball, but it works perfectly.

First: shift the burden of proof to the *converse* of your unsupported hypothesis, defining it as the *null hypothesis* — true until proven false. Second: raise the standards for proving it false to an absurd and unsatisfiable level. (See [this](#) for a typical attempt to clear the ever-rising bar.) Third: declare victory.

Thus: the moon is made of green cheese. You say the moon is made of moon rock and moondust, but you have no real evidence for this claim. Astronauts landed on the moon and brought home moon rock and moondust, but this is just a superficial layer of asteroid debris around the cheese. If they go again and actually drill this time, they'll hit cheese. If they don't, they didn't drill deep enough. Regardless, the moon-rock theory remains highly speculative and unproven — it is probably “junk science” funded by lunar mining interests.

And it's just another day in your worm-eaten medulla. Hey, don't worry — we've all been there.

Here is a thought I distinctly remember thinking as a teenager, quite possibly after reading one of Stephen Jay Gould's better essays on the early hominidae: “boy, it's a good thing *Homo erectus* went extinct. Because fortunately, racism is a lie, we are all the same under the skin, and once America educates the world all God's chilluns will go to Harvard. But we're obviously descended from less-intelligent hominids — and if those guys were still around, we'd have a *real* race problem.” A testament to the art of modern [crimestop](#), which always finds a way to disable wrongthink by removing some tiny but essential component from one's picture of reality.

I'll assume you've succumbed to the wrongthink. If not, think about it for a while. Spend some time on the Internet. Draw your own conclusions. Then continue below — or, of course, don't.

Since you're no longer an HNU credulist, you must be an *HNU denialist* — ie, one prepared to consider patterns of genotype-phenotype correlation in behavioral traits of modern human subpopulations. Terrible! But don't worry — if you don't mind keeping company with the dead, you'll find yourself in the best of company.

For instance, [David Hume](#) — founder of modern rational thought — was an [HNU denialist](#):

I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the Whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the Whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are Negro slaves dispersed all over Europe, of whom none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; though low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one Negro as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks a few words plainly.

Now, if a man was to stand up and say this today, that man would be a *racist*. But let's not forget, Hume wrote this in, like, 1500 BC or something. (He also wrote it when there were a lot fewer Negroes around.)

As Hunter S. Thompson once put it, we've learned a lot about race relations since then. Don't worry, SPLC — we welcome our new [Mustiphino](#) overlords.

Seriously: should the HNU denialist accept this invidious word, *racist*? Better yet, should he flaunt it like a homo? Obviously, a matter of personal taste. It depends how much you want to offend people. But there is one thing to note: the common meaning of *racism* implies the belief that ancestry is significant information in the context of common decisions about individuals.

It should be obvious that it is not. If you want to test a job applicant's IQ, for example, give her an IQ test. Patterns of ancestry become useful only in decisions that affect large groups of humans in the aggregate. Governments, however, must often make such decisions.

Therefore, if you are an HNU denialist and someone asks you whether you're a *racist*, you can ask him if he implies the above belief, which we can call *racial essentialism*. (The Nazis, of course, were big essentialists.) If he says yes, tell him no. If he says no, you can tell him yes.

One also must be quite a bit more careful than Hume with the words *superior* and *inferior*. This implies some quantitative ordering of overall personal worth, an idea one would expect Hume to be the last to accept. For example, consider the proposition that Jews tend to be better chess players than Negroes, whereas Negroes tend to be better dancers than Jews. Both halves of this statement may (or may not) be true, but neither can justify us in ranking the two races overall — unless our sole criterion of personal worth is either chess or dance. Which mine isn't.

I will take the liberty of suggesting that Hume, had he known how touchy his descendants would become on this subject, would have said that Europeans tend to have higher labor productivity than Negroes. As measured in wages, this is an easily verifiable fact of no moral significance whatsoever. (In a society which permitted both European and Negro slavery, we could compare the cost of the capital rather than the price of the rental.)

For an intelligent person in the 21st century, it is unnecessary to be even slightly neurotic about the obvious statistical differences in the average talents of human races. It so happens that, in the world of 2009, a talent for solving differential equations commands a higher salary and a larger job market than a talent for playing musical instruments. But there are exceptions: Prince is much better compensated than you. Does that make him a better person? Who could possibly care? We each are who we are, we each make the best of it. Duh.

My ideal future is one in which governments pay at most minimal attention to race. If that makes me a racist, so be it. But Orwell just came in his pants.

Obviously, once you stop believing in *democracy*, it is easy to stop seeing the failure of this political design in societies with a high percentage of non-Eurasian genetic ancestry as a moral reflection on persons of non-Eurasian ancestry, and start seeing it as an mere engineering failure. Ie: if Negroes are

unsuited for representative government, the fault lies entirely with the latter. Europeans are unsuited for representative government, too — just slightly less unsuited.

It's true that our planet, at present, hosts quite a few healthy humans whose present economic productivity is negative. But this is probably best explained as a case of mere misgovernment. Civilized societies in the past have found that the demand for menial labor is, at the right price, almost inexhaustible, and have flourished with a very high ratio of laborers to elites. If present political structures fail under these demographic conditions, the fault is — once again — with the political structures. (For example, colonial Spanish America thrived peacefully under royal government, and became violent and corrupt under republican institutions.)

Should governments, for example, consider race in their immigration policies? I can't imagine why they would want to. Surely an effective immigration policy, by definition, is one that lets in desirable subjects and keeps out undesirable ones. Whatever your definition of desirability, there are surely far more effective ways to evaluate an applicant for immigration than examining his or her ancestry, or even a full genotype. Even if we had a genotype-to-IQ function, which of course we don't (yet), by definition an IQ test is the most effective way to test IQ.

But enough defensiveness. Let's see what the world looks like to an HNU denialist.

As usual, we all have a complete picture of reality as consistent with HNU credulism. As usual, we have no picture whatsoever of reality as consistent with HNU denialism — except, of course, for some sketchy and invidious stereotypes of what a “racist” should think. We have no interest in nibbling at these poisoned baits.

(But we will continue to use the word *Negro*, which has — or had — been the most standard and precise signifier for its signified since (according to my OED) 1555. Geeze, man, talk about freakin' Orwell. It reminds me of an old Primitive Radio Gods [track](#), which goes: “*I got a god-given right to smoke whatever I like; / Tell me how it got given to you?*” Of course, the verse refers to tha chronic, not the English language. Yet the principle is the same.)

In other words: you know the complete story of race relations in America — in the reality in which Negroes are best understood as Europeans with black skin. But now we have another reality. In that other reality, what is the story of race relations in America? Whatever it is, it can't be the *same* story.

Perhaps you've seen this issue discussed before, and it tires you. The Negro problem has vast ritual importance in the modern American mind. A fresh perspective is essential. So:

Let's say you were a person who didn't care *at all* about the Constitution, and you wanted to take America back to the past and establish a new order of hereditary nobility. What could be more deliciously reactionary than that? Real, live nobles, walking around on the street. So let's see what it would take to

make it happen.

First, we need to define noble status. Our rule is simple: if either of your parents was a noble, you're a noble. While this is unusually inclusive for a hereditary order, it is the 21st century, after all. We can step out a little. And nobility remains a *biological* quality — a noble baby adopted by common parents is noble, a common baby adopted by noble parents is common.

Fine. What are the official duties and privileges of our new nobility? Obviously, we can't really call it a noble order unless it has duties and privileges.

Well, privileges, anyway. Who needs duties? What's the point of being a noble, if you're going to have all these duties? Screw it, it's the 21st century. We've transcended duties. On to the privileges.

The basic quality of a noble is that he or she is presumed to be *better* than commoners. Of course, both nobles and commoners are people. And people do vary. Individual circumstances must always be considered. However, the official presumption is that, in any conflict between a noble and a commoner, the noble is right and the commoner is wrong. Therefore, by default, the noble should win. This infallible logic is the root of our system of noble privilege.

For example, if a noble attacks a commoner, we can presume that the latter has in some way provoked or offended the former. The noble may of course be guilty of an offense, but the law must be extremely careful about establishing this. If there is a pattern of noble attacks on commoners, there is almost certainly a problem with the commoners, whose behavior should be examined and who may need supplemental education.

If a commoner attacks a noble, however, it is an extremely serious matter. And a pattern of commoner attacks on nobles is unthinkable — it is tantamount to the total breakdown of civilization. In fact, one way to measure the progress that modern society has made is that, in the lifetime of those now living, it was not at all unusual for mobs of commoners to attack and kill nobles! Needless to say, this doesn't happen anymore.

This intentional disparity in the treatment of unofficial violence creates the familiar effect of asymmetric territorial dominance. A noble can stroll anywhere he wants, at any time of day or night, anywhere in the country. Commoners are advised not to let the sun set on them in noble neighborhoods, and if they go there during the day they should have a good reason for doing so.

One of the main safeguards for our system of noble authority is a systematic effort to prevent the emergence of commoner organizations which might exercise military or political power. Commoners may of course have friends who are other commoners, but they may not network on this basis. Nobles may and of course do form exclusive social networks on the basis of nobility.

Most interactions between commoners and nobles, of course, do not involve violence or politics. Still, by

living in the same society, commoners and nobles will inevitably come into conflict. Our goal is to settle these conflicts, by default, in favor of the noble.

For example, if a business must choose whether to hire one of two equally qualified applicants, and one is a noble while the other is a commoner, it should of course choose the noble. The same is true for educational admissions and any other contest of merit. Our presumption is that while nobles are intrinsically, inherently and immeasurably superior to commoners, any mundane process for evaluating individuals will fail to detect these ethereal qualities — for which the outcome must therefore be adjusted.

Speaking of the workplace, it is especially important not to let professional circles of commoner resistance develop. Therefore, we impose heavy fines on corporations whose internal or external policies or practices do not reflect a solid pro-noble position. For example, a corporation which permits its commoner employees to express insolence or disrespect toward its noble employees, regardless of their relationship in the corporate hierarchy, is clearly liable. Any such commoner must be fired at once if the matter is brought to the management's attention.

This is an especially valuable tool for promoting the nobility: it literally achieves that result. In practice it makes the noble in any meeting at the very least *primus inter pares*. Because it is imprudent for commoners to quarrel with him, he tends to get what he wants. Because he tends to get what he wants, he tends to advance in the corporate hierarchy. The result, which should be visible in any large business without dangerous commonerist tendencies, will be a predominance of nobles in top executive positions.

And, of course, this should be especially the case in government... but enough. We've made the point.

And what exactly is that point? Well, three points.

One: this system is profoundly unhinged and bizarre, and completely inappropriate in anything like a sane, civilized society.

Two: it is — save for the change in terminology — a fairly close description of the present legal status of non-Asian minorities (NAMs) in present-day America. (Which is by no means the only modern government to adopt such a system.)

And three: applied to the cream of America's actual WASP-Ashkenazi aristocracy, genuine genetic elites with average IQs of 120, long histories of civic responsibility and productivity, and strong innate predilections for delayed gratification and hard work, I'm confident that this bizarre version of what we can call *ignoble privilege* would take no more than two generations to produce a culture of worthless, unredeemable scoundrels. Applied to populations with recent hunter-gatherer ancestry and no great reputation for sturdy moral fiber, *noblesse sans oblige* is a recipe for the production of [absolute human garbage](#).

Thus, the analogy of hereditary ignobility has given us HNU denialists a desperately-needed fresh perspective on the [bezonian](#) underclasses of the hardcore, female-welfare and male-criminal variety, whatever their race, color, creed or ethnic origin. (Amazingly, Boston still has [Irish bezonians](#).) The underclass are infinitely depraved aristocrats, with the aristocrat's economic role of extracting profit without productivity through the use or threat of violence. The women are concubines or queens, the men are warriors or barons. In terms of sheer, industrial-strength vice, the denizens of Professor Venkatesh's world surrender nothing to the louchest rake of the Hellfire Club, and their capacity for random mayhem might even shock the Borgias.

That this Orcish parody of aristocracy was created, in the lives of those now living, out of the certainly imperfect but generally functional pre-WWII American Negro subculture, through policies designed by "social scientists" who were in fact religious moralists in disguise, is one of the larger ironies of modern history.

But perhaps I overanticipate. Strangely (or not), most Americans are not familiar with the actual history of the modern American Negro. It shows a precipitous cultural decline in the second half of the 20th century — just as our system of ignoble privilege was established. This might be a coincidence, but then again it might not.

Before 1960, most Negroes had jobs, most Negro children were born to married parents, and most cities in America had thriving Negro business districts (such as [Bronzeville](#) in Chicago). All this is gone. But for a white-assimilated minority, often more mulatto than Negro, the community has simply been shattered. A time traveller from 1960 might be excused for thinking the country had spent the last fifty years in the savage grip of the Klan. Even the great Negro contribution to American music has sunk from the genius of jazz to the barbarism of rap.

Whereas to the HNU credulist, the second half of the 20th century was the golden age of the "African-American," with historical achievements unseen since Periclean Athens. We have developed a remarkably wide parallax here. Let's go back and see the world through the eyes of our old, discarded, worm-installed beliefs.

If we assume HNU, the standard story *makes sense* — to the extent that any perspective founded on nonsense can make sense. Without the obvious answer of genetic neurological disparities, the HNU credulist applies the proper Sherlock Holmes algorithm and assumes that, absent the impossible, the only alternative is the improbable.

Thus, he ascribes the depressing sociological statistics of American Negroes to mistreatment, past and present, by whites. Ie: *racism*. In the era of slavery or the era of the lynch mob, this did not seem like much of a stretch. Surely it is at least the #2 suspect.

The HNU credulist of the [Gunnar Myrdal](#) era discovered two principal aspects of this problem. One:

Negroes in America had no effective political power and were often discriminated against by the government, mainly state governments in the South. Two: Europeans in America generally disliked Negroes, and preferred not to associate with them (ie, they were *racists*). Therefore, the Negro problem could be solved by (a) giving Negroes money and power, and (b) educating Europeans to like and respect their Negro brothers, who (respectable scientists assured them) were exactly the same as them, under the skin.

Fifty years ago, this prescription was *not absurd*. America took it. It didn't seem to be working, so we doubled the dose. And so began the usual pattern of iatrogenic escalation. Far from curing the relatively mild social pathologies of the Negro community in the early 20th century, the Myrdal therapy aggravated them, converting small precancerous lesions into vast metastatic melanomas. Of course, this called for even more medicine. And so on.

As in AGW and KFM, the feedback loop has created a business of its own. America is now inconceivable without the race industry. It has added a Hispanic underclass to its Negro problem, and its disciples in Europe have created a remarkably similar Muslim problem.

Antiracism gained power in the United States through what we call the *civil-rights movement*. Perhaps a more precise name would be the *black-rage industry*, but we can compromise and settle for *black-power movement*. When you hear these words, you probably think of the “carnivorous” side of the whole circus, with [Huey Newton](#), [H. Rap Brown](#) and [Field Marshal Cinque](#), and not the “vegetarian” side, with Martin Luther King, Jesse Jackson, etc.

But from the perspective of European-Americans, the two acted as a perfect Mutt and Jeff act. Mutt said: I'll kill you. Jeff said: that Mutt is a really bad apple, and if you don't give me money and power he might well kill you.

To a Loyalist, this all sounds dreadfully familiar. Remember the pattern of the American Rebellion: the likes of Otis and Sam Adams raised hell, and the likes of Burke and Pitt explained that they were raising hell because they weren't given enough money and power. Of course, the conciliations of the latter did precisely nothing to reconcile the former to British government.

Americans failed to grasp the fundamentally predatory nature of the black-power movement. Rather than suppressing it forcefully and restoring the rule of law, the worse it behaved the more they fed it. The result was, and is, a Negro population which has essentially seceded from mainstream American culture, to the tremendous disadvantage of both parties. The resulting ghetto culture remains marinated with black-power ideology, although it is now so distant from the lives of you or I that we only notice it when a Jeremiah Wright somehow swims into view.

And meanwhile, the official story is that this entire disaster is the result of *racism* — ie, Europeans who dislike Negroes, deny HNU, or both. Consider the enormous guilt complex that so many Americans have

laid on themselves for answering no to the question: “do you regularly enjoy the company of African-Americans?” It is not enough for the State to force you to *believe* — it must also force you to *like*. Emotional tyranny is old hat for any good Puritan.

Lynch mobs and segregated lunch counters are a thing of the past, but the consequences once attributed to them have only gotten worse. Therefore, the campaign against *racism* must only strengthen. Consider the discovery of [unconscious racism](#). The involuntary, concealed, guilt-inducing activation of the European amygdala somehow seems to do just as good a job, if not better, as any Klan mob of keeping the black man down. We must get rid of the amygdala! Coincidentally — or not — this racist organ is also the part of the brain activated when you or I feel *fear*. I can’t imagine why [that would be](#).

Step back a moment and picture your fellow Americans, who are so confident that by electing a mulatto President (more money, more power) they have brought this astounding circus to an end. Quite the contrary. They have just fed it another lollipop.

But this is nothing new, so the consequences should not be especially devastating. The circus is awful, but it is an old dog and capable of few new tricks. Contra [Jared Taylor](#), I expect no American [Zuma](#) to follow our new Mandela. Though some other hell no doubt awaits us.

The policy solution here is obvious: eliminate the race industry, abolish all racial privileges including laws against “harassment” and “discrimination,” and restore unconditional freedom of speech and freedom of association. Someday, sooner or later, probably later, all this nonsense will end up in whatever dusty closet we sent the segregated water coolers too. Our government will finally forget about race and treat individuals as individuals. And the entire country will party for a week — except those who need to be arrested.

Yes. This is what happens when you think for yourself. Suddenly, your mind is full of all sorts of *completely unacceptable* — but strangely logical — ideas. These three cases are probably the most spectacular, but the list could easily be extended. (The good news, however, is that you’ve swallowed the sodium-metal core, and your stomach seems to still be intact.)

The thing to note about these democratic feedback loops between public miseducation and official malpractice is their tremendous stability. As a believer in democracy, you expect the system to stabilize itself, the people to magically wake up, return to sanity, and seize control of their government. It is this dream from which you need to wake. It will never happen.

But what will? Perhaps we need another week of therapy, after all.

A gentle introduction to Unqualified Reservations

(part 4)

Thursday, January 29, 2009 at 4:47 AM

The trouble with last week's examples is that, while they may convince you that some seriously foul residue has built up in the democratic feedback cycle of State, School, and People, they don't really help us understand just what that gunk is, how it can be pumped back out of the pipes, or how much better the kitchen will smell without it.

The cases of AGW, KFM and HNU, assuming we've analyzed them correctly (if one or even two are wrong, it is not hard to come up with others), do not constitute anything like a real picture of the actual, real reality behind the official reality show. Counting the Loyalists, we have four little paint chips from the real picture. We know something is weird, because each of the chips is orange — and there is no orange on the official picture. But four chips are not a picture.

For example: the four positions, Loyalism and AGW, KFM and HNU denialism, all seem to appear — not in any precise sense, just as a matter of obvious perception, on one side of the political spectrum. That would be the *right* side.

Is this a coincidence? No, I don't think it's a coincidence. Does it offer an easy formula for correcting your television picture? By tuning it permanently, perhaps, to Fox News? By my count, Fox News and I agree on exactly one of the four.

[Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn](#) once put the formula as briefly as possible: "Right is right, and Left is wrong." Which is perfectly accurate, if you define Right as right, and add the obvious caveat that Left puts its pants on one leg at a time. The first clause is thus a tautology, and we reduce to: "Left is sometimes wrong." Anyone who doesn't already agree is well past the reach of reason.

And if we define Right as the political position of some antileftist political movement or other — Fox News, the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the Rotary Club, you name it — K-L's formula can only be wrong. Because not all these groups agree with each other. We could say that, between factions of the Right, the rightmost is always the rightest, but (apart from the fact that the rightmost also tends to be the craziest) this brings us back to our original problem of defining "right." Again — we are getting nowhere.

What we're starting to notice is that it's much more difficult to think outside the box than in it. When we were in the box, we had these authorities we trusted — the Times, Harvard, National Public Radio. If someone asked us about X, our answer was: what does Harvard say about X?

Of all easy formulas for obtaining the truth, this official formula is *by far* the most accurate. Which is perhaps the most compelling of the many safeguards that hold so many in the Matrix. Switch off the pumps, open the hatch, stick your head out — and inhale an infinite vista of raw, unfiltered garbage. This is the reality of the political Right in the democratic era. To the starved for truth, the Right offers a well-stirred cocktail of truth, secondhand leftism, and pure ordure.

Can I offer you an [anti-Dreyfusard](#) with that week-old turd? Do you prefer democracy, or more democracy? Would you like those stale coffee grounds with [Dr. King](#) on top? Which is tastier: anti-Semitism, or a used condom?

As a political faction, Right just means “not left.” There are many Rights and only one Left. The modern Left evolved from one 18th-century Anglo-American tradition ([English Radicalism](#)), which over the last two centuries captured almost every intellectual and political institution in the world. Any post-1945 perspective outside this movement ([Updike's](#), for instance) is not the product of any significant intellectual quality-control process, because the modern Right has no significant intellectual institutions (by the standards of the modern Left).

Worse, as a political movement, the democratic Right exists only to the extent that it can recruit voters. Its doctrine is not a red pill, because it was never designed to be a red pill. It was designed to persuade as many bipeds as possible to pull the right lever. Ideas prosper in the modern Right if, and only if, they increase this number rather than decreasing it. Thus the blend of reality, leftism and nonsense — each of which has its own way of attracting voters.

Our reconstructions all seem right-wing because “right” just means “heresy.” Where the truth is orthodox, there is no need to reconstruct. But we cannot reverse the process: just as not all orthodoxies are false, not all heresies are true.

Our basic problem in reconstructing reality is that there is only one way to tell the difference between a healthy neuron and a parasitic filament: know what the neuron should look like. Clearly, the State is sick; by definition, it is sick because it is not healthy; but what, exactly, is a healthy State?

For example: WTF is wrong with Washington? Why, for example, is it so grimly and joyously intent on [crushing productive industries](#) and [rewarding inept ones](#)? Such are the psychic mysteries that have baffled many a thinktank. Yet the royalist surgeon steps into the room, glances quickly into America's open skull, and scribbles a diagnosis as obvious as it is concise: republicanism. (“As bad a case as I've ever seen. Very little hope, I'm afraid.”)

Is royalism the answer? It would surely be an improvement. But we must blame royalism for the faults of democracy, because the former decayed into the latter. It would be a bit of a waste to go to all the trouble of restoring the Stuarts, then see the same thing happen again.

In any case, we are not on original ground here. I'm asking more or less the same question that Carlyle posed in his [Latter-Day Pamphlets](#) (especially #3 and #4, *Downing Street* and *New Downing Street*), and I get more or less the same answer. This is UR for you: a late, decadent, second-rate imitation of Carlyle:

And secondly it is felt that "reform" in that Downing-Street department of affairs is precisely the reform which were worth all others; that those administrative establishments in Downing Street are really the Government of this huge ungoverned Empire; that to clean out the dead pedantries, unveracities, indolent somnolent impotences, and accumulated dung-mountains there, is the beginning of all practical good whatsoever. Yes, get down once again to the actual *pavement* of that; ascertain what the thing is, and was before dung accumulated in it; and what it should and may, and must, for the life's sake of this Empire, henceforth become: here clearly lies the heart of the whole matter.

For "Downing Street," of course, read "Beltway." Which is longer, loopier, and has more lanes. Everything else is the same — including the bit about the live coal. (And I fear not a few of the Beltway's dung-mountains were inherited intact, perhaps via Lend-Lease, from Downing Street.)

Here's how we'll explore Carlyle's question: we'll take [Matthew Yglesias' challenge](#), and solve the financial crisis. UR's cure for the monetary blues, hereafter to be known as Plan Moldbug, is (a) instantaneously effective, (b) thoroughly fair, (c) certain to be wildly popular, and (d) results in a stable, free-market monetary system.

Don't get your hopes up, though: Plan Moldbug will never happen. We'll explain why, and show how this is just one example of the difference between a sick State and a healthy one.

Let's start with a science-fiction scenario. Long ago, the Andromeda Cloud was ruled with an iron fist by the Fourth Empire, a basically Nazi-like operation based on a secret, now-lost, and thoroughly evil hyperdrive technology powered by burning kittens. For currency, the Fourth Empire used the *sol*, a swastika-stamped disk of *moolium* — an artificial element produced only in the kittendrive's exhaust stream.

Deafened by their own fascist death disco, the Fourth Empire's spaceführers fell long ago, and with them went the evil secret of the kittendrive. But moolium is nearly indestructible. Thus, Fourth Empire sols are scattered throughout the Cloud and form an ideal galactic currency, whose supply is fixed for ever and cannot be forged or counterfeited.

On the planet of Urf, which has recovered nicely from the collapse of interstellar trade and communication, archeologists have recovered 2,047,822,917,502 Fourth Empire sols. We'll make it a nice round number, and call it two trillion. Urf's surface has been surveyed with moolium-detecting blimps, ensuring that no further sols will be discovered.

But one day, after 30,000 years of isolation, the automated, sail-driven trading ship Monx-138, sent from the distant planet of Gubble, reaches Urf. Gubble's technology is vastly more advanced than Urf's; its nanoassemblers can produce almost any product that Urfers desire.

This implies that Urfers cannot produce anything of value to Gubbleans — which is indeed the case. But Gubble too uses the Fourth Empire monetary system. Monx-138 has no use for Urf's products. It only wants Urf's sols. But this works, too.

The first thing about Urf that Monx-138 notices is a strange fact. There are only two trillion sols on Urf. However, the net market capitalization of all financial assets on Urf is about 100 trillion sols. How should Monx-138 interpret this fact?

“Financial asset” is a broad category. Let's look at one category of Urf assets — corporate bonds. On a planet with 2T sols, Urf has 10T in corporate bonds, at the current market price. Obviously, bonds currently selling for 10T are expected to pay out over 10T if held to maturity — call it 15T.

This suggests a possibility for Monx-138. If Urf markets are right, we can exchange our Gubble products for all of Urf's corporate bonds, wait around until they mature (solar sailing is slow, anyway), then leave Urf with all 15T sols. But wait: Urf markets cannot possibly be right, because there are only 2T sols on Urf. So how can the bonds be worth 10T, or pay out 15T? Perhaps Monx-138 should forget about its nanoreplicator — and just short Urf bonds.

Believe it or not, Earth has roughly the same financial structure as Urf — with dollars, of course, not sols. Despite recent frenzied printing, there are fewer than 2T dollars [in the world](#), but the personal net worth of all Americans (alone) is [roughly](#) 50T dollars.

One may ask: does this make sense? It is surprisingly hard to show that it doesn't. For example, since Monx-138 is not actually hoovering up all payments on all corporate bonds and sailing them back to Gubble, it is possible that these dollars go around in a circle. The bondholders spend them on corporate goods and services, etc, etc.

But, to make a long story short, no: it doesn't make sense. If dollars were sols and could not be printed, this structure would collapse instantly. Even though dollars can be printed, it remains so unstable that it is collapsing anyway. Here is [my analysis](#) of what this crazy thing is and why it is falling apart. (Basically, the source of the instability is a loophole in bank accounting, which lets banks pretend to teleport money from the future into the present. This loophole has not been closed because it is (a) very lucrative and (b) very old.)

These details are irrelevant, though, to the points I want to observe here.

One: the net value of all financial assets must be *in some way* related to the amount of money available to buy them. It looks a little weird that Urf has 100T in financial assets but only 2T in cash. It would look

even weirder if Urf had only 2B, 2M, or 2,000 sols.

Two: whatever the force that amplifies 2T in cash to 100T in assets is, it is not a force of nature. The factor of 25 amplification cannot be an immutable, eternal constant, such as pi or e. We would be no more or less surprised if the latter number was 30, 60, or 120T.

Thus we can see *deductively* — without even understanding the Rube Goldberg machine that created it — that this system must be unstable. Whatever the amplifying force is, it is not constant; so it can vary. And indeed, that's exactly what we see: long periods of expansion in financial asset prices (without any corresponding production of actual dollars), punctuated by sharp declines in asset prices (without any corresponding destruction of actual dollars).

What happens when financial asset prices fall? What we're seeing now. But let's explain it.

The principal factor in a person's spending decisions is how much money she has to spend. Rich people splurge. Poor people scrimp. For each dollar you add to your wallet, your propensity to hold on to that dollar decreases, and your propensity to spend it increases.

By money, in this calculation, do we mean *actual dollars*? No, we mean *financial assets*. In general (with some exceptions, for hard-to-liquidate assets), your propensity to spend is not a function of the *composition* of your portfolio. It is only a function of the *magnitude*. If your net worth is ten million dollars, you are rich, whether your brokerage statement says you hold gold, dollars, or Intel shares; and you will spend like it.

Thus, we would expect an overall decline in financial-asset prices to result in a decline in spending, ie, consumption. 20th-century economic planners generally manage economies in terms of national production aggregates, such as GDP. Since global consumption must equal global production, a fall in consumption implies a fall in production. And this is how a banking crisis becomes a "recession."

What we call a "recession" is a gap between what consumers, with their 2009 brokerage statements, want to consume, and what producers, who did not expect the asset price collapse, planned to produce. These numbers must be equal. The obvious way for them to converge is for the productive economy to reduce capacity — close factories, lay off employees, etc. As [Andrew Mellon](#) put it: "Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers, liquidate real estate."

And there is a real case to be made that liquidation is the right solution. It is the traditional solution of [Austrian economists](#), for example, who had the right analysis of the banking problem to begin with. And it is the right-wing solution, although as we've seen this indicator is fallible.

Moreover, there is a logic to liquidation. When the Rube Goldberg machine of asset-price expansion was operating in its pleasant, forward gear, a substantial percentage of consumer spending can be directly attributed to its efforts. For example, direct [mortgage-equity withdrawal](#) alone tended to be about 3% of

GDP — and this is only the visible fraction of the effect. Obviously, a healthy society is not dependent on the practice of printing money to purchase goods that would not otherwise be produced. Thus, even if we just turn the machine off, production must fall.

Nonetheless, I think liquidation is an error. Here's why.

Imagine that, instead of holding securities, everyone held cash. We can then replicate the chain of events from portfolio decline to consumer-spending recession, by replacing a decline in asset prices with a simple *destruction of money*. Suppose, for example, that every dollar whose serial number is divisible by 2 was badly manufactured. One day, all these dollars disintegrate.

Thus, everyone's net dollar worth falls by 50%; spending craters; so does production; and we get, in short, exactly what we're seeing now, with our 50% decline in financial-asset prices.

Now, how should a healthy government — a New Downing Street — react to this event? Option one: it can do nothing, allow consumption to fall, and let production stabilize at its new equilibrium. This is the liquidationist solution.

If dollars were Fourth Empire sols (or gold), liquidation would be the only possible solution. However, they are not. In the famous words of Ben Bernanke, USG has a “device called a printing press” which can produce them at zero cost.

More traditionally, USG can raise an arbitrary number of dollars by borrowing them, ie exchanging them for risk-free government bonds (which are risk-free because of said printing press). This is a difference of degree: a bond of zero maturity is simply a dollar note, and a bond of nonzero maturity is equivalent to a dollar with a “not valid until” date. Thus borrowing, for a monetary authority, just means printing money that is not ripe yet. (The purpose of printing unripe money is to reduce its positive effect on present consumption and hence present prices; since our problem is the opposite, not “inflation” but “deflation,” there is no reason not to just print ripe money.)

If this confuses you, don't worry. Just remember that the US cannot possibly run out of its own Monopoly money. Although fiat currency is what got us into this mess in the first place, it also gives us more than one angle for getting out of it.

Option two: the US can stimulate consumption by printing new dollars and lending them to banks, who will then in turn lend to consumers, who will spend. This is the monetarist (Fisher/Friedman) solution. It is not available to us at present, because economic actors are [so deeply indebted](#) that they cannot borrow even at zero interest rates.

Option three: the Keynesian “stimulus.” The US can stimulate consumption by printing new money and spending it. For reasons that are essentially cosmetic, this is generally done by hiring people to do [useless jobs](#) — Keynes himself, for example, once suggested burying stacks of bills in abandoned

minshafts, then filling up the mines, to produce an equivalent of gold mining for fiat currency. Most of your [“green jobs,”](#) inasmuch as they produce nothing of any practical use to anyone, are of just this sort.

The process can be short-circuited, however, with an even simpler approach. USG could simply print money to buy unwanted goods and services. (It already does this in agriculture.) For example, if demand for Hummers falls, there is nothing at all which prevents Congress from appropriating (printing) a billion dollars or two to buy Hummers. These can then be sunk in the ocean as an artificial reef, creating fish. (I have no joke — I just like saying “creating fish.”)

Perhaps this *reductio ad absurdum* brings home the fundamentally Soviet logic of Keynesianism. In the future, we will all do worthless work for worthless money. Change.

So: option one results in considerable personal suffering and destruction of industrial capacity. Option two does not work. This leaves us with option three, which has no historical record of working (at least, it neither cured the Great Depression nor ended Japan’s “lost decade”), and is obviously absurd. Nonetheless, logic must admit the possibility that it *could* work — for some values of the word “work.” So it seems like our best bet.

However, there is a fourth option. My example was specially crafted to make it obvious. Hopefully, you are already jumping up and down in your seat with your hand raised.

Option four is to simply *replace the defective dollars*. If you held dollars with serial numbers divisible by 2, you now have a wallet full of green lint. Send us the green lint. We’ll weigh it, figure out exactly how many dollars you used to have, and print new ones to replace them.

Note how much simpler and more elegant this approach is. We are actually fixing the *actual problem*: the destruction of money. We are curing the disease, not the symptoms. We are giving the feverish patient antibiotics, not immersing him in a bath of icewater.

Moreover, option 4 is also the fair solution. Whose fault is the crisis? USG’s. What did USG do wrong? It printed defective dollars. How can it make its wrong right? Replace the defective products. Not only does this restore the equilibrium of production and consumption, it also restores the contents of its citizens’ wallets.

Of course, the financial crisis was not *actually* caused by defective dollars. No: it was caused by a defective banking system. This system, while nominally “private,” was constructed and operated under the laws of USG, which claimed and exercised the right to regulate it down to the last crossed T — even if this regulation was in many cases inadequate or even [counterproductive](#). Moreover, the Rube Goldberg machine that managed to amplify two trillion actual dollars into a \$100 trillion securities market could not have operated without an incestuous connection between bank and state, in the form of both formal deposit insurance and informal “too big to fail” moral hazard. Again: the fault is clear.

Thus, Plan Moldbug: the real-life equivalent of mailing in your green lint. Replacing a defective financial system is harder than replacing a defective printing press. But still quite doable, as we'll see.

Step zero: call up Larry and Sergei, and get them to lend USG a few hundred of Google's best coders. We'll need them to write our new financial system. (We don't have time to do it the Beltway way.)

Step one: *nationalize* all market-priced financial assets at the present market price, exchanging them for new dollars. USG buys all publicly-traded American securities, and foreign securities held by Americans. It thus becomes the sole owner and operator of all public companies, and in doing so it also acquires all the banks (for the price of their common stock, which is not much these days). By acquiring all the banks, it acquires all their dodgy mortgages and other "bad" securities. Obviously, after this process, all debts USG owes to itself are cancelled.

Hedge funds, private equity, and other exotic assets held by individuals may require some appraisal. But these are held by rich people, who are patriotic and don't mind taking a bit of a haircut. Also requiring appraisal are homes; if you are a homeowner, USG calculates your home equity (perhaps using an automated appraisal, such as Zillow's), and buys it from you. You are now a renter; USG is your landlord. Your new rent is calculated as a percentage of your home appraisal.

The result of step one is that USG owns all financial assets, major corporations, and real estate. In return, each USG citizen has one number: how many dollars they have. Perhaps the most straightforward way to implement this is to give every American a direct account at the Federal Reserve (a privilege now held only by banks). Thus, all your portfolios are automatically sold at the current market price, and your statement is mailed from the Eccles Building. The little number at the bottom, however, is the number you care about. This number has not changed. If your portfolio was worth \$250,000, you now have \$250,000.

Step two: *triple* each of these dollars. If your portfolio was worth \$250,000, you now have \$750,000. (I told you the plan would be popular.)

It is not practical to actually unwind all the financial transactions of 2008. Our goal is simply to (a) preserve some vestige of fairness, and (b) return the equilibrium of production and consumption to roughly where it was in 2007. In particular, we are tripling dollars, but not tripling debt. (Otherwise, this step would be meaningless.)

We triple the dollars rather than doubling them, because doubling them would roughly restore everyone's net worth, and the old balance of production and consumption existed not in a world of stable asset prices but a world of rising asset prices. (Thus, for instance, the systemic mortgage equity withdrawal.) In the new financial system, prices will be stable and magic money will not be created out of nowhere. So, to roughly match the spending level, while preferring an overshoot ("inflation") to an undershoot ("deflation"), we triple.

This may also annoy poor people, who have no assets to triple. Instead, poor people have debts. Thanks to our cleanup, these debts are now held by USG itself (which acquired them from the old financial institutions). There is no reason for USG, which can print dollars, to be squeezing them out of the hides of the poor. Forgive them all. Call it a [Jubilee](#).

Step three: calculate the expected shortfall in future *entitlements* (Medicare and Social Security), and print new dollars to fill the gap. (About 50 trillion of them, to be exact.) For extra credit, print unripe dollars (bonds) and issue them directly to the actual entitlement recipients, as per the actuarial value of their policies. Otherwise, just hold the dollars until they are needed.

Why all this printing? Basically, the problem is that (as, presumably, on Urf) our money supply has become inextricably confused with our financial-asset market. We could have \$100T financial assets and \$2T dollars only because a significant percentage of the value of all these assets was a consequence of Professor Bernanke's printing press. The same can be said even for entitlement payments — USG will never default on your Social Security, because it can always print money and mail it to you.

We are going to break this printing press. But before we break it, we have to use it — or we may well end up with \$2T dollars, and \$2T in financial assets. If you haven't been skimming, you know what effect that would have on GDP. Basically, we are finding all the fuzzy, virtual, implicit, green-lint dollars in the world, and replacing them with actual dollars.

Step four: *auction* all the financial assets previously nationalized — corporations, real estate, etc. There is certainly plenty of cash around to buy them with. Destroy the dollars received in the auction.

Why are we selling the assets we just bought? We bought them to close out a broken financial system, in which the relationship between asset prices and dollars was unstable and unhealthy. We are selling them to establish their free-market price in a stable, healthy financial system. We do not know what the right relationship between the number of dollars in the world and the net price of its financial assets should be. So we ask the market, and the market tells us.

If you were a homeowner before step one, you sold your house to the government and now rent. We don't want to evict anyone unnecessarily, so we'll offer you the opportunity to buy back your house for 10% less than the winning bidder — presumably some faceless conglomerate. If you reject this opportunity, your rent to the conglomerate is a function of the price it paid.

Step five: *renumber* the currency. Every dollar in the world (perhaps about 200T) has a new serial number — from 0 to 200T. This limit will never change. Write it into the Constitution. As long as we can hold the line on this number, our new financial system is built on a fiat currency that will be *harder than gold* (since new gold can be mined).

Or, for extra credit, redenominate the currency (including debts and contracts, this time) so that rather

than a random decimal number of dollars, there is a round binary number — such as 2^{64} . This has two advantages: (1) micropayments, and (2) a round binary limit will rapidly get baked into all sorts of financial software, and become almost impossible to change.

And that's Plan Moldbug. If this isn't a full reboot of the financial system, what is? If the financial system doesn't need a full reboot, what does? Now, let's review the advantages, as previously claimed, of this plan.

Is it *instantaneously* effective? Only inasmuch as the Googlers can implement all five steps instantaneously, perhaps; but only steps one and two are needed to reverse deflation, and these are easy. Is it *effective*? Yes, because tripling everyone's net worth should restore consumer spending quite handily. Is it *fair*? Perhaps not perfectly, but at least your new net worth is a function of your old net worth, and the government picks no winners or losers. Is it *popular*? Does a bear...

And does it restore a *stable, free-market financial system*? USG sells all the assets it nationalized, and its new dollar is the hardest currency in human history. We are increasing total dollar net worth over its pre-crash level, to make up for the termination of credit expansion, so the new dollar may have a slightly lower purchasing power. But the new dollar is watertight and does not leak, so there will be no persistent inflation.

And none of this matters at all, because Plan Moldbug will never, ever happen. At least, not as long as we have anything like the government we have now.

The problem with Plan Moldbug is that it can only be executed by a *strong* government. The election of Barack Obama has considerably strengthened USG, by removing the fraudulent Outer Party and returning Washington to its natural “apolitical” condition as a one-party state. Nonetheless, not all one-party states are created equal, and ours is weak and getting weaker. You may think this is a good thing. Please allow me to disabuse you of this notion.

What do we want in a government, anyway? What makes government good or bad?

First, there are two models of preference in government. You can prefer government X to government Y because either (a) X provides better government to its subjects, or (b) you, personally, have more power in the administration of X. Better, as Milton put it, to reign in Hell. We can call (a) the Popean model, (b) the Luciferian model.

Whether or not to worship the Devil is always a matter of taste. For me it is Taste 101, however, and I will go with [Pope](#):

For Forms of Government let fools contest;

Whate'er is best administer'd is best.

Of all Luciferian motivations, democracy is the lowest. It is one thing to rule in Hell. It is quite another to have one hundred-millionth of a say in the selection of an official whose role in Hell is primarily ceremonial.

Most fans of democracy do not, I think, support it for Luciferian reasons. They support it for Popean reasons. They think that deposing Lucifer and holding elections in Hell stands at least some chance of turning Hell into Heaven. While this is definitely not an opinion that anyone was ever reasoned into, it beats pathetic grasping at homeopathic fractions of power. Note, however, that many believe *others* support democracy for Luciferian reasons.

So we focus on the question: what is quality of government, and what design for government is most likely to provide it? And when we say “quality,” we mean quality from the perspective of the government’s subjects, not its rulers, ministers, employees, etc. From the Popean perspective, government is a *product*, and we are its consumers — whether we like it or not.

This unsurprising, but strangely uncommon, perspective also allows us to distinguish between *quality* and *price*. The *price* of a government is simply the level of taxation it imposes. Of course, as consumers we are prepared to balance quality and price, but our key goal at the moment is an engineering problem: how do we even create a high-quality government? Once we know how to build it, we can focus on getting the price down.

It so happens that, until I read Carlyle, I thought of myself as a libertarian. For me, a better government was a smaller government — case closed. Carlyle is often thought of as a prototype of fascism, a direction easy to see in even an early bit of late Carlyle such as the Pamphlets, and of course the absolute nemesis of any libertarian is the fascist. So how was I won over?

For me, quality of government comes in two dimensions: *responsibility* and *authority*. Both qualities are monotonically positive. There is no Goldilocks about them. A government cannot be too responsible or too authoritative — any more than food can be too tasty, bass too funky, or sex too hot. A serviceable Saxon synonym for the latter is *strong*, and responsibility is no more than common sense. So all we’re saying is that strong, sensible states govern the best.

Let’s take them in order. First, we will make the state sensible; then we will make it strong.

The common incidence of irresponsible kings, for purely biological reasons, is one of the main reasons cited for the demise of the European monarchical system, which of course created the great Continental nation-states now plainly [going to the dogs](#). I think this problem may be slightly overstated (the main reason I would cite starts with “E” and ends with “land”), but it is nonetheless a problem.

An easy way to see this is to see the royal family as a family business, that business being the State. A

sovereign state has no law above it to govern its affairs, and exists solely as a function of its own ability to defend itself. In all other respects it is exactly the same as any other corporate enterprise. For example, states and private corporations can, should, and usually do use the same accounting conventions, HR procedures, management structures, etc, etc. If sovereignty were not boolean, the difference between a real-estate developer and a state would be a difference of degree.

Unfortunately, the monarchies of Europe were already in decline when the most important organizational invention of the last millennium, the joint-stock corporation, was born. (And, of course, it was born in England, which had already done in its own rightful king and was soon to do away with everyone else's.) Therefore, no royalist intellectuals that I am aware of ever proposed converting the old family businesses into what might be called *joint-stock republics*.

The joint-stock republic is a very different entity from your ordinary, democratic republic. Its shares are negotiable and freely traded. Owning a share is not a “right,” except in the sense that if you own a share of Intel you have a right to receive Intel dividends. And, most importantly, the republic is operated for the exclusive benefit of its shareholders. All corporate governance mechanisms are otherwise the same, although without a superior sovereign to enforce them they must enforce themselves. Briefly: combine [this technology](#) with [this one](#). (Those Google engineers will be busy.)

If the republic is operated for the exclusive benefit of its shareholders, who of course are likely to resemble the corporate shareholders of the present day (pension funds, fat cats, Saudi sheikhs, etc), how on earth does it provide high-quality government? Shouldn't it be operated for the benefit of its customers?

This is the miracle of capitalism, so familiar and yet still so strange. The capitalist restaurant is operated for the benefit of its owners. The Communist restaurant is operated for the benefit of its customers. But which has better food?

We must agree that a restaurant operated *effectively* for the benefit of the customers will be a better restaurant than any operated for the benefit of the owners. But it is not possible to design a management structure that will reliably achieve this result. The problem is fundamental: we cannot state a precise and unambiguous definition of “good food” that we know all customers will agree on. We cannot characterize the results objectively or quantitatively.

We can, however, operate a restaurant effectively for the benefit of the *owners*, because we can describe what the owners want objectively and quantitatively: money. The more, the better. Thus the restaurant can be *accountable* to its owners, as it never can to its customers. And it is this accountability, this quality of tautness, which causes it to serve its customers well. A string can be loose in many ways, but tight in only one.

In a joint-stock republic, the mapping from profitable ownership to high-quality government is

straightforward. The return on each share is a function of the value of the capital. The capital is the country, ie, its real estate. The value of real estate is its price. How does a government maximize the price of its real estate? By making the country as pleasant a place to live as possible, ie, by providing high-quality government.

CEOs of private corporations today may be effective or ineffective. There is no escaping the bell curve. On the right end, you have Steve Jobs; on the left, Gil Amelio. However, one quality shared by almost all corporate CEOs is *sanity*. One generally does not hear of them going crazy and murdering the entire board of directors with a fire-exit axe, or the like. I realize that this is a low standard — but consider the record of heads of state in the democratic era.

Thus, responsibility. Let's look at the more interesting question of *authority* — or *strength*.

Authority is the state's ability to act decisively, cohesively, proactively and intelligently. From our experience in the private sector (not to mention the [military sector](#)), the formula for authority is clear: unity of command. A single extremely capable individual can manage an organization of any size, and our society has no shortage of such individuals. From this apex descends the familiar hierarchical pyramid. As an old Prussian Army saying went: who wishes to command, must first learn to obey.

Note your reaction to this. You are well aware that any large corporation which adopted any management structure besides a simple hierarchy would be halfway already to bankruptcy court, and that simple hierarchical command is the difference between an army and a mob. In both these cases, there is a single individual at the apex of command, which is completely normal.

However, in the terminology of government, this system would be described as an *absolute dictatorship*, or (once) an *Oriental despotism*, and you consider it the most dangerous possible design — one certain to practice sadistic, Kafkaesque mass murder. The salient examples, of course, are Stalin and Hitler.

There are quite a few mistakes in this perception, but one of the main ones is to take examples from outside one's own tradition of government. In the post-WWII era, everyone's tradition of government is the Anglo-American tradition, and when we think of absolute personal rule we should be thinking of Elizabeth I. (If you're going to argue that Elizabeth and Hitler were truly comparable, I'd like you to start by showing me the Nazi Shakespeare.)

Hitler and Stalin are abortions of the democratic era — cases of what [Jacob Talmon](#) called totalitarian democracy. This is easily seen in their unprecedented efforts to control public opinion, through both propaganda and violence. Elizabeth's legitimacy was a function of her identity — it could be removed only by killing her. Her regime was certainly not the stablest government in history, and nor was it entirely free from propaganda, but she had no need to terrorize her subjects into supporting her. Not so the dictators of the democratic era, each of whom could have been removed by a combination of their subordinates, and depended absolutely on personal mass popularity to avert this fate. And killing or

incarcerating opponents is a pretty obvious way to maintain one's popularity.

(And, of course, none of the three had anything like an accountability mechanism. It is not purely a coincidence that Elizabeth was sane whereas Hitler and Stalin were demented, but the process that produced the former at least did not select in favor of insanity.)

My favorite analogy for official authority is the [stellar cycle](#). If the authority of government is the temperature of the star, and the size of government is the size of the star, Washington is easily identifiable as a red giant, like Betelgeuse — enormous and cool.

For former libertarians, such as myself, this inverse relationship is critical. The paradox is that weakening government makes it larger. At least, to a libertarian, this seems like a paradox. Once it seems quite natural, you may no longer be a libertarian.

Perhaps the most significant fallacious principle in the Anglo-American democratic mind is the principle of division of authority — immortalized by Montesquieu as the [separation of powers](#). Montesquieu, of course, was an Anglophile, and he was head-over-heels in love with the supposed balance of powers created by the “Glorious” Revolution of 1688. To refute this principle, it should be sufficient to note that in the Britain of 2009, only one — at most — of Montesquieu's three powers still has any power at all.

The division of authority is simply the destruction of order. The Romans knew it as the political solecism of *imperium in imperio*, and Harvard Business School dreads it no less. There is no conceivable balance between competing authorities; they will fight until one kills the others, and even when they collaborate it is in the fashion of partners in crime.

Of course, divided authority tends to be quite popular among those who divide the authority. Power is fun, and power shared three ways creates more total fun than power held by one. Note also the entropic quality of division: it is much easier to divide than to reunify. The stellar cycle is entropic, of course, as well.

Democracy is a classic case of division of authority. It purports to dole out microscopic slivers of power equally to all subjects of the government. In fact this power is simply transferred to those who form, instruct, and organize large bodies of voters, whose average thoughts are unsophisticated by definition. Carlyle and others of his ilk called these men *wire-pullers*, and did not regard their growing importance as a good omen for the British polity. Surely the disaster of Great Britain in the democratic era evinces of some prescience in this regard.

We must not be too harsh on the the advocates of divided authority, however. The principle is easily recognizable as what it is: a bad, but not completely ineffective, attempt to produce accountability. Lacking anything like the shareholder structure of the joint-stock republic — which is categorically distinct from democracy, most notably because the interests of all shareholders are identical, whereas the interests of democratic voters differ and conflict — division of authority seems like a decent

compromise. That it weakens the State is obvious, but the more people you have in a room the more likely they are to agree on something sane.

The great error of libertarians, as well as many liberals, progressives, etc, is to suppose that the weaker the State is, the freer its subjects are. The opposite is very nearly true. A weak government is a large government — and the smaller the State, the freer its subjects are. Every time you weaken your government, you give it another excuse to become larger.

Essentially, big government is big because it is constantly *competing with itself*. Restore unified authority, clean the Augean stables, and the great dungheaps which exist only for the sake of themselves are washed out with the Orontes. Ideally, the dungheaps exist only for themselves, but in order to justify their existence they often put quite a bit of energy into molesting the poor customer.

We can see this easily by looking at a level of weakness the US has not quite achieved: personal corruption. In a country where government officials take bribes, the principle of divided authority has reached the individual level. The bribe taker is personally sovereign, in a sense. His actions are not in the interest of the State as a whole, but the State as a whole did not just pull you over for driving 50 in a 55 zone. He did, and he wants a 500-peso note along with your driver's license.

In the US, not individuals but agencies of the State compete for power and importance. Each seeks to expand its own impact, budget, and personnel. If USG, tomorrow, were to find itself operated as a single authority, it would set quite a number of live coals under quite a number of superfluous agencies.

There are many reasons that Plan Moldbug cannot happen, but this is perhaps the most salient. Our financial system cannot be rebooted, because there is no one in Washington with anywhere near the authority required to make any such decision. Even in FDR's day it would have been a stretch, and the Beltway hasn't spent the last 75 years turning into Betelgeuse for nothing.

This is especially the case because the logic behind the plan is not pseudoscience, but common sense. Common sense smacks of personal authority, and all bureaucracies have an intense jealousy of personal authority. One major goal of a bureaucracy is to distribute as much importance (ie, power, or at least apparent power) as possible to its employees, which argues for maximizing the number of individuals involved in every decision. Impact means power means status, and it's not for the money that bright young people flock to Dupont Circle.

In this environment, anything that smacks of proactive management or personal decisionmaking becomes almost offensive. To the extent that decisions must be taken at all, they should be taken on the basis of (a) science; (b) if not science, law; (c) if not law, at least some regular process. As we've seen, science has expanded wonderfully to fill this vacuum (congratulations to the climate modelers, by the way; our "stimulus" gives them another [\\$140 million](#)), and law and process are not far behind.

The ultimate power in the US system, the *summum imperium*, which of course belongs to the Supreme Court, reflects this paralysis perfectly. There is no question but that sovereignty resides in the nine bodies of the Court. If they order Barack Obama to deliver his next press conference standing on his head, he has to do it.

But not even the united Supreme Court, voting 9-0, can execute Plan Moldbug, because in exchange for the power of ultimate appeal, their authority is quintessentially reactive. The matter would have to reach them in a lawsuit, and the policy of rebooting the financial system would have to emerge in some way from that suit. The Court can decide whatever it wants, but it only gets to make a small number of decisions on a certain class of problems, and those problems have to come to it. Once again, authority has been driven out of the system.

Betelgeuse, of course, will end in a supernova. The fate of the red-giant state is similar. First, a phenomenon Carlyle would no doubt see everywhere in modern America and Europe, since he saw it even in the England of 1850: anarchy. The breakdown of a single general order, the emergence of transient local centers of power — gangs, terrorists, “activists,” and the like.

With its invention of that wondrous dream, the Third World, America has inflicted the horrors of anarchy on almost every corner of the planet outside itself. Even Europe is not immune, and nor are certain corners of most American cities. But I live in one of the least well-governed American cities, and I hardly get a glimpse of it. This, slowly — very slowly, I hope — will change.

So the conclusion we’ve come to about democratic government as a whole is oddly similar to our conclusion about the financial system. The conclusion is that it’s fatally broken, and needs to be replaced by something completely different. Even in Carlyle’s day, repair did not seem like an option. How less it is today! And still the dungheaps grow, the bats flit in and out, the stacks of paper molder. And we notice, with a chill: the whole damned thing is a colossal firetrap.

And I have no solution at all to this problem. I am hardly the first to notice that Washington is broken beyond repair — at least according to [this spurious poll](#), 71% of Americans agree with me. Perhaps this is the simple beginning of wisdom: yes, this thing is broken; no, it is not going to fix itself; no, we cannot fix it, either; and yes, it is getting slowly but surely worse.

Honestly, I am happy just to stop believing in my government. The idea that, just because you are right and the State is wrong, you should be able to do something about it, is a nematode rather than a neuron. It is unique to the democratic era. We are lucky simply that I’m allowed to post these posts, that you’re allowed to read them, that we can both go to Google Books and scroll through politically unacceptable tomes from the 19th century until our eyes glaze over.

If you by some chance agree with what I’ve written here, please avoid the impulse to act on it. Surrender completely to the impulse to think on it. Remember that the inexorable slope of the line is slow, slow,

slow. There is no shortage of time for thinking, none at all.

A gentle introduction to Unqualified Reservations

(part 5)

Thursday, February 12, 2009 at 7:10 AM

I feel we are ready for our portrait of USG in the large — what she is, and how she came to be.

Obviously, I can't conceal my opinion of the beast before us. Perhaps Goya put it best:



Goya left no captions for his [Black Paintings](#), so we have no way of knowing whether or not he meant to call this one *Democracy*. Events of the last week, however, have shown that Goya got one thing wrong. The black-robed figure is no goat at all — but a great, horn-crowned hog.

But in speaking so ill of any great thing, we must speak with great precision and care. What, exactly, is our hog-devil? In what coarse sty was it spawned? And what foul work betrays it?

For example: if USG has any material existence, it must in some sense consist of the people who work for it. Both my parents and my stepfather were career employees of USG. If they ever donned robes and animal masks for any dark, nocturnal rite of evil, they've hid it well.

While it's true that the average USG employee is probably not best described as a sensible, decent and capable person, exceptions are everywhere. And USG has no shortage of tentacles in which the exception becomes the rule — notably, the military.

For example: if we despise USG, what shall we make of its flag? As we know, the storied banner of the Republic is no more than the corporate logo of a malstructured sovereign. Liquidate the corporation, and what becomes of its brand? Shall the Stars and Stripes wave nevermore o'er the windy air? Yet where are the E.F. Huttons of yesteryear?

The answer is simple. Sovereign corporations are not to be liquidated. Sovereign liquidation means

anarchy, and there is no political form more dangerous. In small doses or in large, anarchy is destruction of capital. Those who worship it, pray to a goat.

Peter Oliver and Thomas Hutchinson, America's reactionary founding fathers, often called their party the "friends of government," and perhaps a systematic opposition to anarchy (with its inevitable concomitant, [anarcho-tyranny](#)) could describe itself as *archism*. For example, when you start spouting Moldbuggian nonsense and people accuse you of being a fascist, you can say, no, actually, I'm an *archist*. Will it keep your neck from the rope? Doubtful, but try it anyway.

USG is by no means an inherently unprofitable operation. It is anything but a candidate for liquidation. All it needs is new management. All assets and operations are preserved — at least, until the new management figures out what to do with them. This certainly includes the flag, and all other heraldic attributes of sovereignty. These are part of USG's capital, and no small part.

No — the program of the archist is not [destruction](#), but [restoration](#). A more palatable synonym, perhaps, for our grand design of [thorough](#) and uncompromising [reaction](#), which will reforge the sword of the State and spread peace, order and security across the democracy-scarred earth. Indeed you will learn to welcome your new, reactionary overlords... but I digress.

Our quarrel with USG, obviously, is not with the American continent or its population, nor with USG's employees; and nor with its symbols. So what remains? Why the Goya?

Answer: the hog-devil in USG is its *constitution*. Note the small c. Sadly, it is impossible to salvage the word *constitution*, small c, from its Orwellian fate. But we will pretend to try for a moment — if just to parse the scene of the crime.

Like most American political doxology, the word *constitution* comes from British politics. (In general, if any American wants to understand any phenomenon in American history pre 1940 or so, a good exercise for clearing the mind is to see it again through the eyes of London.)

Britain, of course, is famous for its [unwritten constitution](#) — a phrase which strikes the worm-gnawed American brain as oxymoronic. In fact, *unwritten constitution* is a tautology. It is our *written constitution* — or large-C *Constitution* — which is a concept comical, impossible, and fundamentally fraudulent. Please allow me to explain.

England had a *constitution* well before America had a *Constitution*, and De Quincey (whose [political journalism](#) is remarkably underrated) defines the concept [succinctly](#):

...the equilibrium of forces in a political system, as recognised and fixed by distinct political acts...

In other words, a government's *constitution* (small c) is its *actual* structure of power. The *constitution* is the process by which the government formulates its decisions. When we ask why government G made

decision D1 to take action A1, or decision D2 not to take action A2, we inquire as to its constitution.

Thus the trouble with these written constitutions. If the *Constitution* is identical to the *constitution*, it is superfluous. If the *Constitution* is not identical to the *constitution*, it is deceptive. There are no other choices.

It's easy to show that the latter is the case for USG. For example, the two-party system is clearly part of USG's *constitution*. But not only does the *Constitution* not mention political parties, the [design notes](#) indicate an intention to preclude them. Obviously this was not successful.

For another example, American law schools teach something called [constitutional law](#), a body of judicial precedent which purports to be a mere elucidation of the text of the *Constitution*. Yet no one seriously believes that an alien, reading the *Constitution*, would produce anything like the same results. Moreover, the meta-rules on which constitutional law rests, such as [stare decisis](#), are entirely unwritten, and have been [violated](#) in patterns not best explained by theories of textual interpretation. Thus the small 'c' in *constitutional law* is indeed correct.

In retrospect, the written-constitution design is another case of the pattern of wishful thinking that appears over and over again in the democratic mind. From the perspective of a subject, political stability is a highly desirable quality in a sovereign. We should all be ruled by governments whose constitution does not change. The error is to assume that this outcome can be achieved by simply inscribing a desirable constitution. This is a quick dive off the *pons asinorum* of political engineering, the [quis custodiet](#) problem.

If the constitution is in fact stable, inscribing it (while a prudent clerical task) makes it no more stable. If the constitution is not in fact stable, the equilibrium of forces can shift away from the original intent of the designers, and the inscription becomes a fraud.

An obstacle, in fact, to any real understanding of the actual constitution. Which, as we'll see, is so heinous that it needs every bit of camouflage it can get. And thus the bug becomes a feature.

But this distinction is too important to hang on a single capital. So let us discard the old word, and pick a new one to mean what De Quincey meant, the equilibrium of forces: *structure*. USG, though damned, is great, and merits the majuscule. And because it changes — though not much, these days — we must specify the period.

Thus we have a new name for our robed boar-god: the *Modern Structure* (MS). Today, we're going to examine the nature and origins of the MS. Both will be found equally foul.

First, let's describe the fundamental engineering flaw in the MS. This bug is so easy to see that even the New York Times can [see it](#). Of course, our columnist is addressing the governance of fish, not hominids, but note that nothing in his logic depends on scales, gills, or fins:

Since the mid-'50s, economists who study fisheries have basically understood the fate that has befallen these waters. They call it the [tragedy of the commons](#).

If a fish population is controlled by a single, perfectly rational agent — an idealized entity economists refer to as “the sole owner” he or she will manage it to maximize its total value over time. For almost every population, that means leaving a lot of fish in the water, where they can continue to make young fish. The sole owner, then, will cautiously withdraw the biological equivalent of interest, without reducing the capital — the healthy population that remains in the sea.

But if the fish population is available to many independent parties, competition becomes a driving concern. If I don't extract as much as I can today, there's no guarantee you won't take everything tomorrow. Sure, in a perfect world, you and I would trust each other, exercise restraint, and in the long run, grow wealthier for it, but I'd better just play it safe and get those fish before you do. The race for fish ensues, and soon, the tragedy of the commons has struck.

Ie: if you are a fish, you want all fish to be owned by a King of Fishermen. So long as our fisher king is rational, this “single owner” will govern his fisheries with a strong and kindly hand, maximizing returns over an infinite time horizon, bringing peace, freedom and prosperity to cod, pollock, and sea-bass alike.

But if we fracture this *coherent authority* into two competing authorities, each can gain by stealing fish from the other. The more authority is fractured, the more predatory it becomes. Thus, the infallible recipe for a sadistic and predatory state: internal competition for power. (Hominids, unlike fish, respond well to fences, so *geographical* fragmentation is not inconsistent with coherent authority — the ocean partitioned, as it were, into artificial lakes.)

Congratulations. You've just rediscovered the logic of [Sir Robert Filmer](#) — just 321 years too late. (Lord Wharton's puppies, indeed!) And where, dear Times reader, does this place you on the political [spectrum](#)?

Well — let's say that Barack Obama is yellow light, and John McCain is green light. George W. Bush is blue light. Trent Lott is violet. Pat Buchanan is ultraviolet. Hitler is an X-ray. Filmer is a freakin' *gamma ray* shot out of some vast, galaxy-munching *black hole* on the other side of the friggin' *universe*. He's so right-wing, you need special equipment just to *observe* him.

And yet: the logic works the same for fish as for people. And we can see it work for fish. We have the pictures. In the New York Times. Pretty little sea cucumbers, flourishing, under the care of wise Indian chiefs.

And note, strangest of all, that your democratic mind, or parasite, or whatever it is, believes in exactly the opposite principle. Not coherent authority — but fragmented authority.

For example: Montesquieu's [little device](#), “checks and balances.” More generally, you are instinctively

distrustful of any concentration of sovereign authority into one hand or a few, and instinctively trustful of political architectures that involve as many actors as possible in the choice and formulation of government policy.

Which is exactly the right way to ensure that you, as subjects of said government, are trawled into undersea deserts by mile-long bottom-scraping Taiwanese gill-nets. As indeed we see. What explains this remarkable, centuries-old divergence between logic and opinion?

There's an easy answer. Consider the incentives of the fishermen in an ocean under fractured authority. They are not friends. Each strives to strip the sea before his neighbor arrives. But there is one principle they can agree on: that fragmentation of authority is *good*.

Why? Because any consolidation of authority must involve stripping at least one player of the power to fish. Any consensus that this is undesirable is a basis for cooperation among all, and is likely to achieve social popularity, regardless of truth. Hominids have been living in tribal societies for the better part of ten million years. They are very good at cooperation games.

For example: if political power is split between Commons, Lords, and Crown, it is easy to construct a settlement in which each of Commons, Lords, and Crown acknowledges the division of authority and promises not to infringe it. While each party will of course struggle to evade this settlement and gain absolute power — note that we don't hear much from the Lords or the Crown these days — the *doctrine* of benign fragmentation is one all can endorse, even though it is the converse of truth.

Acton was exactly wrong: it is not absolute, but partial power that corrupts. More precisely, it is partial authority not formally matched with partial responsibility. Formal shareholders experience no such conflict of interest — that is, their interests do not conflict with each others', nor with the interests of the firm as a whole. And corruption depends on conflict of interest.

For example: if the "sole owner," our Fisher King, decides to sell out to a giant Japanese conglomerate, said conglomerate will run the fishery in just the same way. Its shareholders are not likely to descend on the reef with their own spearguns — and if some try, the rest will stop them. Few corporations afford any special treatment to shareholders who are also customers.

Of course, we are assuming that actors in this structure respond rationally to incentives. But these relationships exist in the real world today, albeit without the sovereign twist, and they appear to be conducted for the most part sensibly. We are certainly not making the mistake of appealing to anyone's philanthropic motives, although one can expect that in an environment of peace, order and security, genuine philanthropy will flourish.

Thus we see a feedback loop between the *idea* of fragmented power, and the structure itself. Those who hold some fragment of power are natural believers in the fragmentation of power, because in any return to coherent authority all but one fragment-holder must be dispossessed. Believing in their cause, they

will work to further it, and destroy any concentrations of authority.

Fragmentation of authority already exhibits a ratchet effect. Power fractures easily. Those with it are human; they grow old, retire, die. Power must be passed on, and it is as easy to pass to many as one. It is a sweet thing, however, and not often relinquished. And for the fragments to come back together, one with power must transfer that power to another with it. This happens easily as a consequence of violence, and not easily otherwise.

Thus we see two unidirectional effects — ratchets, arrows, etc — that should lead, as time advances, to fragmentation of sovereign authority. [Boltzmann's law](#), anyone?

Indeed it is quite reasonable to describe *coherent* (or, in democratic parlance, “absolute”) authority as orderly, and *divergent* (or, in democratic parlance, “plural,” “open,” “inclusive,” etc) authority as disorderly. The trend from coherent to divergent is thus a case of entropy.

Cancer, corrosion, infection, and putrefaction are all entropic processes. If the gradual decline, across the last two centuries, of coherent authority (in democratic parlance, “progress”) belongs on this list, I feel the Goya analogy is at least half sold.

Note, for example, the predicted endpoint of fragmentation: *universal suffrage*. At the start of the entropic process, the State has one owner, guardian, and trustee: the Crown. At the end of the process, an equally microscopic sliver of authority is entrusted to every resident who, without too much comedy, can be portrayed as capable of using it responsibly.

In a universal-suffrage democracy, the voter is quite literally a part-time government employee. Unpaid, untrained and unmanaged, he nonetheless has his place on the org chart. (From the archist perspective, this is the fundamental error of confusing the guests with the staff.)

Thanks to our fish logic, we would expect universal-suffrage democracy to manage its capital very badly. We would expect to see a high level of autopredation in this system, with coalitions of voters cooperating to strip-mine the sea in which they themselves swim, Peter robbing Paul and Paul robbing Peter, etc, etc.

And, despite this result, we would still expect to see the doctrine of fragmentation widely espoused and propounded. And in both cases, experience matches deduction.

So the ritual self-congratulation of democracy, the entire theory of progress, is a fraudulent edifice constructed to rationalize what is in fact a decline. Thus we should see a decrease in the quality of government, and especially in the cohesion of authority, across what the official story describes as periods of great progress.

And we indeed see this effect. For example, across the 20th century, we see crime rates in Great Britain rise by roughly a [factor of 50](#) (offenses per capita known to the police). If this isn't a breakdown in both

quality of government and cohesion of authority, I don't know what is. Similarly, the period has experienced unprecedented progress. South Africa has also experienced great progress in the recent past, and we see how [that](#) worked out.

But is all this sufficient to explain USG? Obviously, USG is a universal-suffrage democracy — despite hanging chads, archaic Constitutional doohickeys, minor campaign-finance irregularities, etc. And obviously, it is quite disorderly and becoming [more so](#). So is this a sufficient description of the Modern Structure? Have we solved the problem?

Sadly, we're not even close. We have hardly lifted the hem of Goya's beast. Even if you are an experienced reader of UR, the facts of the matter are far more horrible than you imagine. I mean: what else was the 20th century? A horror story. Why should we expect any regime which owes its existence to, say, um — the 1930s — to be any good at all?

But I am skipping ahead. First the theory — then the experience.

To describe a sovereign structure as a universal-suffrage democracy (USD) is to describe it incompletely. The set is somewhat bounded, but not so much as the democrat imagines. If X times 0 is 0, what is X?

The problem is that what we might call a *pure* democracy, a system in which *actual* power is distributed in exactly the same proportions that the democracy distributes *nominal* power, is so unstable and unlikely a proposition as to be ridiculous. If you doubt this, I recommend a tussle with [Limits of Pure Democracy](#), by [W.H. Mallock](#) (hat tip: [Deogolwulf](#)). Mallock will beat you — kick your ass, break a chair over your head, and throw you out of the ring. Just so you know.

Therefore, when we describe a structure as a USD, we know it is not *actually* a USD. Rather, there exists some actual structure (of power, ie influence over government policy) into which the USD, which being pure can only exist for a femtosecond, has degenerated. The nominal structure of the USD remains, as camouflage.

Remember, what we seek is not our quarry's official org chart, but its real one. We do not want to know that everyone has one vote — we knew that. What we want to know is why USG does, or does not, do the things it does or does not do. (We are as interested in inaction as in action.)

Lenin, like Hitler an evil man but a nonnegligible philosopher of government, put it neatly:

Who? Whom?

This loses a bit of its bite in 21st-century English. In a language with actual pronoun declensions, Lenin was asking: who rules whom? Ie: who is stroking himself hard; who is bending over and greasing up? Sadly, this is indeed the great question of our time.

But before we answer it, we should leave democracy with a parting compliment or two.

The first thing we should note is that, in a world in which they have destroyed all competitors, democracies appear to succeed because the form is inherently stable. Unfortunately, this is not because the people are inherently wise, but simply because it is inherently very difficult to retrieve them from their present Svengalis.

This gives the government a heavy base, as it were, rendering it quite hard to dislodge. Of course, as the thing rots, we will come to regret this feature more and more.

But democracy has genuine virtues. Perhaps [Froude](#) wrote the [best epitaph](#) for the system:

Democracies are the blossoming of the aloe, the sudden squandering of the vital force which has accumulated in the long years when it was contented to be healthy and did not aspire after a vain display. The aloe is glorious for a single season. It progresses as it never progressed before. It admires its own excellence, looks back with pity on its earlier and humbler condition, which it attributes only to the unjust restraints in which it was held. It conceives that it has discovered the true secret of being 'beautiful for ever,' and in the midst of the discovery it dies.

In the arts of decadence — sex, drugs and rock 'n roll — democracies excel. If only for these, the second half of the twentieth century will never be forgotten. We need not imagine the level of punitive austerity and reeducation that would need to be inflicted on Western society to make it forget the Rolling Stones and everything after. Possible, surely, but hard to recommend.

Another way to state Froude's thesis is to describe democracies as obtaining their energy by breaking the strong molecular bonds of their authoritarian predecessors. Similarly, fire obtains its energy by breaking the strong molecular bonds of wood. You'll note that the democracies do not seem to have much energy left, and indeed there is not much left of the wood.

Had the Anglo-American democratic movement somehow been defeated, had the fire been put out, in time these bonds might have loosened on their own, as sovereigns became more secure and ceased to fear the mob. Or they might not have. It is difficult to know. In any case, this does not constitute an argument for a continuation of democracy, because by the '90s all possible avenues of decadence had been quite thoroughly explored. Our society has nothing to learn and nothing to prove in the arts of vice. Therefore, we can move on.

Also, while there are many advantages to taking the authoritarian, autocratic and aristocratic European governments of the 18th and 19th centuries as a general template for the 21st, the reactionary must remember that all of these regimes were, in a word, Continental. Generally, the farther east you went the worse they got — and wogs, as we all know, begin at Calais. Read, but don't necessarily imitate.

[Reflections of a Russian Statesman](#) is great winter beach reading, for example, but it is difficult to forget that one of [Pobedonostsev's](#) patent medicines for democracy was the [Black Hundreds](#).

To find anything like an pure autocrat of good English stock you have to go back to the Tudors and Stuarts. While there is nothing wrong with that (I'd take either Henry, Elizabeth, James, or either Charles back in a millisecond — heck, I'd take Oliver Cromwell. Or Thomas Cromwell. Or *Richard* Cromwell...), the time gap becomes considerable. It is difficult to extrapolate from a country with hogs in the streets to one with iPhones.

Democracy also has a special talent for making its enemies stupid and evil. If we observe the success of democracy in the last two centuries, we need not understand its causes to understand that anyone who was not with the program had to be a serious hard-ass to even try to survive.

For example, democratic movements tended, for reasons we will see shortly, to be very good at capturing the elites of any society. It is never easy to fight the best with the worst, and necessity alone has corrupted many if not most anti-democratic movements in the past. Moreover, opposition to evil does not constitute an automatic hall pass to Heaven. Hitler opposed democracy and democracy is evil, but Hitler is not in Heaven.

Therefore, for obvious reasons, just as democracy is an insufficient description of a political structure, so is opposition to democracy. Be careful in unconditionally endorsing opposites. In general, my feeling is that no opposition to democracy can succeed until it casts out all the motes in its own eye, regardless of the beams in USG's — and by 'motes' I mean offences against the truth, not offences against the State. However, this may be influenced by my bias in favor of a movement that recaptures the State by democratic, rather than military, means. No set of misconceptions is a practical obstacle to military action.

Lastly, we need to remember that democracy is not dead, but only dormant. The minds of the hundred million part-time officials who constitute USG's voter base are not, at present, particularly relevant to USG's actions. However, just as the military continually delegates its sovereignty by failing to pull a coup, democracy can awaken and return to power at any time.

For example, if Americans elect a President who promises, in his platform and campaign, to assume full executive authority and rule by command, suspending or even terminating constitution and Constitution alike, this exact program will almost certainly occur. If courts demur, the security forces are very likely to obey the President rather than the courts. He would owe them one for this, of course, but this is normal. They would probably be allies already. Unless it is not a military but a comedy troupe, any military works on the principle of command, and will endorse what it recognizes.

Of course, this requires the intellectual capture of a large number of hominids, whose opinions on the subject are extremely fixed and whose intelligence and education are not, on average, impressive. While this is obviously not easy, new tools are changing the battlefield. Consider, for example, the power of Facebook groups as a technique for democratic organization. The game is young.

So, while no good can be expected of normal political participation in the Modern Structure (with the important exception of petitioning the authorities, and organizing such petitions), it is worthwhile to understand the otherwise vestigial system of democracy, which may be in some way reactivated as a temporary stage in whatever process is required to terminate it.

But let us get back to peeking under the great goat-hog's robes. Fortunately, the answer, though terrifying, is not complicated at all.

A *democracy* is a government in which public policy is controlled by public opinion. Fine. Wonderful. We knew that. Who controls public opinion?

Duh. Popular opinion is in general a reflection of public education. It is certainly true that there are certain statements that the public cannot be educated to believe. It may be impossible to convince a healthy human population, for example, that red and blue are the same color. But almost everything short of this has been tried, and it tends to work. And while there are always deviants, outliers in an election are irrelevant by definition.

So: who educates the public?

Our answer is simple: *the Jews*. (Sorry, Jew-haters. Just kidding.) But seriously, we should note who else took exactly the same line of thinking:

Just as a man's denominational orientation is the result of his upbringing, and only the religious needs as such slumbers in his soul, the political opinion of the masses represents nothing but the final result of an incredibly tenacious and thorough manipulation of their mind and soul.

By far the greatest share in their political 'education,' which in this case is mostly designated by the word 'propaganda,' falls to the account of the press. It is foremost in performing this 'work of enlightenment' and thus represents a sort of school for grownups.

That would be — yes — Adolf Hitler. So, as you can see, we are on dangerous ground here. We must be careful where we put our feet; there is no other answer. For what it's worth, my feeling is that Herr Hitler is personally responsible for all the world's problems today. Perhaps we'll explore this delicate issue, Nazism, next week.

One does not have to be a Nazi, however, to believe that popular opinion tends to match public education. In other words, people believe what they are told to believe — sometimes minus a little stubborn deviation, electorally negligible.

So, to combine Lenin's question with Hitler's answer, we ask: if the People control the State, who controls the People? The teachers. And who controls the teachers? Hm. What an interesting question. We'll have to think about that one.

But I do hope I haven't activated anyone's [crimestop](#) with these terrible, terrible thoughts. Note: we are no longer asking a philosophical question. We are asking an administrative question. The answer is not a matter of logic, but of fact.

You see, there is another way to classify governments. We can define them in terms of the means that those in power use to prevent those not in power from taking said power away. Since pure democracy is impossible, there are always those on the inside and those on the outside. For example, USG has a permanent civil service which no power in Washington can purge, restructure, or otherwise attack. If that isn't the inside, what is the inside?

The chief distinction in this category is between sovereigns that hold their positions by the tactics of *physical* warfare — that is, conventional military and law-enforcement methods, which allow the State to manage the physical actions of its subjects — and those which hold their positions by the tactic of *psychological* warfare — that is, information management, which allows the State to manage the thoughts of its subjects.

Of course, all sovereigns require physical security. Therefore, the only question is whether they use psychological security as well. As we'll see, permanent psychological warfare is an essential aspect of the Modern Structure, which is a big part of why I have so much trouble with it.

If we exclude the possibility of pure democracy, we see instantly that every democracy must be a psychological-warfare state. Most people get their opinions from others. If public opinion commands the power of the State, the power to inform is the power to command the State. Just as you will seldom find a stack of twenties on the sidewalk, this power will not just be waving around in the breeze. Someone will capture it, and hold it until it is torn from their hands.

Even if you have not been reading UR long and remain a good democrat, it disturbs you to see the resemblance between political communication and commercial advertising. This is because you know the latter consists largely of psychological-warfare tropes (as per [Bernays](#), [Lippmann](#), and the like). Their goal is not to inform you, but to control your behavior. You know this. And yet...

What is psychological warfare, exactly? What do we know about psychological warfare in modern American history?

As it so happens, I have an expert on the line. His name is [James P. Warburg](#), and he is (or, thankfully, was) crazy as a loon on 2CB, more evil than a Komodo dragon, and almost as rich as the Pope. But yea, he knew whereof he spoke, because before he wrote *Unwritten Treaty* (1946) Warburg had been a big wheel at [OCI](#) and [OWI](#). Bearing in mind that he is a pathological liar, let's hear his definition of "psychological warfare:"

In addition to the destruction of enemy morale, the functions of a psychological warfare agency in

time of declared or actual war include: the maintenance of home morale; the maintenance of the confidence of the peoples of friendly or allied nations; and winning the sympathy of the peoples of neutral countries.

All these assignments are carried out by the implantation of carefully selected ideas and concepts. These ideas and concepts are neither necessarily true nor necessarily false. In fact, whether they are true or false makes no difference whatsoever, so long as they successfully serve to create the desired state of mind. It follows that there is no validity whatsoever to the widely held belief that propaganda consists by definition of the spreading of lies. There is equally little justification for the belief that the propaganda of “decent,” democratic nations should be “the truth and nothing but the truth.”

There is a dangerous popular confusion, particularly in this country, between propaganda and information. This confusion arises from the fact that we are novices at psychological warfare even though we are experts in the techniques of propaganda. No other nation is as skilled in sales propaganda, or advertising, as we. No other nation indulges in orgies of political propaganda to the extent that we do once in every four years, when we elect a President. And yet, in spite of our familiarity with some of the techniques of psychological warfare, we are unfamiliar — even after this war — with the use of these techniques as an adjunct of modern warfare. Perhaps just because we are so familiar with the use of propaganda for peaceful domestic purposes, we seem unable to avoid applying to its use in wartime the moral standards of peace.

It cannot be stated with sufficient emphasis that information is one thing — propaganda quite another.

The purpose of spreading information is to promote the functioning of man’s reason.

The purpose of propaganda is to mobilize certain of man’s emotions in such a way that they will dominate his reason — not necessarily with evil design.

The function of an information agency is to disseminate truth — to make available fact and opinion, each carefully labeled and separated from the other. The aim of an information agency is to enable as many people as possible to form their own individual judgments on the basis of relevant fact and authoritative opinion.

The function of a propaganda agency is almost the exact opposite: it is not to inform, but to persuade. In order to persuade it must disseminate only such fact, such opinion, and such fiction masquerading as fact as will serve to make people act, or fail to act, in the desired way.

Etc. I think you get the idea. Bear in mind, however: this man is not to be trusted. (I have several works of James P. Warburg. Almost every sentence he writes is mendacious and creepy, usually in some awful, strange and surprising way.)

Do click that Wik link for the [Office of the Coordinator of Information](#). Isn't that just about the creepiest name for a government agency you've ever heard? Isn't it even creepier that the page tells you nothing at all about who was coordinating what information, or why? The CIA link is even better:

The office of the Coordinator of Information constituted the nation's first peacetime, nondepartmental intelligence organization. President Roosevelt authorized it to

collect and analyze all information and data, which may bear upon national security: to correlate such information and data, and to make such information and data available to the President and to such departments and officials of the Government as the President may determine; and to carry out, when requested by the President, such supplementary activities as may facilitate the securing of information important for national security not now available to the Government.

Is that creepy, or what? It's like the intro to some kind of bad period thriller, with Kevin Bacon and Matt Damon. "*Supplementary activities.*" In other words, what we are looking at here is basically FDR's private secret service. If you assume its attentions were primarily directed at America's soon-to-be enemies overseas, I'm afraid you assume too much.

But the most interesting descendant of OCI is not OSS/CIA, but another pair of acronyms — OWI/MSM. Yes, that's right. Our lovely "mainstream media" is not, of course, a hierarchical organization reporting to the hidden Elders of Journalism. However, modern journalism is *descended* from such a hierarchical organization. That organization was the [Office of War Information](#), OWI.

OWI, in the grand scheme of history, is not that important. National Socialism also managed its population with psychological-warfare techniques, and indeed for Nazi Germany Lenin's question is easily answered. "Who" is Hitler; "whom" is everyone else. Goebbels answered to Hitler, and every line in every German newspaper, radio broadcast and movie was in principle (and often in person) edited by Goebbels. Neither [Elmer Davis](#) nor even [George Creel](#) ever had anything like Goebbels' personal authority over content.

Indeed, the problem with Lenin's question in recent American history is that the answer seems to trail off into nowhere. Who informs the public? Journalists, schoolteachers, professors. Who tells schoolteachers what to say? Professors. Who tells journalists and professors what to say?

No one. Au contraire — they are specifically immune from even the hint of any such authority. The trail of power disappears. The river goes underground. And we see that we live in the "open society," exactly as advertised. Ah, bliss was it in those days to be alive. And bliss is it still, I guess.

The comfort of this realization disappears instantly, leaving only an icy, sinister chill (the same fascination, perhaps, felt by the well-dressed woman at the right of the painting) when we observe three facts.

Fact #1: *no one* tells journalists and professors what to say. Also: no one tells them what to do. Also: if they come into conflict with any other institution of government, they appear to win — always in the long run, if not always in the short.

Does this indicate that they are bystanders in the game of sovereignty? Or players? If, when journalists and politicians conflict, the politicians always go down in flames and the journalists always walk away without a scratch, who exactly is wearing the pants in this place?

The sovereign power is the power that is above all other powers. We have just located it. You probably knew this anyway, of course. But in case you didn't — hey, it's never too late.

The status of journalism as sovereign was confirmed when the Post and the Times defeated the Nixon administration, and established that the press *could* and the President *could not* break the law with impunity. That is, the right to leak (for legitimate journalists) became part of the Modern Structure, and the right to corrupt the political system with minor skulduggery (for Presidents) disappeared. As late as the Johnson Administration, it was the [other way around](#).

Do note the elegance of this outcome. You would expect any supreme power, for example, to be strongly hardened against any kind of attack, and strongly camouflaged against even the recognition that here lies the Ring of sovereignty. Sauron has his Orcs as well, of course, but he spares no precaution in offense or defense.

Thus, in the American version of the Modern Structure, the press and the universities are actually *outside the government proper*. If they were actual government agencies — in a Department of Truth, perhaps — they could be no more potent, permanent and unaccountable.

And they would also be instantly recognizable as the most powerful agencies on the block. They would become targets, as the BBC is. The BBC has many defences against any counterattack from the feeble, dying, but still nonnegligible political system — but the New York Times has even more. (And if it needs mere money, [Carlos Slim's pockets](#) remain quite deep.)

Fact #2: journalists and professors have not one, but *two*, connections to power.

The information organs *secure* their authority by their control of public opinion. It is this power that makes the journalists and professors' own opinions important. It is why they matter. However, the cycle of power from professor to election is, though certain, not fast. One would expect a more direct connection, and indeed one finds it.

Journalists and professors are part of the larger matrix of permanent power in the Modern Structure, which we can call the *extended civil service*. It is *extended* because it includes not only the civil service proper — formal government employees — but also all those who consider themselves public servants, including journalists, professors, NGOistas, etc. Note that regardless of the formal details, the same

superiority to politics is enjoyed by all.

And, importantly, it is *one social network*. Thus, for a faithful follower of the Party, there is never any doubt about what policies or ideas are legitimate or illegitimate. In the form of “public policy,” power flows directly from Cathedral to Congress, often leaving public opinion a decade or two behind. There is no reason to worry. The people, as always, will catch up with their leaders.

Fact #3: journalists and professors never go to war with each other. This is by far the strangest and most important of our facts.

Surely, since a journalist is one thing and a professor is another, you would expect a natural factional conflict between them. At least. You would also expect various internal factions of journalists and professors to form. They don’t.

While you will find occasional weirdness out at the contemptible fringe, the core of the legitimate press and the legitimate university system is remarkably homogeneous. For example, it is impossible to pick any one of the Ivy League universities and declare objectively that this school is either more progressive, or more conservative, than the others. Subject to individual, disorganized variation among professors, all are the same. And the same is true of news desks at the major centers of journalism.

Moreover, when compared to their historical predecessors, we *do* see change. Any Ivy League school of 1969, or at least its professoriate, would appear quite conservative if teleported to 2009. No doubt there are quite a few students in 2009 who would prefer to attend such an institution, but it does not, of course, exist.

In other words, what we *don’t see* is any hierarchical coordinating authority. But what we *do see* is *actual coordination*. Even though the Modern Structure has no central authority to guide it — no Goebbels, no Beria, no sinister, imaginary cabal of Jews, Communists, or even bankers — it nonetheless seems to be able to maintain a remarkably tight party line. And thus, it can “change,” in the familiar pattern of “progress.”

In fact, ideological consistency within the information authorities (which, here at UR, we often call the *Cathedral*) in the Modern Structure seems if anything tighter than its equivalent in the Warsaw Pact. Factions often emerged within Communist parties in the Leninist tradition. If there are any in the Cathedral, they are not visible to the general public.

Of course, professors may form factions that disagree on areas within their fields — string theory, for instance, versus loop quantum gravity. But this tiny rift is of no structural significance to the Cathedral as a whole. It does not jeopardize its control over the political system.

So what is the source of this anomalous coordination? Actually, we have seen the effect already in the fragmentation of power. When power fragments informally, those who hold the fragments cooperate

best with their peers by regarding the fragmentation as progress, not decay. The suggestion that the fragmentation should be reversed is dangerous to everyone.

In the Modern Structure, this spontaneous, decentralized coordination is seen across the information organs. These, being aware of the fundamentally informal and in a sense even illegitimate nature of their power, are very sensitive to the prospect of losing it. This prospect is in reality remote, but the fear is easy to generate. And that fear (of a “populist” or anti-Cathedral political revival, from Joe McCarthy to Sarah Palin) is one more organizing principle.

Thus, thoughts, perspectives and facts which favor, justify or defend this system of government which conducts psychological warfare against its own subjects, the Modern Structure, are adaptive, and those which oppose it are maladaptive. And thus, an information machine without any central administration self-coordinates and achieves effective censorship.

As a good democrat, of course, you have been taught to fear systems of this class only in the case that they have an evil genius, or at least a cabal, behind them. Thus “conspiracy theories.” But in fact, you should find a decentralized, self-coordinating system, one in which ideas are filtered and organized by memetic evolution rather than intelligent design, far more creepy and dangerous.

For one thing, it is a heck of a lot harder to shut down. And, as we’ve seen, the result of the filtering process is not always a good one.

This is the truth at the bottom of the Modern Structure: it is *out of control*. It is best seen as a mindless and automatic beast. Its capacity for destruction is obvious. The only way to stop it is to kill it, and there is no obvious way to kill it. And its tendency is to get worse, not better.

But this is getting long. Next week, we’ll do a little more history and see exactly how America, and then the world, ended up in the hands of Goya’s black goat-hog.

A gentle introduction to Unqualified Reservations

(part 6)

Thursday, February 19, 2009 at 3:49 AM

So at least we have a theory of the Modern Structure. But a theory is not a picture. History is a story, not a pile of facts. If history is a necklace, theory is the string. Now, some beads.

Let's remind ourselves again what we mean by the Modern Structure. We mean the structure of actual political power — ie, influence over official action — that exists today in the OECD countries, and is obviously of Anglo-American origin. Regardless of nominal boundaries, it appears to coordinate policy not just in the United States, but throughout the Western world.

This design is called by in the modern English language *democracy*, although the Modern Structure is only one of many possible power structures that can evolve out of an attempt to achieve that impossibly-unstable fantasy state of homogeneous power distribution. But surely it is fair to say that if we oppose the Modern Structure, we oppose *democracy*. So the latter is two things; we oppose them both.

You are surely familiar with the democratic history of American democracy. Note that — as expected — it is a story of thrilling victories, sinister villains, and dashing heroes. Frankly, this fungal mass has spent far too long in your left parietal lobe. Today, it meets our diesel-powered Water Pik. Taste the pain, hyphae! You sleep tonight in a jar.

To enter the skull, we'll use the same methods we used on the American Rebellion: a minimal number of open primary sources, of the utmost crispness and flavor. (This poses some problems after 1922, when copyright kicks in, but we'll try to manage.)

But the American Rebellion (which belongs more to British than American history) is not quite part of the story of the Modern Structure. While the Structure's ideological roots are older than Jesus, its organizational roots go back a mere century and a half. So this is all we must explain.

So: we are Martians. We know nothing. But somehow, still, we speak English. And our time-traveling spaceship has landed in New York in 1859. Where are we? What is this place, anyway?

Our first step in understanding the America of 1859 is to observe it. However, we are not actually Martians and we have no actual time machine, so we cannot observe it directly. Therefore we must rely on history.

Obviously, a large quantity of work, scholarly and nonscholarly, on the period has been and continues to

be produced. If you have read the entire series to this point and you are not aware that 21st-century democratic history is an extremely unreliable guide to the America of the 1850s, I commend you for your obtuseness. You might want to try a different blog, such as Instapundit. It is certainly a challenge to excise your so-called knowledge of the period completely, but it does no harm to at least try to take the challenge.

In the absence of a time machine, I prefer to rely on a single reliable report from a single alien. Or foreigner, at least. I see no reason to start with an American description of America. Let us be introduced by a stranger, and a decent, trustworthy stranger at that. In reading history, we must decide whom to trust; let us start by making this decision easy. I have just the man: [Charles Mackay](#).

Sometimes I like to rate sources on a scale of 1 to 4. 1 is pure propaganda, the devil's work on earth, to be read only with heavy welding gloves. 2 is the usual human state of gullible sincerity. 3 denotes generally strong perception with occasional systematic flaws. 4 is a good source. Thomas Hutchinson, for example, is a 4.

Mackay is best known for his [Extraordinary Popular Delusions](#), still quite popular on Wall Street. His American letters were written almost twenty years later. They are written in a whimsical voice quite suited to a large Victorian audience, but this is easy to get past. Mackay is, in short, a 4, and I commend to you his *Life and Liberty in America* ([vol. 1](#), [vol. 2](#)).

I'm afraid *Life and Liberty* is mandatory reading, but it reads extremely fast (and the Canadian material, of course, can be omitted). Mackay simply tells you what he saw and what he thought of it. His ideas are typical of a moderate English liberal at the time, which of course makes him wonderfully reactionary for now. I can't imagine a better host.

My first response to Mackay's travelogue is that the America he is writing about is, um, actually, *alive*. There is no sign of any tetrodotoxin. There are no zombie banks, zombie theaters, or even zombie politicians. If you absolutely have no time for anything beyond a sample, read Mackay's chapter 3 — [Broadway By Night](#).

What would you pay for a ticket to Broadway, 1859? Just to spend a night there? Imagine Mackay traveling to the New York of 2009. How is our Broadway by night? Not bad at all — by the standards of 2009. (And pretty damned good by the standards of 1979.)

I suspect he'd think Manhattan had been subjected to some kind of awful experiment in mass psychiatric medication. Everything has become grim, gray and slovenly. Not to mention that "life and property" are no longer anywhere near what Mackay would consider "very safe." (Being a Londoner of the Victorian era, by "very safe" he means "completely safe" — the presence of a human predator on the streets being slightly more likely than that of an escaped leopard.)

And this is Broadway, then and now. Now, consider his description of [St. Louis](#). What would Charles

Mackay make of St. Louis today? What do *you* make of St. Louis today? (Or [Detroit](#)? Consider what this [news crew](#) found... in what was once America's fourth largest city.) And then there's Mackay's [New Orleans...](#)

But there is another difference between 1859 and 2009: modern technology. We have it. They didn't. So: imagine Mackay's America, plus iPhones and satellites and nuclear power. Now you see the true measure of the gap. It's a little like comparing America, 2009, to Belarus, 2009.

Mackay leaves us with two mysteries, to be answered below.

First, our story is a mystery, because it is the story of a crime. A century and a half of democracy has wreaked unbelievable devastation on a place and people once considered by far the most promising on earth. No mere ecological pollution could possibly compare. USG has left America a shattered wreck.

Her industries are gutted and vanished. Her finances are ruined beyond imagining. Her old cities, but for a few, are dirty, dangerous, unlivable. Millions of feral, armed savages, perfectly decivilized, run wild in her streets. Her famous social fabric is shredded, her famous voluntary institutions defunct, her population bored, lonely, atomized. Her small towns have rotted, turned into strip-malls, or both. (Her birds, however, are remarkably well-protected.)

Granted, the rest of the world is even worse. (This is not a coincidence.) Granted, many of her suburbs are bland but livable. Granted, pockets of some cities have been partly restored. True, things seemed to improve after the '70s. But when we ponder [this graph](#), we realize that even even this may be a forgery — a late, illusory bloom, like that of Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the '80s.

The entire recovery from the '70s was built on a tripling of private debt. The analogy to the Warsaw Pact is by no means misleading — as we'll see. Perhaps the best way to put it is simply to say that the United States has never quite recovered from the Great Depression.

Note that there was a [Great Depression](#) before the Great Depression. Lord only knows what this one will be called. The system is economically capable of reflating and restarting credit expansion. But it does not appear to be politically capable of any such drastic action, nor would its subsequent stability be clear if it was.

And yet: this is not the Soviet Union. There is no Party. The free and open nature of the system is unambiguous. Power, for perhaps the first time in history, is fully decentralized. And even though the Modern Structure cannot survive the concerted disapproval of half its subjects, they show little sign of even understanding what it is, let alone the effort required to remove it. If this is not a mystery, what is?

And we take another mystery from Mackay — a strange word, easily passed over as a mere quirk. It is not. Indeed it may be the key to American history.

Suppose you were referring to a German. Any German. Or Germany as a whole, or in her military capacity. Might you be tempted, in this situation, to use the [metonym](#) *Fritz*? Suppose that across the street was a Russian, Russia, the Red Army, etc, etc. Might you say *Ivan*?

You will notice that such metonyms do not exist for all nations. There is no equivalent for Britain or the United States, for example — the national characters of John Bull and Uncle Sam are well known, but no one thinks of calling a random Briton *John* or a random American *Sam*, as with *Fritz* and *Ivan*.

But actually — this isn't true. There is a national metonym for the US. Or rather, was.

The name is *Jonathan* — which you will see all over Mackay. And it works just like *Fritz* and *Ivan*. For example, in *Wanderings in West Africa* ([vol. I](#), [vol. II](#)), Burton [writes](#):

No one seems to visit Lagos for the first time without planning a breakwater. About three years ago an American company proposed to make floating breakwaters, upon the condition of receiving the harbour dues for twenty years; Jonathan, however, was refused.

Jonathan is the American company. Weird, huh?

But there is nothing strange about having a national metonym. What is strange is that the dog would *not* bark in the night — that a national metonym could just *disappear*.

How and why would such a linguistic change occur? What would it take, for example, for us to forget that Germans are called *Fritz*? And this is the English word for an English-speaking people, and not a minor one. How could it just disappear?

For an exhaustive investigation of the Jonathan phenomenon, see [this historian](#). And I was pleasantly surprised to find that even Wikipedia has a page for [Brother Jonathan](#) — though not a very informative one.

The answer is that Brother Jonathan is a *derogatory* caricature of America and Americans. Brother Jonathan has two basic tendencies. One, he is completely uncultured — a participle best translated from the Russian [nyekulturny](#). Two, he has a nasty reputation for hypocrisy, religious cant, and general pharisaism, as well as a talent for creative legal interpretation.

Writers who say *Jonathan*, as one might expect, are generally of the British persuasion. They are generally not fans of the great American experiment. Which explains why their names, their work, and their idioms are not generally known to you.

But this can only be part of the answer. There have been America-haters as long as there has been an America. Half Columbus's crew took one look at the place and decided it was barely fit for dogs. And there are still America-haters — more than ever, indeed.

And these America-haters do not say “Jonathan.” So when did they stop, and why? Let us hold this second mystery in our teeth, like a dog with a spare bone, and introduce our second witness: [Charles Francis Adams, Jr.](#)

Adams, as UR readers may know, is my favorite American historian. I don’t always agree with his opinions, but my confidence in his sincerity, diligence and perception is absolute. With his lineage he had nothing to prove, and he (like his more famous brother [Henry](#)) was socially connected to all the major political and literary figures of the day. Chuck, in short, is a 4.

We introduce Adams as a historian of American ideas. Our story, after all, is the story of USG and how it makes the decisions it makes. This is a story of ideas and institutions, orbiting each other like a binary star: institutions follow ideas, and ideas follow institutions. And institutions, of course, fight wars. The winners survive, with their cloud of ideas. The losers — don’t.

While it is by no means unique, the roots of the Modern Structure can be observed admirably in a single Adams essay. The piece, [An Undeveloped Function](#), is his 1901 address as president of the American Historical Association. *An Undeveloped Function* is a history of American political ideas from 1856 to 1901. I regard it as completely trustworthy.

The whole thing is fascinating, but the money quote, perhaps, is in the middle:

Twelve presidential canvasses, and six great national debates have thus been passed in rapid review. It is as if, in the earlier history of the country we had run the gamut from Washington to Van Buren. Taken as a whole, viewed in gross and perspective, the retrospect leaves much to be desired. That the debates held in Ireland and France during the same time have been on a distinctly lower level, I at once concede. Those held in Great Britain and Germany have not been on a higher. Yet ours have at best been only relatively educational; as a rule extremely partizan, they have been personal, often scurrilous, and intentionally deceptive. One fact is, however, salient. With the exception of the first, that of 1856–1860, not one of the debates reviewed has left an utterance which, were it to die from human memory, would by posterity be accounted a loss. This, I am aware, is a sweeping allegation; in itself almost an indictment. Yet with some confidence I challenge a denial. Those here are not as a rule in their first youth, and they have all of them been more or less students of history. Let each pass in rapid mental review the presidential canvasses in which he has in any degree participated, and endeavor to recall a single utterance which has stood the test of time as marking a distinct addition to mankind’s intellectual belongings, the classics of the race. It has been at best a babel of the commonplace. I do not believe one utterance can be named, for which a life of ten years will be predicted. Such a record undeniably admits of improvement. Two questions then naturally suggest themselves: To what has this shortcoming been due? Wherein lies the remedy for it?

The shortcoming, I submit, is in greatest part due to the fact that the work of discussion has been left almost wholly to the journalist and the politician, the professional journalist and the

professional politician; and, in the case of both there has in this country during the last forty years, been, so far as grasp of principle is concerned, a marked tendency to deterioration. Nor, I fancy, is the cause of this far to seek. It is found in the growth, increased complexity and irresistible power of organization as opposed to individuality, in the parlance of the day it is the all-potency of the machine over the man, equally noticeable whether by that word “machine” we refer to the political organization or to the newspaper.

The source of trouble being located in the tendency to excessive organization, it would seem natural that the counteracting agency should be looked for in an exactly opposite direction—that is, in the increased efficacy of individualism. Of this, I submit, it is not necessary to go far in search of indications. Take, for instance, the examples already referred to, of Mr. Schurz and President White, in the canvass of 1896, and suppose for a moment efforts such as theirs then were made more effective as resulting from the organized action of an association like this. Our platform at once becomes a rostrum, and a rostrum from which a speaker of reputation and character is insured a wide hearing. His audience too is there to listen, and repeat. From such a rostrum, the observer, the professor, the student, be it of economy, of history, or of philosophy, might readily be brought into immediate contact with the issues of the day. So bringing him is but a step. He would appear, also, in his proper character and place, the scholar having his say in politics; but always as a scholar, not as an office-holder or an aspirant for office. His appeal would be to intelligence and judgment, not to passion or self-interest, or even to patriotism. Congress has all along been but a clumsy recording machine of conclusions worked out in the laboratory and machine-shop; and yet the idea is still deeply seated in the minds of men otherwise intelligent that, to effect political results, it is necessary to hold office, or at least to be a politician and to be heard from the hustings. Is not the exact reverse more truly the case? The situation may not be, indeed it certainly is not, as it should be; it may be, I hold that it is, unfortunate that the scholar and investigator are finding themselves more and more excluded from public life by the professional with an aptitude for the machine, but the result is none the less patent. On all the issues of real moment,—issues affecting anything more than a division of the spoils or the concession of some privilege of exaction from the community, it is the student, the man of affairs and the scientist who to-day, in last resort, closes debate and shapes public policy. His is the last word. How to organize and develop his means of influence is the question.

If the Modern Structure had a manifesto, this might be it.

No, I have not suddenly become a fan of the Structure. My goal is to explain how this awful, goat-horned beast came into existence. My answer: it was invented by some of the best people in the world, for some of the best reasons in the world. To me, this fact only highlights the absolute, bone-chilling horror of the situation.

Charles Francis Adams, Jr. was what they used to call a [Mugwump](#). It is indeed to the Mugwumps that we owe the Modern Structure. Their experience is highly instructive.

Notice the theme of *An Undeveloped Function*, which is that *democracy doesn't work*. [Bryan Caplan](#) avant la lettre, you might say. Adams reveals that the political debates of the late 19th century, which are of course a miracle of perspicacious compared to hope 'n change, do not take place on an intellectually meaningful level.

We need to bear in mind the formative experiences of Adams, [Schurz](#), and the other Mugwumps. They were members of a genuine aristocracy of the mind — one described with gentle ridicule by Mackay:

Boston is the great metropolis of lecturers, Unitarian preachers, and poets. Perhaps for poets, it would be better to say rhymers or versifiers; and I make the correction accordingly. The finest churches in the city—with the tallest and handsomest spires, and the most imposing fronts and porticos, belong to the Unitarians. Lecturers have been so richly endowed by the Lowell bequest, that the Bostonians, over-belectured, often experience a feeling of nausea at the very suggestion of a lecture, or worse still, of a series of them; and as for poets and poetesses, or, as I should say, rhymers and versifiers, both male and female, their name is “legion upon legion.” In walking along Washington Street, and meeting a gentlemanly-looking person with a decent coat and a clean shirt, the traveller may safely put him down as either a lecturer, a Unitarian minister, or a poet; possibly the man may be, Cerberus-like, all three at once.

It's essential to remember that in the 19th century, America was not the intellectual center of the world. That center was London. A Schurz and an Adams could be on the same page, though one was a Rhinelander and the other a Bostonian, because both were fully *au courant* with the latest brand of intellectual enlightenment as fermented in London. Ie, the liberalism of [1848](#) — whose intimacy with [low-church](#) Protestantism is no secret to the UR reader. Thus their fervor exhibits a kind of provincial excess, a fanaticism above and beyond the call of duty — a quality with which the modern American is unfamiliar. The rest of the world has no such luck.

To the enlightened Northerner, the antebellum United States presented a distressing spectacle. Washington, paralyzed by the struggle between North and South, was by postwar standards miniscule and stultified. This produced intense intestinal discomfort in the lecturers, Unitarian ministers and poets, who were quite conscious that (a) America, in theory, was supposed to be the bleeding-edge of human liberty and progress; (b) America, in practice, was the home of slavery and an isolated backwater.

The war, whose coming both Adams and Schurz were quite enthusiastic about, was supposed to change this. (At least if the North won.) Rather than being sequestered in the stiff and idle hands of Southern aristocrats and their traitorous Northern allies, the full energy of Washington would pass to said lecturers, Unitarian ministers, and poets.

It did not work out that way. The North won and Washington burgeoned, but the expanded, empowered Washington became not the domain of poets, but that of machine politicians, bloviating demagogues, and corrupt interests — in a phrase, the [Gilded Age](#). (Mark Twain had an even better phrase: the *Great*

Barbecue.)

Bear in mind: from the perspective of 2009, the period between Reconstruction and the Progressive Era looks like one of the best periods of government in American history. For example, it is responsible for much of the best American architecture — always a telling issue. It was also the age in which American industrial supremacy, since destroyed by its 20th-century successors, was born. Not at all perfect, but hardly all bad.

Government by competing corrupt interests — the present system in many countries today, including Russia and China — is not at all without its virtues. While the corrupt interests, by definition, conflict with the interests of the whole, at least they are all basically in the business of making money. This keeps their heads on a certain plane of reality, and precludes any incentive for wanton, rampant destruction.

But it's also pretty easy to see why the Great Barbeque did not please the likes of a Charles Francis Adams, Jr. He was a true American aristocrat, and so were his fellow Mugwumps. While I do not always agree with the Mugwumps, I seldom feel the need for a shower after reading their books. This is not always so for their successors.

As I have also, more than once already, observed, this Association is largely made up of those occupying the chairs of instruction in our seminaries of the higher education. From their lecture rooms the discussion of current political issues is of necessity excluded. There it is manifestly out of place. Others here are scholars for whom no place exists on the political platform. Still others are historical investigators and writers, interested only incidentally in political discussion. Finally some are merely public-spirited citizens, on whom the oratory of the stump palls. They crave discussion of another order. They are the men whose faces are seen only at those gatherings which some one eminent for thought or in character is invited to address. To all such, the suggestion I now make cannot but be grateful. It is that, in future, this Association, as such, shall so arrange its meetings that one at least shall be held in the month of July preceding each presidential election. The issues of that election will then have been presented, and the opposing candidates named. It should be understood that the meeting is held for the purpose of discussing those issues from the historical point of view, and in their historical connection. Absolute freedom of debate should be insisted on, and the participation of those best qualified to deal with the particular class of problems under discussion, should be solicited. Such authorities, speaking from so lofty a rostrum to a select audience of appreciative men and women could, I confidently submit, hardly fail to elevate the standard of discussion, bringing the calm lessons of history to bear on the angry wrangles and distorted presentations of those whose chief, if not only, aim is a mere party supremacy.

Well, that worked. We certainly can't say the "scholar or investigator" is "excluded from public life." No worries on [that front](#).

What Adams and the Mugwumps are asking for is no less than the creation of a new power structure, a

“lofty rostrum,” which is *above democracy* — which supersedes mere politics, which makes decisions and policies much as Adams and his friends would have — in the light of reason and science, the “calm lessons of history,” not the mad psychological battlefield of the torchlight election parade.

The result is our Modern Structure, of course. The dream made real. The Mugwumps won. Yet somehow, all the diseases Adams diagnoses seem worse then ever. What happened?

What happened is that Adams and his friends, as members of an aristocratic intellectual caste, true Platonic guardians, Harvard-bred heirs to the American dream, had been disempowered. Sidelined, in fact, by grubby street politics of a distinctly Hibernian flavor. This could not have been expected to make them happy. It did, however, render them *pure* — because even if the Carl Schurz of the world had been inclined to corruption, which they were not, competing with the [James G. Blaines](#) of the world in that department was simply out of the question.

So the Mugwumps believed that, by running a pipe from the limpid spring of academia to the dank sewer of American democracy, they could make the latter run clear again. What they might have considered, however, was that there was no valve in their pipe. Aiming to purify the American state, they succeeded only in corrupting the American mind.

When an intellectual community is separated from political power, as the Mugwumps were for a while in the Gilded Age, it finds itself in a strange state of grace. Bad ideas and bad people exist, but good people can recognize good ideas and good people, and a nexus of sense forms. The only way for the bad to get ahead is to copy the good, and vice pays its traditional tribute to virtue. It is at least reasonable to expect sensible ideas to outcompete insane ones in this “marketplace,” because good sense is the only significant adaptive quality.

Restore the connection, and the self-serving idea, the meme with its own built-in [will to power](#), develops a strange ability to thrive and spread. Thoughts which, if correct, provide some pretext for empowering the thinker, become remarkably adaptive. Even if they are utterly insane. As the Latin goes: *vult decipi, decipiatur*. Self-deception does not in any way preclude sincerity.

Ideas are not individuals. They do not organize, have meetings in beer halls, wear identically colored shirts, practise the goose step or chant in the streets. However, to ambitious people the combination of good and altruistic *intended* effects, with evil and self-serving *actual* effects, is eternally attractive. We can describe policies exhibiting this stereotype as *Machiavellian*.

The Modern Structure exhibits a fascinating quality which might be described as *distributed Machiavellianism*. USG under the Modern Structure enacts large numbers of policies (such as “affirmative action”) which are best explained in Machiavellian terms. However, there is no central cabal dictating Machiavellian strategies, and actors in the Structure do not feel they are pursuing evil or experience any pangs of conscience.

Under this pattern, the intended effect of the policy is to inflict some good or other on America, the rest of the world, or both. The actual effect of the policy is to make the problem which requires the policy worse, the apparatus which formulates and applies the policy larger and more important, etc, etc. In other words, the adaptive purpose of the actors is to maximize their own share of sovereignty. The side effects are at least parasitic, and at worst far worse.

Most people's share of sovereignty is zero. However, many aspire to make policy who will never get there, just as many aspire to play in the NBA. Since Machiavellian thinking tends to become the corporate culture of all powerful institutions, and since the ambitious naturally tend to emulate the thinking of the powerful, the natural perspective of the ambitious becomes Machiavellian. In a meritocratic oligarchy, where power is open only to those who succeed in contests of intellectual strength, the natural perspective of the intelligent is Machiavellian.

In other words: Machiavellian ideas are adaptive in a competitive oligarchy, because they allow members of that oligarchy to feel good about themselves while in fact looking out for number one. However, if the same exact people are completely disconnected from power and have no chance of regaining it, these same ideas will dwindle and die out, their intrinsic stupidity soon revealing itself.

Once again, we see the failure to solve the *quis custodiet* problem. The classic mistake is to pass power to some new institution, already extant but hitherto uncorrupted. It appears worthy of power because it is worthy of power, being uncorrupted. However, it is uncorrupted only because it has not yet held power. Handed power, it becomes corrupt, and the problem repeats.

So it was not the intelligence or education of the Mugwumps that shielded them from the corruption of power, but solely their (temporary) irrelevance. When that irrelevance was reversed, the consequence was a new system of government by deception — the Modern Structure — which is not, unlike the coarse populist mendacity of the Gilded Age, transparent to anyone of any intelligence or education.

The Modern Structure is just as sophisticated as Charles Francis Adams, Jr., and no less slippery, mendacious or corrupt than James G. Blaine. It is subject to all the woes of the system it replaced, but its new system of deception is impenetrable enough to convince even most of the most intelligent that up is actually down. It is, in short, a perfect disaster.

And, to make a long story short: the Mugwumps begat the Progressives. And we live, still, in the Progressive or progressive era — big or small P. Progressivism, big or small P, being the religion of government in our time, the distributed delusion of our atheistic theocracy. The mortar, as it were, in the Modern Structure.

The path from Adams to Obama is relatively straight. Along this path, three big things happen.

One, the influence of elected politicians over the actual process of government decreases. This represents

the ongoing triumph of the Modern Structure over its ancestor. Indeed the charge that elected officials have excessive influence over government is a routine form of scandal, despite the obvious and never-explained weirdness of the charge.

At least, when the elected official in question is a Republican. Democratic politicians have no influence at all over government, because they consider their work entirely symbolic — they exist just to keep the Republicans out while the civil servants do their jobs. A vote for the Democrats is a vote for the Structure and against politics. Sadly, this is a perfectly sensible choice.

As late as the 1940s, enormous executive authority was concentrated in the White House. [Harry Hopkins](#), FDR's last Svengali, who was perhaps America's last CEO (and also perhaps a [KGB agent](#)), could hire a million men in a month and get projects off the ground in weeks. Try that now, Barack & Co. These guys can't even get a [website](#) up. Welcome to Brezhnevland.

The result of the impotence of democratic politicians is voter apathy. Obviously, since the whole thing is a game and the actual policies depend little or not at all on their choice, it is more and more difficult to motivate the faithful. Enlightenment spreads, like a cancer. Bureaucrats sweat.

However, because voters have no actual process by which they change the system, they disconnect from politics rather than pursuing it by other means. No power, no attraction. They are successfully subdued and subjugated, as the Structure desires. Thus this ubiquitous sense of empty, ineffectual resentment — a sensation familiar to all those who remember the Eastern bloc.

Two, institutions become more and more corrupt, grossly misdirecting resources in obviously self-serving ways, and becoming utterly incapable of doing anything like their jobs. This is obviously the inevitable result of unaccountable institutions, of which we now have quite a few. And the Mugwump civil-service state is a synonym for unaccountability.

In particular, when the power loop includes science itself, science itself becomes corrupt. The crown jewel of European civilization is [dragged in the gutter](#) for another hundred million in grants, while journalism, our peeking impostor of the scales, averts her open eyes.

Science also expands to cover all areas of government policy, a task for which it is blatantly unfit. There are few controlled experiments in government. Thus, scientistic public policy, from economics (“queen of the social sciences”) on down, consists of experiments that would not meet any standard of relevance in a truly scientific field.

Bad science is a device for laundering thoughts of unknown provenance without the conscious complicity of the experimenter. Bad news. That it's the best you can do is not good enough. The good news, however, is that Marcus Aurelius seemed to do a pretty good job of running the Roman Empire without any science whatsoever.

Three, perspectives of blatantly religious origin flourish — notably low-church Protestantism, which as the Christian analogue of anarchism is always ready with an inexhaustible armory of Machiavellian memes for the world of fractured, competing sovereignty. Basically, the Modern Structure is the trisomal spawn of three Juke mothers: 18th-century democracy, Mugwump scientific bureaucracy, and [ecumenical mainline Protestantism](#).

This [Time article](#) is my standard justification for the third. If you want more detail, [here](#) is what these same people were doing a generation earlier. We see them in freeze frames crawling into USG's skull, like Khan's worm into Chekov's ear, leaving the empty, powerless husk of formerly private religious organizations such as the [YMCA](#) — once, believe it or not, a force in the land.

And this is the Modern Structure: the predictable product of a botched surgery on the Republic, a (second) attempt to do away with democracy without actually doing away with democracy. (The first was the Constitution itself.) When will people learn? Not soon, I fear.

This explains the first Mackay mystery. Readers should feel free to try their hands at the second — the mysterious disappearance of Brother Jonathan. Another Adams essay, [*A National Change of Heart*](#), might assist you in the process. The solution, which may just be obvious, will appear next week — when we will add more beads to our string, and finish the awful tale of the Structure.

A gentle introduction to Unqualified Reservations

(part 7)

Thursday, March 5, 2009 at 5:02 AM

It occurs to me that the previous chapter may have fallen a bit short of its surgical purpose.

I mean, I did promise to relieve your skull of democracy's mendacious and infinitely self-serving history of itself. That ancient, poisoned puffball, its mycelia deep in your medulla. Yet here you still are, still believing in basically all of it. So what gives?

Patience, that's all. Obviously you have that. Or you wouldn't be here at UR. Why stop now?

In last week's episode, we explained the *important* part of modern history: the part about the *winners*. Ie, how we got from a few well-meaning Mugwumps to Kafka's castle in glass and concrete, the vast, sclerotic and depressing Modern Structure.

This week and next we're going to focus on the *exciting* part of the story. This is the story of the *losers* — the Neanderthals, as it were, who lost out to the Modern Structure and its lusty hominid forebears. Ie, to the great democratic movement for freedom, justice and democracy.

The Neanderthal experience is an exciting one for many reasons. It evokes strong emotions in those who have received the full democratic programming, which is pretty much all of us. Some of the Neanderthal characters are surprisingly sympathetic, but fated of course to lose, lending a certain Shakespearean attraction to their story. And last but not least, the struggle between moderns and archaics was generally settled by the most exciting phenomenon in hominid ethology — war.

It is important for us to remember, however, that there are no more Neanderthals. Hitler is not going to crawl out from under your bed and bite off your toes. Jefferson Davis, even if he weren't dead, would not have much chance for the Republican nomination in 2012. And not even old Kaiser Bill so much as rattles a bone in his Dutch grave — though an especially delicate geophone might just pick up his feelings about the American mulatto, Barack Obama, who spoke so eloquently before his father's Victory Column.

In history, it is the winners who matter. The losers, no matter how good or evil they were, cannot count. They lost, and ceased to exist. There is no existing institution, culture, or doctrine which is descended from the Gestapo, the Confederate Army, or the Austro-Hungarian Navy. The same cannot be said for the OSS, the Union Army, or (barely) the British Navy.

Therefore, the nature of the latter set is a practical question; the nature of the former set is not. The only

practical reason to understand the Confederacy is that, to understand the Union, we may need to understand the Confederacy. Our moral judgment of the Confederacy is relevant only inasmuch as it confirms or challenges the Union's moral judgment.

And when we condemn the Gestapo, we are not striking at the legitimacy of any existing institution. And when we praise the Gestapo (should we choose to praise the Gestapo), we are not promoting the legitimacy of any existing institution. And therefore, as students of history, we feel free to say *whatever we want* about the Gestapo — as long as it is true, of course.

(It is an interesting fact about UR that, while I receive a fair amount of email which is almost uniformly of an extremely high quality and will all be answered some day, I have never received a single hostile communication. I sometimes feel like going to the SPLC and reporting myself. But not quite. Anyway — thank you, dear readers, and please help keep this record intact.)

So: clearly, our study of the anti-democratic Neanderthals revolves around three major wars. Together, we can call them the Three Modern Wars. To prevent any stray tentacles of mycelium from entering the surgical cavity, let's assign each a neutral name: the War of Secession, the First German War, the Second German War. No prizes for matching these events to their democratic doppelgangers.

Our focus today is the War of Secession (1861-65). But let's not zoom in on it just yet. What's interesting about the Modern Wars is that they share a number of *common features*. These resemblances might of course be coincidental, but then again they might not. If we list them first, we can look for them in the War of Secession — which, fortuitously, is not only the first but also the easiest to understand.

Feature A: in each Modern War, we see an archaic side (anti-democratic, right-wing, reactionary, etc) and a modern side (democratic, left-wing, revolutionary, etc). It is easy to see which is which: the Confederacy, Wilhelmine Germany, and Nazi Germany are archaic.

Feature B: in each Modern War, the archaic side initiated military activity by attacking the modern forces. The Confederates shelled Fort Sumter, the Kaiser invaded Belgium, Hitler invaded Poland and the Japanese bombed Hawaii, etc, etc. This might of course be a mere military coincidence, but I don't think it is.

Feature C: In each Modern War, the archaic side was substantially weaker on paper than the modern. The Union was substantially more populous and industrially productive than the Confederacy, the Triple Entente than the Triple Alliance, the Allies than the Axis.

Feature D: In each Modern War, the modern side defeated the archaic, and imposed its own terms of surrender without negotiation. The defeated political structures were thoroughly liquidated, and replaced by new structures of the victor's design.

The conjunction of B, C and D is especially intriguing. If the archaics always look like they will lose the

war, and indeed always *do* lose the war, why do they always *start* the war?

The obvious theory is that they're so evil, they just can't help it. Perhaps this works for you, and perhaps it always will. But we will suggest another solution to this mystery.

And there is also a *Feature E*, which demands slightly more explanation.

You may or may not be familiar with Moldbug's Universal Peace Plan. Now, your usual, common or run-of-the-mill peace plan is a *special-purpose* plan. It is designed, by expert experts, to produce a peaceful outcome for a *single* conflict. Palestine, say, or Northern Ireland, or Sri Lanka. You could have the perfect peace plan for Sri Lanka, and apply it to the Gaza Strip, and the result would just be absolute *chaos*.

The UPP is different. It's a *general* formula for peace. It stops any war, anywhere, any time. At least, if both sides are willing to accept it. But isn't that true of all peace plans?

To apply the Universal Peace Plan, first ask the question: do both sides maintain effective and undisputed control over at least one town, city, or other civilized urban area? If not, one or both sides is no sovereign at all, but a mere gang of bandits. To restore peace: hang the bandits.

Otherwise, the conflict is a war between two governments. The UPP prescribes the simplest possible settlement. The new boundary between the governments is the present line of military control. Each recognizes the other as a sovereign peer under [classical international law](#). All financial claims from the war are cancelled; all prewar obligations remain. Done.

The great merit of the UPP, aside from its perfection and universal applicability, is that we can see easily whether or not any side in any past or present conflict would accept it, even when we have no record of anyone considering the proposition. Moreover, it is obvious that if both sides would accept the UPP, the war cannot continue.

Therefore, in an ongoing war, there must be one side that would accept the UPP and one that would not. This introduces a useful asymmetry. We can call the side that would not accept the UPP the *plaintiff*, and the side that would accept it the *defendant*. [Edit — in the original post, these labels were reversed. Sorry for the confusion!]

Of course, this asymmetry may reverse with the fortunes of war. But to put it in plain English, the plaintiff is the party that wants to continue the war. The defendant is the party that would be happy to let it stop where it is.

This asymmetry does not imply any moral judgment. If the plaintiff has been wronged, he may be perfectly justified in pursuing the war to redress this wrong. His offensive may be preemptive and self-defensive in nature. Etc, etc, etc. Unlike modern international law, [classical international law](#) is perfectly comfortable with the notion of a justified offensive war.

All that said, however, perhaps the most common form of warfare throughout history can be described as simple *predation*. In predation, the *predator* attacks the *prey*. The weak are the dinner of the strong. And the predator is generally the plaintiff, for obvious reasons.

So, *feature E*. For at least most of the duration of the Modern Wars, the modern side is the plaintiff and the archaic side is the defendant.

Eg: the North is trying to subdue the South; the South is trying not to be subdued by the North. Victory for the Confederacy means the survival of the Confederacy. Victory for the Union means the non-survival of the Confederacy. The German Wars are slightly more complex, but through most of both wars, it was the Germans who made peace proposals, their enemies who rejected them.

The combination of features E and C suggests the *possibility* that predation is the best metaphor with which to explain the Modern Wars. At least, if we did not find E and C, we could exclude predation. We do see E and C; so we must still consider predation.

Therefore, we have two conflicting perspectives with which to examine the Modern Wars. We have the standard modern perspective, which is that the archaics were just evil. And we have this synthetic perspective, a sterile hypothesis for which we have seen no evidence whatsoever — the theory that the modern, democratic side in these wars was in some sense *predatory*.

Now let's have a look at the War of Secession.

Unless you are not an American at all, but some kind of exotic foreigner — and probably even then — you already have a favorite side in the War of Secession. Probably for most UR readers (nay, *hopefully* for most UR readers) this is the Union side. All normal people in 2009 know the Union was right. Only weirdos are fans of the Confederates. Of course, only weirdos read UR, but most weirdos do not read UR, and nor should they.

Our goal today is not to change your decision in this matter. While I have trouble seeing how any informed, reasonable person today could be anything but a Loyalist in the matter of the American Rebellion, I feel that any vote in the election of 1860 is reasonably justifiable. Picking sides in this war, in particular, is a matter of moral wisdom and intuitive judgment. These qualities cannot be transmitted over the Internet.

I will state quite confidently, however, that unless you are such a weirdo that like me you have chosen to research the matter for yourself, your opinion on the War of Secession — whether Unionist or Confederate — is not a well-informed one. If you doubt this, I have links for you. Not only is most neo-Unionist history garbage, most neo-Confederate history is garbage as well.

It is easy to understand why Unionist history would be unreliable. Having won the war, this side has no motive for humility. Moreover, 21st-century progressivism has the best of grounds for associating itself

with its ancient ancestor, abolitionism.

On the neo-Confederate front, I do have to give some props to [Professor DiLorenzo](#), because one of his anti-Lincoln books was the first non-Unionist history of the war I read. Many, even most, of his facts are correct. However, his libertarian Confederacy is as perfect a fantasy as anything by Howard Zinn. The proposition that the Confederates were, in some sense, acting on the basis of classical-liberal ideology, is not DiLorenzo's invention (it was designed to promote British intervention on the side of the South), but it is no more true in 2009 than it was in 1862. The Confederates were aristocratic conservatives, whose sympathy for free trade was a matter of geography rather than principle. The primary ideological issue of the war was, of course, slavery.

So let's start with slavery. As a faithful devotee of the Modern Structure, 2009, your view of the War of Secession is or at least includes the following judgment: the war was a good thing, because it abolished slavery. The North was good, because it was fighting against slavery. The South was bad, because it was fighting for slavery.

This is a very simple view. And here at UR, we find great virtue in simplicity. But of course, one can be simply wrong as well as simply right.

We will consider the question of slavery — never fear. However, because our emotional associations with the word and concept are so strong, rational thought in its presence is hard. What we need is a conceptual tool which can *separate* our moral judgment of slavery from our critical assessment of the political acts and actions of the 1850s.

So, for example: if you see someone lying, cheating, and stealing, you are inclined to dislike him. But if he is lying, cheating, and stealing with the goal of freeing the slaves, what shall we make of him? It's a complicated issue. We would like to at least separate the questions, and determine first whether he is lying, cheating, and stealing, without having to think about slaves first.

The name of our tool is [temperance](#). Ie, prohibition of alcohol. For reasons that will be obvious to any UR reader, the temperance and abolition movements were close bedfellows. The match is not perfect, of course, but if we replace slavery with liquor, we have a hot-button issue in the 1850s whose emotional connotations in 2009 are comical at best.

So, for example: when politicians are fighting about whether “slavery shall go into Kansas,” just think of them as fighting about whether liquor shall go into Kansas. Is Kansas to be a wet state, or a dry state? Shall Congress decide? Or the settlers in Kansas? Are [prohibitionists in Massachusetts](#) organizing to dispatch teetotalers to the territories? Are all the worst [sots of Missouri](#) up in arms against them?

With this device at our disposal, we are equipped to ask: *disregarding* the moral connotations of slavery (which we will consider later), which side in the War of Secession was in the right?

We'll need a precise definition of "in the right." [Frederick Maitland](#) once [wrote](#) that all systems of law resolve into two commandments: keep your promises, and tell the truth. These will do as well as any others.

We'll add a third: be reasonable. Reliability, honesty, and reasonableness tend to go together. Moreover, we have a remarkable facility for determining the last: hindsight. If one side predicts that the effect of A will be B, another predicts C, and A happens, we have a nice experiment.

Note, unless you have made some special study of the period, the total uselessness of your democratic education in answering the question. See how the righteousness of the crusade against slavery can cover and excuse any conceivable sin. Might it be possible that the same effect was already active in the 1850s? It might indeed be possible.

So let's start our examination of the evidence by considering two quotes from 1856. Our first:

Do you say that such restriction of slavery would be unconstitutional, and that some of the States would not submit to its enforcement? I grant you that an unconstitutional act is not a law; but I do not ask and will not take your construction of the Constitution. The Supreme Court of the United States is the tribunal to decide such a question, and we will submit to its decisions; and if you do also, there will be an end of the matter. Will you? If not, who are the disunionists—you or we? We, the majority, would not strive to dissolve the Union; and if any attempt is made, it must be by you, who so loudly stigmatize us as disunionists.

But the Union, in any event, will not be dissolved. We don't want to dissolve it, and if you attempt it we won't let you. With the purse and sword, the army and navy and treasury, in our hands and at our command, you could not do it. This government would be very weak indeed if a majority with a disciplined army and navy and a well-filled treasury could not preserve itself when attacked by an unarmed, undisciplined, unorganized minority. All this talk about the dissolution of the Union is humbug, nothing but folly. We do not want to dissolve the Union; you shall not.

Our second:

Perfect liberty of association for political objects and the widest scope of discussion are the received and ordinary conditions of government in our country. Our institutions, framed in the spirit of confidence in the intelligence and integrity of the people, do not forbid citizens, either individually or associated together, to attack by writing, speech, or any other methods short of physical force the Constitution and the very existence of the Union. Under the shelter of this great liberty, and protected by the laws and usages of the Government they assail, associations have been formed in some of the States of individuals who, pretending to seek only to prevent the spread of slavery into the present or future inchoate States of the Union, are really inflamed with desire to change the domestic institutions of existing States. To accomplish their objects they dedicate themselves to the

odious task of depreciating the government organization which stands in their way and of calumniating with indiscriminate invective not only the citizens of particular States with whose laws they find fault, but all others of their fellow-citizens throughout the country who do not participate with them in their assaults upon the Constitution, framed and adopted by our fathers, and claiming for the privileges it has secured and the blessings it has conferred the steady support and grateful reverence of their children. They seek an object which they well know to be a revolutionary one. They are perfectly aware that the change in the relative condition of the white and black races in the slaveholding States which they would promote is beyond their lawful authority; that to them it is a foreign object; that it can not be effected by any peaceful instrumentality of theirs; that for them and the States of which they are citizens the only path to its accomplishment is through burning cities, and ravaged fields, and slaughtered populations, and all there is most terrible in foreign complicated with civil and servile war; and that the first step in the attempt is the forcible disruption of a country embracing in its broad bosom a degree of liberty and an amount of individual and public prosperity to which there is no parallel in history, and substituting in its place hostile governments, driven at once and inevitably into mutual devastation and fratricidal carnage, transforming the now peaceful and felicitous brotherhood into a vast permanent camp of armed men like the rival monarchies of Europe and Asia.

The [first quote](#): Abraham Lincoln, August 1, 1856. The favorite president of the democratic historian. The [second quote](#): Franklin Pierce, December 2, 1856. Not the favorite president of the democratic historian.

Pierce's last State of the Union address, at the link above, is an excellent introduction to the crisis from a perspective you have probably never seen before. Read the whole thing. Beveridge — of whom more shortly — has this to say about Pierce's state of mind at the time:

Pierce was leaving public life forever; there was not even the possibility of a hope that he could be President again; at the Cincinnati Convention the South had left him for Douglas; he was going back to his New Hampshire home and that State had become almost as fierce against slavery and the South. If any man ever was free from political influence, Franklin Pierce was unbound and untrammelled when he wrote his last annual message to Congress.

Pierce makes exactly one error in his dark prophecy. By "servile war," he refers to the common expectation that any North-South conflict will include some sort of a slave revolt. The slaves in fact remained loyal, an outcome which only the most diehard Southern partisans predicted.

Note that the Lincoln quote contains a broken promise as well as a flagrantly incorrect prediction. Lincoln is referring to the impending [Dred Scott decision](#). Republican submission to the Supreme Court on this outcome was not, in fact, conspicuous. To say the least.

(Also notable is Lincoln's denial of the charge that he is a disunionist; this is a strawman. No reasonable person would have made this charge about Lincoln himself, who was always an anti-slavery man but

never an abolitionist. It was the abolitionists, such as [Garrison](#), who advocated Northern secession right up until a more attractive alternative appeared.)

This example is not definitive. But it is characteristic. Let it sit for a minute, and let me try to explain how the War of Secession came about.

At the time of American independence, there was little or no proslavery ideology. American slavery was an accident, an outlier. It was an African institution which had spread to the English colonies via Portugal and Spain. It survived because English property and contract law of the time was so strong that it frowned not at all on [contractual servitude](#). This was easily extended to Negro slaves purchased from the existing Spanish [asiento](#) trade, though they had signed no contract of indenture. Slavery existed at first because no one had the power to ban it or to confiscate slaves. Before the American Rebellion it was gradually regularized — in all states, not just the South — by legal recognition of actual fact. It was, in short, an [unprincipled exception](#) to the democratic enthusiasms of the 18th century.

So, for example, a Virginian slaveholder like Jefferson could write a prohibition of slavery into the law that established the Northwest Territory, because the issue at the time was not a bone of contention. Statesmen of the early Republic, North and South, generally saw slavery as an artifact of history which was undesirable and fated, somehow, to disappear.

All this changed in the '20s, and still more in the '30s, with the rise of abolitionism. Imported from England and associated, as we would expect, with Quakers, Unitarians, Methodists, etc, etc, abolitionism was the first great cause of the democratic era. Its original exponents, as we would expect, were highly moral and principled intellectuals, such as John Quincy Adams.

There were two basic problems with abolitionism.

One: it could not be seen as anything but an attack on the South, the weaker party, by the North, the stronger party. Once the lines of sectional politics were clear, as [Jefferson saw clearly in 1820](#), the question of whether a new state would allow slavery was the question of which bloc would get its two new Senators.

Two: the North had no legal basis whatsoever for this attack. The idea that the Federal government had the power to end slavery and free the slaves was roughly as foreign to antebellum constitutional law as the proposition that Barack Obama could order Rush Limbaugh hanged at dawn, “just because he’s an asshole,” is to ours.

It is difficult to find a legal or substantive argument in the Republican political rhetoric of the era that is (a) valid, (b) nontrivial, and (c) sincere. Skipping ahead to the legality of secession, for example, the modern historian [David Potter](#) (writing so late as 1977) lists the five most common explanations of it (or, more precisely, of the illegality of coercing a state to remain in the Union), and then remarks, without irony as far as I can tell:

Against the defenders of this doctrine, the defenders of nationalism did not come off as well as they might have, partly because they accepted the assumption that the nature of the Union should be determined by legal means, somewhat as if it were a case in the law of contracts.

Indeed. Pity the poor bastards, who thought that the nature of the Union should be “determined by legal means!” When — as seen previously on UR — the Union was created by anything but legal means. Mob, brickbat and musket return, and claim their inheritance in blood. With interest.

But suffice it to say: in the reactionary atmosphere of 1787, no one at the Constitutional Convention had any idea that they were signing anything but a legal document, “as if it were a case in the law of contracts.” Fortunately for the 18th century, romantic nationalism had not been invented quite yet. Of course, to a romantic nationalist, this means nothing at all, and it is perfectly reasonable to argue, as Lincoln did, that “the Union is older than the states,” etc, etc.

This situation set the pattern of the resulting cold war. Southern politicians, writers and ministers found the *moral* defense of slavery in the context of democracy and Christianity a difficult problem, but not at all impossible for the sinuous. But they found the *legal* defense of slavery no problem at all, because the law was on their side from day one.

Northern politicians, writers and ministers had exactly the opposite problem. While the American mores of 1850 were not quite the same as ours, *moral* condemnation of slavery came almost as naturally then as it does now. However, said moral condemnation created the urge to actually do something about the problem. For which the North had no *legal* standing at all.

During the 1840s and 1850s, the antislavery movement spread far beyond the handful of Massachusetts intellectuals who were the original abolitionists. And its features became extremely unattractive. Because it had no legal means to proceed, it resorted to illegal ones. Because the truth was that the North was attacking the South and trying to abolish slavery, its politicians had to assert that the South was attacking the North and trying to propagate slavery. [Conspiracy theories](#) abounded — such as Lincoln’s completely false [charge](#) that the Dred Scott decision was a conspiracy between Douglas, Buchanan, Taney and Pierce to bring about national slavery, as wild a lie as anything in American political history.

As the ideology of antislavery spread West, it passed from those who hated slavery because they loved Negroes as fellow men, to those who hated slavery because they didn’t want Negroes around. (Lincoln, with typical dexterity, managed to convince his audiences that he was in both categories.) Thus the free-state Kansas constitution prohibited Negroes free or slave, as did that of Oregon. By 1860, little that is human or humane can be found in the antislavery movement. Its engine runs on pure chimp rage. As Pierce’s speech shows, it took no hindsight to detect the growing smell of blood.

Responsible Northern statesmen, typically Democrats or “old line” Whigs, saw where things were going,

and with their old Southern Unionist friends did their best to shut the antislavery agitation off. This was generally taken by antislavery men, and by your less scrupulous historians, as complicity with the infamous Slave Power.

So, for example, the authors of the Dred Scott decision had no thought of instituting slavery in Vermont. Their goal was to drive a legal nail into the coffin of the antislavery movement, allowing a country in which the map of slavery had been finally and completely outlined (after Kansas, there were no remaining territorial quarrels) to return to politics as usual. But every attempt of this type was no more than political fuel to the antislavery machine.

Southerners developed the increasingly beleaguered sense of nationalism that terminated in secession. They had two choices, neither good. If they compromised and accepted Northern demands, despite the essential asymmetry of the situation, they gave in to force and fed a crocodile. The next round of agitation would demand more. If Southerners resisted, being the hot-blooded people they were, or even raised the ante, they were conjuring the specter of the Slave Power and contributing to Northern paranoia.

The repeal of the Missouri Compromise in 1854 is a typical event. As Pierce notes, the original compromise of 1820 had been repeatedly abused and violated by the North, most notably in the complete evisceration of the fugitive-slave clause. The [Compromise of 1850](#), regarded by both sides as a last-ditch attempt to prevent Southern secession, had replaced a sensible geographical boundary with the murky Douglassian principle of popular sovereignty. It had not, however, made it clear that this principle was to apply to territories on the Northern side of the 1820 line — such as Kansas and Nebraska — as well as the Mexican territories on the Southern side, such as Utah and New Mexico.

At the time this appeared to work, and the antislavery agitation drained away. But in 1854 Douglas made a fatal mistake: he wanted to organize Kansas and Nebraska as territorial governments, because he wanted to run the transcontinental railroad through them. This was a blow to the South, because the obvious alternative was a Southern rather than central route. As a small payoff to Southern senators, he proposed a bill for the territorial organization that adopted the language already used for Utah and New Mexico.

This was not quite enough for some of the Southern hard-liners. They wanted the Missouri Compromise repealed *explicitly*, an outcome they took to be (a) only fair, (b) implicit in the Compromise of 1850, and (c) irrelevant in practice, as Kansas and Nebraska were not at all suitable for the slave plantation system. This was not a substantive point for the South, but — like so many other points in the controversy — one of mere honor.

Of course, Southerners took honor quite seriously. It was their general assumption that anyone who failed to defend a trivial point of honor would soon have neither honor nor anything else to defend. And in the vicious political world of 19th-century America, they may well have been right. However, it was

foolish of both Douglas and the Southerners to expect even the slightest symbolic concession to be made to the Slave Power, without reigniting the antislavery agitation. And this indeed was the result.

This pattern holds right down to the proximate cause of the war, the Fort Sumter incident, whose story I take from George Lunt's *Origin of the Late War* (Boston, 1865):

Mr. Campbell, of Alabama, who had resigned his position as one of the justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, when the State in which he resided declared for secession, was the organ of communication, at Washington, between the Department of State and the Confederate commissioners. His account of his negotiation has been before the public, and has not been contradicted upon any known authority. He stated that Mr. Seward authorized him to give assurances to the Southern commissioners that Fort Sumter would be evacuated. This assurance appears to have been repeated, on various occasions, and at length with the statement that the fort would be immediately evacuated. On the seventh of April, Mr. Campbell, having learned, doubtless, that ships-of-war were in motion at New York and elsewhere, and hearing the rumors at Washington, addressed a note, indicating his uneasiness, to the Secretary of State, and received the explicit reply: "Faith as to Sumter fully kept — wait and see." On the twelfth of April, a fleet, consisting of two sloops-of-war, a steam cutter, and three steam transports appeared off Charleston harbor, and remained at anchor in the offing, inactively, during the assault which ensued. It is well known that upon the appearance of this fleet, a message was despatched to Montgomery for orders, to which the reply was, to demand the surrender of the fort, and to reduce it if compliance with the demand were refused. Upon Major Anderson's refusal, the bombardment began.

Whether the appearance of this fleet, under the circumstances, could be considered a pacific or a hostile demonstration, may be left to inference. Whether its total inaction, during the fierce bombardment of the fort and its defence, continued for days, and until its final surrender, justly bears the aspect of an intention to avoid the charge of "aggression," and to give the whole affair the appearance of defence merely, may also be referred to the judgment of the reader. The question also occurs — whether this sudden naval demonstration was not such a palpable violation of the promise — "faith as to Sumter fully kept" — as to be an unmistakable menace of "aggression," if not absolute aggression in itself. For these inquiries are not to be settled upon the basis of the abstract right or duty of the Government to adopt one line of conduct or another, in its own support; but, in reference to the position in which it had placed itself, to the understanding between the parties, and to the whole circumstances of the actual case in hand. It should also be considered that when the fleet came to anchor off Charleston bar, it was well known that many other and larger vessels-of-war, attended by transports containing troops and surf-boats, and all the necessary means of landing forces, had already sailed from Northern ports — "destination unknown" — and that very considerable time must have been requisite to get this expedition ready for sea, during the period that assurances had been so repeatedly given of the evacuation of the fort. It bore the aspect, certainly, of a manoeuvre, which military persons, and sometimes, metaphorically, politicians,

denominate “stealing a march.” It was generally thought at the North that the attack on Fort Sumter was a desperate, if not a treacherous deed; but it was considered at the South as the repulse of a threatened assault upon Charleston, involving an ostensible breach of faith by a responsible officer and agent of the administration.

I can find very little information on [George Lunt](#), for reasons that should be obvious. (I was linked to Lunt by Carlyle, who mentions him in a footnote in *Shooting Niagara*.) He was obviously a capable historian, and an old-line Whig of the Daniel Webster school. I’m afraid his verse does not speak to me.

As with Pierce, it must have been clear to Lunt that his words could earn him nothing but ignominy and oblivion. I cannot even fathom the quantity of testicular fortitude required to publish this sort of material in Boston in 1865. [Origin of the Late War](#) is simply a wonderful book; it has both judgment and immediacy, detail and passion. I recommend it highly. If you only read one primary source on the War of Secession, this should probably be the one.

We start to see the effective strategy here. It is perhaps not a conscious one in anyone’s mind. (For example, it is quite plausible that the mixed messages sent about Sumter were simply a result of disorganization in the early Lincoln administration, although the conclusion that Lincoln, despite his speeches at the time, wanted a war and was happy to get one is unavoidable. It is really difficult to understate Lincoln’s sincerity.) Nonetheless, the strategy works quite well.

The approach is one of *camouflaged predation*. Perhaps it can be summarized as: “kick the dog until he bites, then shoot him.” Press your target, using blows that hurt but do not draw blood, until he finally snaps and bites back. Then it’s time for the Glock. The resulting execution appears to the casual observer, who misses the kicks or can be persuaded not to see them, as a simple case of justified self-defense — putting down a biting dog.

We have an explanation for feature B, the tendency of the weaker party to attack. It is what an animal trainer would call [fear biting](#). Moreover, the dog that does not fear-bite is liable to be kicked to death. Sovereign rights, when not defended, tend to vanish.

There is an accepted diplomatic term for what Seward and Lincoln, whatever did or did not pass between them, did at Sumter. That term is *provocation*. A provocation is an act designed, or reasonably expected, to cause the target to initiate hostilities. Provocation is only a useful tactic when the provoker is (a) stronger than the provokee, (b) does not want to be seen as the initiator of the conflict, and (c) knows that the provokee has no alternative but to respond.

For example, if the Confederacy had not fired on Sumter after Seward’s provocation, it would have effectively demonstrated its cowardice and pusillanimity to a population, North and South, well-trained to recognize both. It would have become laughable, and soon disappeared — as many in the North were predicting. The decision was fatal, of course, but there was no choice.

And so democracy claims another victim. Did you ever wonder how it took over the world? Here's your answer. Camouflaged predation tends to be popular with the voters, who read it as laudable self-defence, the extermination of vermin, or both. And of course it deceives the enemy as well. Had the South seceded in 1850, even had Virginia voted to secede (as she almost did) in 1861 before Lincoln's inauguration, we would probably have a Southern Confederacy to this day.

For fans of the Confederacy, we must describe the general mistake that brought it down. The Confederates made many errors, of course, as any government of any longevity must; but perhaps the general pattern of their error was that the Confederate nation was conservative, rather than reactionary. Perhaps, in the 19th century, this was avoidable; but it was still fatal.

A conservative is one who, rather than simply rejecting the revolutionary tradition of democracy, finds some effective way to contaminate it with reality, thus producing a weak but somewhat effective simulation of archism out of basically anarchist materials. Conservatism always appears, because it is easy. And it always fails, because it is weak and fraudulent. It is a case of tiling over the linoleum.

The American populist conservatism of the late 20th century, so reminiscent of Disraeli's "Tory democracy," is a fine example. It uses the tools of democracy to appeal to the inchoate urge of the petty-bourgeois or kulak class for law, order, and national power. In the long run, this is a great way to persuade your aristocracy that it needs to smash the bourgeoisie. Not a fortunate result, and not the only way that real power has of resisting this feeble attack, either. But in the short run it can improve things, sort of, for a little while.

The Confederates failed because they failed to realize that they were Cavaliers. Lord only knows what they would have done if they had, but it would have been quite a bit more drastic. This was not quite a realization available to the 19th-century Southern intellectual — not even to the most extreme, such as the fascinating [George Fitzhugh](#), star of what Louis Hartz called the "[Reactionary Enlightenment](#)" and author of the amazing and mischievous proslavery tract [Cannibals All](#). Even Fitzhugh was not quite ready to restore the Stuarts, and he was probably more talked about in the North than read in the South. It was just the wrong century for that sort of a thing.

The Confederacy, in particular, failed first and foremost because it seceded way too late. It should have done the deed in 1850 at the latest, and probably earlier. It was not necessary to wait for Abraham Lincoln, John Brown and the [Secret Six](#) for the South to know that the North was after its blood. It should have been clear by the 1830s that the marriage with Puritan revolutionary democracy was not a winner.

After that, it failed because it failed to secure British support. Sheldon Vanauken, in his excellent [Glittering Illusion](#), tells the story of this fiasco. The demise of the Confederacy was the demise of the aristocratic tradition in Great Britain, and yet these natural allies could both have survived had [Palmerston](#) lifted a finger in the appropriate direction.

The reason he did not, as Vanauken explains, is that the general feeling in Britain was that the Confederacy could not possibly lose — being far more studly than the successful nationalist revolutionaries in Greece and Italy. (Of course, the liberals of Greece and Italy (a) were actually liberal, and (b) actually had the British Navy on their side.)

Thus, the fighting should be kept going as long as possible, to bleed the loathsome Jonathan. Many British aristocrats were quite surprised, and quite disappointed, when the surrender of Richmond did not lead to a protracted guerrilla campaign. Of course, this was not to be expected from a movement which was conservative, rather than revolutionary — not to mention one faced with the utterly (and appropriately, in my judgment) ruthless North. Again, the error is one of building reaction on the ideological foundations of revolution.

But before we get too carried away with the Lost Cause, note: we are still working on the temperance theory. We are describing the Confederacy as if it were a normal country, not one built on the evil of slavery. Surely, different rules apply.

I have been writing as if slavery, as a moral question, was a *non-issue* (like temperance). Had the gigantic mendacity and ruthless violence of the North been unleashed not against slavery, but alcohol, there are only two ways in which the historian of 2009 might regard the War of Secession. He might see it as the historians of the 1930s saw it, a tragedy at best and a crime at worst. Or he might live in a country bone-dry for a century and a half, and see alcohol the way we see slavery. Error has a way of compounding itself.

But the war was not about alcohol. It was about slavery. To re-examine the war, and not at the same time consider slavery, strikes me as an evasion.

For the reader of 2009, the problem is simple. “Slavery” is a word. The word, by itself, means nothing at all. You associate the word with a phenomenon, a picture, perhaps even a movie, one that perhaps owes something to Harriet Beecher Stowe, maybe even a little to [Addio Zio Tom](#), and certainly a good bit to National Public Radio. Therefore, when you read the writing of Abraham Lincoln or Franklin Pierce, and you see the word “slavery,” you see this picture.

And where, exactly, did this picture come from? Certainly not from anything you saw with your own eyes. No. We know where these pictures come from. It is not reality. I mean: you *know* Uncle Tom’s Cabin is a propaganda novel. Do you get your views on Jews from [Jud Süß](#)? If not, why not? Like, duh, man.

The only remedy is more primary sources. Let me recommend two. One is the Rev. Richard Bickell’s [West Indies As They Are](#), written in 1824 about Jamaica. (Note that slavery in Jamaica in 1824 is almost certainly worse than slavery anywhere in the US in 1854.) As Bickell explains:

At the present time, when the humane and religious of all classes and sects in the United Kingdoms,

seem deeply impressed with the evils, and are anxious to alleviate the hardships of Slavery in our West Indian colonies; some remarks on the real state of that Slavery, with the effects it produces on the different classes of the inhabitants, by one who has been an eye-witness, and has had abundant opportunities of making himself acquainted with the subject on which he writes, may not be unacceptable to the public ; more especially, as there has been a great conflict of opinions between those on the different sides of the question; the colonists and their abettors asserting that the Slaves are better off than the labourers in England; whilst the abolitionists, the friends of the Slaves in this country, on the other hand, have been misinformed as to some of the evils of Slavery, and have represented to the world, by their writings, the condition of the Negroes as being rather worse than it really is. The truth, most likely, lies between the statements of these two parties, for the colonists may very justly be suspected of being too much interested to give an impartial statement of their own affairs, being prejudiced by birth, or long residence, and by their contempt for the Negro race; whilst some of their opponents may have suffered themselves to be carried away by the overflowings of humanity and a generous sympathy for the oppressed, without a due consideration for vested rights; or may have been misled by the interested statements of disappointed men; or through an opposite interest, some of them may have been, in some measure, influenced by the spirit of party.

Indeed. (And note also that the Rev. Bickell sheds fresh light on the mystery of the [Mustiphino](#).)

My other favorite primary source on slavery is the Rev. Nehemiah Adams' [*South-Side View of Slavery*](#) (1854), by a Unitarian minister from Boston who observed the peculiar institution in its native habitat. The Rev. Adams is also a fellow of weird honesty:

Very early in my visit at the south, agreeable impressions were made upon me, which soon began to be interspersed with impressions of a different kind in looking at slavery. The reader will bear this in mind, and not suppose, at any one point in the narrative, that I am giving results not to be qualified by subsequent statements. The feelings awakened by each new disclosure or train of reflection are stated without waiting for any thing which may follow.

Just before leaving home, several things had prepared me to feel a special interest in going to the south.

The last thing which I did out of doors before leaving Boston was, to sign the remonstrance of the New England clergymen against the extension of slavery into the contemplated territories of Nebraska and Kansas. I had assisted in framing that remonstrance.

The last thing which I happened to do late at night before I began my journey was, to provide something for a freed slave on his way to Liberia, who was endeavoring to raise several thousand dollars to redeem his wife and children from bondage. My conversations relating to this slave and his family had filled me with new but by no means strange distress, and the thought of looking slavery in the face, of seeing the things which had so frequently disturbed my self-possession, was by

no means pleasant. To the anticipation of all the afflictive sights which I should behold there was added the old despair of seeing any way of relieving this fearful evil, while the unavailing desire to find it, excited by the actual sight of wrongs and woe, I feared would make my residence at the south painful.

[...]

In the growth of the human mind, fancy takes the lead of observation, and-through life it is always running ahead of it. Who has not been greatly amused, sometimes provoked, and sometimes, perhaps, been made an object of mirth, at the preconceived notions which he had formed of an individual, or place, or coming event Who has not sometimes prudently kept his fancies to himself? Taking four hundred ministers of my denomination in Massachusetts, and knowing how we all converse, and preach, and pray about slavery, and noticing since my return from the south the questions which are put, and the remarks which are made upon the answers, it will be safe to assert that on going south I had at least the average amount of information and ignorance with regard to the subject. Some may affect to wonder even at the little which has now been disclosed of my secret fancies. I should have done the same in the case of another; for the credulity or simplicity of a friend, when expressed or exposed, generally raises self-satisfied feelings in the most of us. Our southern friends, on first witnessing our snow storms, sleigh rides, and the gathering of our ice crops, are full as simple as we are in a first visit among them. We “suffer fools gladly, seeing” that we ourselves “are wise.”

Perhaps Adams and Lunt occasionally conversed. Their words surely won them few other friends in that time and place. Lest I be accused of substituting my own judgment, I will spare you the actual content. If you care, I’m sure you will read it.

For a general history of American slavery from my favorite period of the craft, try Ulrich Phillips, [*American Negro Slavery*](#) (1918). If you must have a source which is both modern and mainstream, there is always Eugene Genovese, [*Roll, Jordan, Roll*](#) (1976). Neither of these will be mistaken for the work of Mrs. Stowe, and they are generally synoptic with Adams and Bickell. And there are always the [Slave Narratives](#), though it is very difficult to sense the reliability of each individual story.

I should also say something briefly about the theory of slavery. As anyone who has read [Aristotle](#) knows, slavery is nanogovernment. If you scale down the relationship of authority between government and subject, you obtain the relationship between master and slave.

This is, in a word, sovereignty. A can claim any percentage of B’s labor, and has the right and power to direct, restrict or punish B as A sees fit. Slavery is actually a toned-down imitation of sovereignty, because the master is responsible to a government, whereas a government by definition is responsible to no higher power.

What was slavery like, for the slave? It depended on the quality of your master. What is government like, for the governed? It depends on the quality of your government. In the history of American slavery, it can safely be said that most slaveowners were decent people who treated their slaves reasonably, while a nontrivial percentage were not.

Note also that we are talking about heavy agricultural laborers in an unpleasant climate. When most of us imagine ourselves as slaves, I suspect most of the suffering we imagine is in picking cotton, cutting sugar cane, etc. I wouldn't last a day — would you? Yet we should remember that whatever Lincoln and Grant did for the slaves, it did not involve freeing them from agricultural labor.

It is in fact very difficult to argue that the War of Secession made anyone's life more pleasant, including that of the freed slaves. (Perhaps your best case would be for New York profiteers and Unitarian poets who produced homilies to war.) War destroyed the economy of the South. It brought poverty, disease and death. As Lincoln put it: "[root, hog, or die.](#)" While material things are not everything, and the psychological impact of freedom was large and usually positive, you will find few slave narratives in which the late 1860s are remembered as days of wine and roses.

So your best bet, as a Union supporter, is probably the argument that the war made a better life for the children, grandchildren, etc, of the slaves it freed. On a moral level, this is slightly metaphysical for me, but I think on a historical level I can buy it. Of course, the war did also kill 600,000 people, but this is a small butcher's bill by the standards of the Modern Wars. Again, it's your choice.

There is one other fact to be mentioned on the subject, however. It comes to us from an essay that is perhaps the best introduction to the art of reconsidering the War of Secession — ['Tis Sixty Years Since](#) (1913), by our good friend Charles Francis Adams, Jr. Note that Adams, besides being the scion of Presidents, commanded a Union brigade in his youth. The whole address is worth reading, but this passage will jump out at anyone:

So far, then, as the institution of slavery is concerned, in its relations to ownership and property in those of the human species, I have seen no reason whatever to revise or in any way to alter the theories and principles I entertained in 1853, and in the maintenance of which I subsequently bore arms between 1861 and 1865. Economically, socially, and from the point of view of abstract political justice, I hold that the institution of slavery, as it existed in this country prior to the year 1865, was in no respect either desirable or justifiable. That it had its good and even its elevating side, so far at least as the African is concerned, I am not here to deny. On the contrary, I see and recognize those features of the institution far more clearly now than I should have said would have been possible in 1853. That the institution in itself, under conditions then existing, tended to the elevation of the less advanced race, I frankly admit I did not then think. On the other hand, that it exercised a most pernicious influence upon those of the more advanced race, and especially upon that large majority of the more advanced race who were not themselves owners of slaves—of that I have become with

time ever more and more satisfied. The noticeable feature, however, so far as I individually am concerned, has been the entire change of view as respects certain of the fundamental propositions at the base of our whole American political and social edifice brought about by a more careful and intelligent ethnological study. I refer to the political equality of man, and to that race absorption to which I have alluded—that belief that any foreign element introduced into the American social system and body politic would speedily be absorbed therein, and in a brief space thoroughly assimilated. In this all-important respect I do not hesitate to say we theorists and abstractionists of the North, throughout that long antislavery discussion which ended with the 1861 clash of arms, were thoroughly wrong. In utter disregard of fundamental, scientific facts, we theoretically believed that all men—no matter what might be the color of their skin, or the texture of their hair—were, if placed under exactly similar conditions, in essentials the same. In other words, we indulged in the curious and, as is now admitted, utterly erroneous theory that the African was, so to speak, an Anglo-Saxon, or, if you will, a Yankee “who had never had a chance”—a fellowman who was guilty, as we chose to express it, of a skin not colored like our own. In other words, though carved in ebony, he also was in the image of God.

This can only remind us of the period’s most notorious [public utterance](#):

The new constitution has put at rest, forever, all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institution—African slavery as it exists amongst us—the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution. Jefferson in his forecast, had anticipated this, as the “rock upon which the old Union would split.” He was right. What was conjecture with him, is now a realized fact. But whether he fully comprehended the great truth upon which that rock stood and stands, may be doubted. The prevailing ideas entertained by him and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old constitution, were that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally, and politically. It was an evil they knew not well how to deal with, but the general opinion of the men of that day was that, somehow or other in the order of Providence, the institution would be evanescent and pass away. This idea, though not incorporated in the constitution, was the prevailing idea at that time. The constitution, it is true, secured every essential guarantee to the institution while it should last, and hence no argument can be justly urged against the constitutional guarantees thus secured, because of the common sentiment of the day. Those ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error. It was a sandy foundation, and the government built upon it fell when the “storm came and the wind blew.”

Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.

This truth has been slow in the process of its development, like all other truths in the various departments of science. It has been so even amongst us. Many who hear me, perhaps, can recollect well, that this truth was not generally admitted, even within their day. The errors of the past generation still clung to many as late as twenty years ago. Those at the North, who still cling to these errors, with a zeal above knowledge, we justly denominate fanatics. All fanaticism springs from an aberration of the mind—from a defect in reasoning. It is a species of insanity. One of the most striking characteristics of insanity, in many instances, is forming correct conclusions from fancied or erroneous premises; so with the anti-slavery fanatics. Their conclusions are right if their premises were. They assume that the negro is equal, and hence conclude that he is entitled to equal privileges and rights with the white man. If their premises were correct, their conclusions would be logical and just—but their premise being wrong, their whole argument fails. I recollect once of having heard a gentleman from one of the northern States, of great power and ability, announce in the House of Representatives, with imposing effect, that we of the South would be compelled, ultimately, to yield upon this subject of slavery, that it was as impossible to war successfully against a principle in politics, as it was in physics or mechanics. That the principle would ultimately prevail. That we, in maintaining slavery as it exists with us, were warring against a principle, a principle founded in nature, the principle of the equality of men. The reply I made to him was, that upon his own grounds, we should, ultimately, succeed, and that he and his associates, in this crusade against our institutions, would ultimately fail. The truth announced, that it was as impossible to war successfully against a principle in politics as it was in physics and mechanics, I admitted; but told him that it was he, and those acting with him, who were warring against a principle. They were attempting to make things equal which the Creator had made unequal.

James Watson, call your office.

How should those of us who have [lost our faith](#) in human neurological uniformity (HNU) react to the War of Secession? Presumably, since we are such smart white, Jewish and/or Asian people, we are smart enough to hold two ideas in our minds at the same time.

Idea one is that Adams and Stephens, as now seems obvious, are right about the facts of the matter. Idea two is that this does not, in any way, constitute proof that hereditary slavery is a good idea. No such proof can be constructed, because the question is moral and aesthetic, not factual or logical.

Your moral judgment of this war is yours alone. Just remember to judge the Union, not the Confederacy, because the Confederacy is a ghost whereas the Union still wants your money.

Finally, please do not take this description of events 150 years ago at my word, in case for some stupid reason you are tempted to. I have scarcely covered a fraction of the period, of course. Please allow me to recommend further reading.

The titanic book that smashed my delusions and forced me to recognize the awful reality of the era was,

without a doubt, Albert Beveridge's unfinished *Abraham Lincoln* (1928). Here is a [review](#) by a modern historian, with whose few negative comments I would quarrel if it mattered. Beveridge died before completing his third volume, which would have started in 1858, but it scarcely matters. If time is short, you can just read the second volume. Also excellent, and even more brutal, is Edgar Lee Masters' *Lincoln the Man* (1931).

Almost all Lincoln biographies are completely worthless. They explain Lincoln as a saint, rather than the extraordinarily talented politician he was. Their method is as follows: tell us what Lincoln said, assume that he was saying what he was thinking, then praise this noble thought. When Lincoln emits "darky" jokes or other crass noises, this can be put down to necessary political opportunism, in which he had to engage if he was to fulfill his Father's mission. (Note that the same method, with the same results, can be used for Barack Obama.)

Masters and Beveridge put Lincoln in his political context, and they explain his speeches as what they were: not thoughts but actions, with intended results. Masters was America's leading poet and Beveridge a major senator, and neither of them have any patience with the "great man" act. Their books are hard to find, unfortunately, but there's always interlibrary loan.

It is also quite worthwhile to go in the opposite direction, and read antislavery propaganda. Actual propaganda from the actual 1850s (or, worse, the war) is simply unreadable, but I have found two later reminiscences of the good old activist life: James Freeman Clarke's breathless [Anti-Slavery Days](#) (1884), and John F. Hume's slightly more tolerable [The Abolitionists](#) (1905). Either of these will set any veteran of 21st-century freshman orientation gasping with pure *deja vu*. These people simply never, ever change. This is our misfortune, but their weakness.

Once you're done with this, why not read some Confederates? As an overall history of the entire period including Reconstruction, one simply can't beat the simple but powerful narrative of Hilary Herbert, [The Abolition Crusade and its Consequences](#) (1912), complete with an introduction by [James Ford Rhodes](#). Other 20th-century historians worth reading: [James G. Randall](#), [Avery Craven](#), [John Burgess](#), and (for those who like girls) [Mary Scrugham](#).

For summer beach reading, there is nothing at all better than Admiral Semmes' [Memoirs of Service Afloat](#), which aside from being a wonderfully written naval yarn is full of contemptuous humor and presents the true depth of Confederate legalism. If you feel the need to counter this with some Unionists, the memoirs of Grant and Sherman are not hard to find, and both are masterpieces.

And last but not least, do consider R.L. Dabney's [Defence of Virginia](#) (1867) — idiosyncratic and theology-packed. Stonewall Jackson was a notoriously religious man. Dabney was his minister. 'Nuff said. If you live in 2009 and can read, understand, and perhaps even respect R.L. Dabney, there can be no further doubt of the matter: you have an open mind.

A gentle introduction to Unqualified Reservations

(part 8)

Thursday, April 2, 2009 at 5:42 AM

Today we are going to finish with the *historical* part of the series. Beginning with part 9, we move on to the *practical* material.

But not yet, because we are not yet done with history. We still have the 20th century to kick around.

The 20th century is surely our best-remembered century. It is also our worst-understood. I have spent a substantial percentage of my adult life trying to understand the 20th century. My conclusion: hardly anyone understands it at all.

That says, most of us know most of the relevant *facts*. The reality and the reality show are made out of (almost) exactly the same materials. In terms of all major factual events, the history of the 20th century that you learned in school is, so far as I can determine, correct — with one small exception.

(And what is that exception? “Why is there a watermelon there?” And no, it’s not the five key Jews behind Osama bin Laden.)

The difference is our *interpretation* of events. We know what happened. Why did it happen? Let me explain this question with an anecdote.

I apologize for neglecting the blog somewhat of late. I will get the Chinese spam out of the comments somehow, I promise, although I would really hate to have to turn on moderation. I liked one commenter’s idea of accepting it as an inscrutable contribution from the Oriental sages of old. As for the Jews, I admit it: I am their tool. I will deal with the subject more below.

Anyway, one bad excuse for this neglect is that I was in Ohio for Sibyl’s first birthday, getting her infected by a herd of sickly cousins. Sibyl’s aunt and uncle are very much blue-staters in a red state, and they live in a half-gentrified section of Columbus, [“Olde Towne East.”](#) (I feel the East deserves an extra E as well.)

Olde Towne Easte has seen some changes in the century of our concern. And not changes for the better. Basically, my sister-in-law, her husband and their two children live in a neighborhood of crumbling mansions. Some have now been restored. Some, like one we saw only three blocks away, are more or less crack dens.

My in-laws are not the people who built these mansions. They are not anything like the people who built these mansions. Nor is anyone in the neighborhood — not the [SWPL](#) Obama voters, not the Section 8

Obama voters. The world that built these mansions — the Midwest of [Booth Tarkington](#) (have a look at [Penrod](#) if you want to see Middle America before progressivism) — is no less dust than the Caesars. Yet its dwellings remain, mostly.

And all this is normal, of course. Completely unremarkable. While I was in Ohio, I asked people a simple question: what happened to Olde Towne East? Why did it decline? Why did the mansions of the town pillars of Columbus crumble? Why was the same phenomenon seen in so many other American cities? And where did all these people go?

I got not a single answer that made any sense. For example, people would say: “they moved to the suburbs.” Why? “It was a trend.” Indeed. My stepfather, who is a creature not of Ohio but of Washington, was crafty enough to know where this was going. “I used to own a big old house on Capitol Hill,” he said. “Do you know what it cost to heat?”

Have you ever heard of a civilized human society, anywhere on the planet, any time in the past, departing from its present location and moving singly or in atoms to another, unless it was in some sense *fleeing*? Not surprisingly, people did not like being asked this question.

“Urban decay” is a *fact*. You know urban decay happened, I know urban decay happened, Wikipedia knows [urban decay](#) happened. But as the page, obviously authored by some prominent chronicler of the human condition, so poignantly explains:

There is no single cause of urban decay, though it may be triggered by a combination of interrelated factors, including urban planning decisions, tight rent control, poverty, the development of freeways and railway lines, suburbanisation, redlining, immigration restrictions, and racial discrimination.

Perhaps I should edit the page and add heating costs. In other words: why did urban decay happen? It just did. Answer unclear — ask again later.

Our aim today is to restore narrative coherence to the 20th century, ridding it of mystical obfuscations, poltergeists, and winds of change. In UR’s 20th century, when things happen, they generally happen for a reason. The reason is generally the obvious reason.

Consider the paradox of the 25th-century historian. To him, which is the more complex century in European history? The 20th, or the 12th? If anything, it must be the 12th. For the student of history is also the student of government. And there were far more independent units of government in Europe in the 12th century, then in the 20th. Which makes for more intricate patterns of interaction. Which makes for more history.

Yet the story of Europe in the 12th century is regularly condensed to a few pages in standard textbooks. While I know more or less nothing at all about the history and historiography of the 12th century, I

remain fairly confident that these compressions are decent representations of the period as it actually was. There is no reason for them not to be.

Imagine constructing such a compression of the 20th! How can we explain the 20th century in three pages, when it takes a whole paragraph of causes just to understand urban decay? And yet surely, the historian of the 25th will have no such trouble at all. Therefore, here in the early 21st, we know that there must be a simple explanation of the 20th century. Wikipedia just doesn't know it.

It is our very proximity to the 20th that prevents us from constructing a plain and summarized understanding of it. Obviously, this comes as no surprise to the UR reader. We have trouble understanding the 20th century because we grew up in it, and our brains remain contaminated with its heinous memetic baggage. It is our Orwellian *crimestop* that prevents us from seeing the plain facts of the matter.

As [Deogolwulf](#) once said to me:

Most people think, in the slough of complacency, that it has always been this way. It has not. We see a thorough-going mendacity and a radical evil set free which was barely anticipated in previous ages, and only then was it anticipated by insightful prophets of the kind such as Dostoevsky and [Burckhardt](#) who stood at the beginning of this age. This condition of ours is one of those things that gives me pangs of despair. I do wonder if anything good can survive it. It is not just that it sullies art, history, philosophy, science, and any pursuit of truth, but that it destroys *truthfulness*, which depends above all upon something too old-fashioned and unquantifiable for our times: good character.

The 20th century was the golden age of lies. The liars of the 20th century, like the painters of the 16th, will be remembered forever as the Old Masters of their art. I know UR has many readers who are Christians or Jews, and sometimes I even regret my own inability to believe in God. But no one who knows anything about the 20th century can fail to believe in the Devil.

Lies are like snowflakes. Every lie is its own unique, perfect self. It is no more possible to list all possible kinds of lie, than all possible kinds of magic trick, or all possible patterns of camouflage. Each is defined only by its goal: misdirecting the mind of the audience. Producing the illusion of a reality that is not real, and obscuring the reality that is.

Every nation in the 20th century produced masterpieces of mendacity. Here is one, from *Last Train from Berlin* (1942), by the New Deal journalist [Howard K. Smith](#). Bear in mind: Smith is observing the Nazi and Soviet regimes at a point in time at which the former *has not* committed millions of political murders, and the latter *has*.

On first glance, Germany [in 1936] was overwhelmingly attractive, and first impressions disarmed many a hardy anti-Nazi before he could lift his lance for attack. Its big cities were cleaner than big

cities ought, by custom, to be. You could search far and wide through Berlin's sea of houses or Hamburg's huge harbour district, but you could never find a slum or anything approaching one. On the countryside, broad, flourishing acres were cut into neat checkerboards. People looked good. Nobody was in rags, not a single citizen. They were well dressed, if not stylishly dressed. And they were well fed. The impression was one of order, cleanliness and prosperity — and this has been of immense propaganda value to the Nazis.

There is a great fallacy here, and it is a mistake which an unfortunately large number of young American students I met in Heidelberg made and retained for a long time. The fallacy is in connecting this admirable order, cleanliness and apparent prosperity with the Nazi government. Actually, and this was pointed out to me by a German dock-worker on my first magic day in Bremen, Germans and Germany were neat, clean and able to do an amazing lot with amazingly little long before Hitler came to power. Such slums as existed were removed by the Socialist government and replaced with neat workers' apartments while the Nazis were still a noisy minority chalking swastikas on back-alley fences.

[...]

Once, however, I broke my routine and took a trip to Russia. That land impressed me disgustingly favorably for a individual who was still more Liberal than Socialist. Contrary to the development of my reactions in Germany, Russia looked better the longer I stayed and the more I saw. Russia was not neat, clean, and orderly. Russia was dirty and disorderly.

But the spirit of the thing got me. The Bolsheviks did not inherit cleanliness and order; they inherited a wrecked feudal society, and in a relatively short period wonders had been done. The edges were rough and the effort was amateur. But that was just it; it was amateur, everybody was doing it. You got the impression that each and every little individual was feeling pretty important doing the pretty important job of building up a State, eager and interested as a bunch of little boys turned loose in a locomotive and told to do as they please. It showed promise like a gifted child's first scratchings of "a house" on paper. *Klein aber mein*; a little but mine own, as the proverb goes.

What is more, the standard of living was definitely rising, not falling. The whole picture was not as pretty as the German one, but the atmosphere, utterly devoid of any trace of militarism or racial prejudice, was clean and healthy as the streets were dirty. I knew all along the atmosphere reminded me of a word, but I couldn't think what it was until I got back to Germany. The word was "democracy." That, I know, is a strange reaction to a country which is well known to be a dictatorship, but the atmosphere simply did not coincide with the newspapers' verdict.

The quality of this propaganda is beyond comparison. Goebbels had talent — there is no denying it. But as a patriotic American, I believe our product is a step beyond.

If there are two words that summarize the above, perhaps they are *sincere mendacity*. Perhaps not all the journalists of the New Deal, or their heirs of today, were (while not of good character) perfectly sincere. But at worst, even when they consciously lied, they thought of themselves as conveying a higher truth. And when they lied they did so as individuals, not cogs in a machine. Goebbels, who was more or less the pope of Nazi Germany, is not in the building.

The result is a wonderfully *chummy* tone. You are grateful to your friend, Howard K. Smith, for seeing beyond the simplistic, superficial appearance of Nazi prosperity and Soviet barbarism, and helping you feel the deep and subtle reality of Nazi incompetence and Soviet democracy.

The Smiths of today omit the first-glance impression of Nazi Germany, but in 1942 this was not possible. Let's be clear on the facts: while German meticulousness is not a myth, the transition from Weimar to Third Reich was indeed responsible for much of the "admirable order, cleanliness and apparent prosperity." This probably does not change your mind about Nazis, Nazism, or Hitler. And nor is it intended to. It is not a point much stressed these days, that's all.

Good primary sources are more essential than ever for anyone seeking an accurate impression of prewar Nazism. For a fair anti-Nazi source, try [Stephen Roberts](#)' *House that Hitler Built* (1937). For a fair pro-Nazi source, try [Francis Yeats-Brown](#)'s *European Jungle* (1939).

Both these books will leave you seeing the Third Reich in color. But if you are satisfied with black and white, a modern history (I like [Michael Burleigh](#)'s) of the Third Reich is perfectly acceptable.

My perception is that the portrait of Nazi Germany we get from Howard K. Smith, his uniformly synoptic colleagues, and of course their present-day successors, is *basically* accurate — in analysis as in facts. They portray National Socialism as fundamentally demonic, and indeed it was. In this, they are right and their opponents are wrong. In other things...

The easy error is the assumption that because National Socialism *was* demonic, its enemies *were not*. Smith's portrait of Russia is a brief masterpiece of sincere mendacity. Since truth plus fiction equals fiction, the whole — even with its fresh, clean Germany — becomes an even more staggering masterpiece, enhanced rather than disqualified by its factual fraction.

The New Deal's picture of the Soviet system has since been corrected, of course. Its picture of the American system has not. And no prizes are available for guessing which category the latter fits.

Thus the standard story of the 20th century includes one set of actors which are portrayed accurately (the fascist regimes), one set which was portrayed inaccurately but has since been repaired with the assistance of whiteout (the revolutionary regimes), and one set whose mythos remains gloriously intact (the democratic regimes). From this stew, clarity is not to be expected.

The reactionary student of history has a great advantage here. To the Nazis, the Soviets and the New

Dealers alike, “reactionary” was a term of abuse. The pre-1918 regimes can be described as reactionary, but proto-fascist tropes are also easy to see in them. Every trope of Hitlerism can be found in Wilhelmine Germany. Here, too, the New Dealers are right.

So in the 20th century, the reactionary is without dog in the fight. The reactionary review of the 20th century is obvious: a criminal tragedy, with some comic notes.

And while not all the crimes in this tragedy were committed by democrats, democracy is indeed its prime and ultimate cause. It is not a coincidence that the century of murder and the century of democracy were one and the same. Perhaps the only one to predict this was — no surprise — Carlyle, in [Shooting Niagara](#) (1867):

All the Millenniums I ever heard of heretofore were to be preceded by a “chaining of the Devil for a thousand years,” — laying *him* up, tied neck and heels, and put beyond stirring, as the preliminary. You too have been taking preliminary steps, with more and more ardour, for a thirty years back; but they seem to be all in the opposite direction: a cutting asunder of straps and ties, wherever you might find them; pretty indiscriminate of choice in the matter: a general repeal of old regulations, fetters, and restrictions (restrictions on the Devil originally, I believe, for most part, but now fallen slack and ineffectual), which had become unpleasant to many of you, — with loud shouting from the multitude, as strap after strap was cut, “Glory, glory, another strap is gone!” [...] And in fact, THE DEVIL (he, verily, if you will consider the sense of words) is likewise become an Emancipated Gentleman; lithe of limb as in Adam and Eve’s time, and scarcely a toe or finger of him *tied* any more. And you, my astonishing friends, you are certainly getting into a millennium, such as never was before, — hardly even in the dreams of Bedlam.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Here at UR, we always try to complete the trial before delivering the verdict. So: the 20th century.

It is easy to explain the 20th century. The story is simple, because it is a conflict of armed doctrines, rather than of human personalities. Even the personalities of Hitler and Stalin can be abstracted into their armed doctrines. It is not possible to imagine the 17th century with a French king other than Louis XIV, but it is possible to imagine Nazi Germany with a Fuehrer who wasn’t Hitler.

On the democratic side, the “leaders” are almost figureheads, and the actors are almost interchangeable. They are classified rather than named. For example, I am not sure *precisely* what I mean when I describe someone like Howard K. Smith as a “New Deal journalist.” But I know his tone is the same as that of [Leland Stowe](#), or [Quentin Reynolds](#), or [John Gunther](#). Or that of [James Reston](#), [C.L. Sulzberger](#), or [Herbert Matthews](#).

The major armed doctrines in the Second German War, for instance, were Universalism, Nazism and Bolshevism. These can easily be taken as examples of the class: democratic, revolutionary, and counter-

revolutionary. We consider these in reverse order.

A *counter-revolutionary* is anyone who fights against revolution. This category can be divided roughly into three parts: reactionary, conservative, and fascist.

Since I am a reactionary, I decline to discuss the creed here. Suffice it to say that reactionaries are always right. And there were few enough in the 20th century that we can ignore them.

A conservative is someone who helps disguise the true nature of a democratic state. The conservative is ineffective by definition, because his goal is to make democracy work properly. The fact that it does not work properly, has never worked properly, and will never work properly, sails straight over his head. He therefore labors cheerfully as a tool for his enemies.

As for a fascist: you know all about fascists. If you want to know anything about fascists, ask a liberal. He will tell you instantly, and he will be right. No regime has ever labored so diligently or so long over the crimes of its defunct foes.

Since there is a bit of misinformation mixed in with the truth, however, I should go into at least some detail.

Basically, fascism is the rightmost end of the tradition that in British politics is called [Tory Democracy](#). It is perfectly legitimate to compare Sarah Palin to Hitler, for example. While they are obviously very different figures, both can be described as Tory democrats. The same can even be said of [William Pitt](#), a threesome that would make an interesting panel discussion. And an even more interesting threesome.

The basic method of Tory democracy is to appeal to the masses to support a non-democratic, ie reactionary, form of government. The basic problem of Tory democracy is that the masses *suck*. Therefore, if you practice Tory democracy, your movement is liable to become contaminated with all sorts of heinous nonsense, such as anti-Semitism.

The American conservative movement practices the most rigorous possible message control to avoid this fate. It has no enemies to the left, and no friends to the right. And still, it is not enough. It is permanently tarred with the brush of Hitler, just like the old prewar Republican Party, the party of [Taft](#) and [Vandenberg](#) and [Borah](#) and [Bricker](#), of which it is the faint, pathetic ghost. This was the party of the Schofields, of Olde Towne East, and like them it is no more.

The old world of [Biedermeier](#), of Central European haute-bourgeois aristocracy, is exactly as dead. But there were many attempts to preserve it, and fascism was one. Conditions are ripe for fascism when there exists an old tradition which is in the process of being destroyed by democracy, but has not yet quite been destroyed. The half-recreated fascist tradition is half reactionary, half democratic, and all nasty.

If you want to see fascism in its pre-Nazi state, take a look at Friedrich von Bernhardi's [Germany and](#)

[The Next War](#) (1911):

The struggle for existence is, in the life of Nature, the basis of all healthy development. All existing things show themselves to be the result of contesting forces. So in the life of man the struggle is not merely the destructive, but the life-giving principle. “To supplant or to be supplanted is the essence of life,” says Goethe, and the strong life gains the upper hand.

Hitler was a genius, I admit, but he wasn’t smart enough to have actually invented this swill. And why does it appear in Germany around this time? And Russia, and Austria-Hungary? Because all three are being democratized, and [jingoism](#) is an excellent way to appeal to the masses against the elite. It works in Britain too, by the way.

When fascism ascends to power, it creates a coherent central authority (good) which is not responsible in any way (bad), maintains itself in power by indocinating its subjects (bad), and practices unnecessary and sadistic violence (bad). Thus we have one good and three bads, which makes bad. It is not surprising that fascism is generally considered bad.

However, since we have one good, it is not surprising that it can accomplish good as well. For example, it is just the bee’s knees for crime, and may even be the least of two evils. Mussolini did a fine job with the Mafia. Imagine him in Mexico now.

The most gross misstatement about fascism presently understood, however, is that the Axis constituted a plot to take over the world. It is truly amazing that people believe this today, for there is no evidence for it whatsoever. However, most historians simply treat it as a given.

If you want an accurate military history of the Second German War and its aftermath, which is also a primary source, I recommend [Albert Wedemeyer](#)’s memoir on the American side, and [Erich von Manstein](#)’s on the German. Both dispense with this myth, giving it exactly the short shrift it deserves.

Manstein, for instance, points out that Hitler never displayed any emotional interest in going to war with England, even after he *was at war with England*. Hitler was a man of extremely fixed ideas. These ideas are all set down in *Mein Kampf*. One of these ideas was that Germany needed to expand to the east. Another was that it needed to have England as a friend. And obviously, he wasn’t getting to America unless he went through England (or both Russia and Japan).

For example: if the Axis was a plot to take over the world, why did Japan never attack Russia? Answer? Because Japan and Germany were acting as *independent, sovereign nations*. They were not acting under any kind of central command, and they had no great trust in each other. They just happened to have similar forms of government and had signed a few token [pacts of understanding](#).

That was the whole point of the war: a rebellion. Japan and Nazi Germany fought because they wanted to be independent, as did Imperial Germany. They lost, so they became provinces in a world empire. That’s

how it goes.

Whereas the Allies were *already* acting as a single world authority, which was called the “United Nations” even *during* the war. Ergo: what we are seeing here is a good old case of *projection*.

If you have a plan to govern the world — not, of course, to win total world domination, but to strive for comprehensive global governance — and you go to war with someone, by definition, he too has a plan for total world domination. Inasmuch as you lose, he wins. Therefore, once the Second German War was started, someone had to win it, and I’m glad the Allies did.

On the other hand, the Second German War — as well as the First — looks a lot more like a *rebellion* against said single world authority. The conquest between America plus Britain plus Russia, and anyone else, is not and cannot be a conquest of equals.

And world authority was certainly in the air. Read [H.G. Wells’ *Open Conspiracy*](#), for example. Wells was not at all a marginal figure. [Benjamin Franklin Trueblood](#) was a marginal figure, and his [Federation of the World](#) (1899) was nothing a dozen other writers weren’t saying, but his work is still great fun, in a tragic sort of way. Don’t miss [chapter 10](#), “*The United States of the World*.”

As Trueblood puts it:

The question of the peace of the world, universal and perpetual, is now one of the uppermost in all thoughtful minds. Even those who do not believe that such a state of human society is desirable or realizable are compelled to struggle with the idea. Universal peace, which seemed a little while ago the dream of disordered brains, has suddenly transformed itself into the waking vision of the soberest and clearest of intellects. This world-peace, the signs of whose coming are now many and unmistakable, will not be established between men and nations as so many separate units or groups, standing apart with different and unshared interests, agreeing to let each other alone and to respect each other’s rights at a distance. Such a peace, even if it were possible, would be at best only a negative one, having little vitality and little power for good. Universal peace will come rather through federation and cooperation.

“Agreeing to let each other alone and to respect each other’s rights at a distance” is, of course, the principle of the *old* school of nations, the *reactionary* school, who practiced the forms that used to pass under the strange name of “international law.” You can still find these old laws — in [Vattel](#), in [Polson](#), in [Davis](#) — and interesting reading they make, indeed. The world they are describing is not the world we live in.

And it certainly isn’t be the Imperial Germany of the World! As Trueblood muses at one point:

But when arbitration has at last come into general and permanent use throughout the civilized world, as there is every reason to believe that it will after a generation or two, then these great

military establishments with all their abominations will come to an end. The end of them may come suddenly, as the result of a great war, or a series of great wars, the disastrous results of which will be so deeply and universally felt that the nations will never again permit militarism to take root and grow.

Indeed. A prescient prediction! Note, however, that causality and prediction are easily mistaken for one another. Similarly, [John Gunther](#)'s *Inside Europe* (1936) describes its subject as "between the wars." Perhaps the lady doth protest too much.

From Trueblood, George Herron's *Menace of Peace* (1917), with its hilariously over-the-top anti-Teutonism, is not far off. I will not excerpt this book. It must be read in its totality. But suffice it to say that Woodrow Wilson employed Herron — as a *peace emissary*. Some peace!

Herron is good for laughs, but a more serious successor is [Ramsay Muir](#), whose *Expansion of Europe* (1916) has a wonderful explanation of the principle of "blue imperialism" that would develop, through weird transatlantic osmosis, into Foggy Bottom's present aid-ocracy, operated not on the principle of dominion but that of dependence:

The words 'Empire' and 'Imperialism' come to us from ancient Rome; and the analogy between the conquering and organising work of Rome and the empire-building work of the modern nation-states is a suggestive and stimulating analogy. The imperialism of Rome extended the modes of a single civilisation, and the Reign of Law which is its essence, over all the Mediterranean lands. The imperialism of the nations to which the torch of Rome has been handed on, has made the Reign of Law, and the modes of a single civilisation, the common possession of the whole world. Rome made the common life of Europe possible. The imperial expansion of the European nations has alone made possible the vision—nay, the certainty—of a future world unity. For these reasons we may rightly and without hesitation continue to employ these terms, provided that we remember always that the aim of a sane imperialism is not the extension of mere brute power, but is the enlargement and diffusion, under the shelter of power, of the essentials of Western civilisation: rational law and liberty. It is by its success or failure in attaining these ends that we shall commend or condemn the imperial work of each of the nations which have shared in this vast achievement.

"Mere brute power," as the reader of Herron might expect, turns out to be the German principle of imperialism. We also must note that there was more than a bit of brute power in the old British Empire, which organism did not survive its passing. Imperialism seems to have something to do with military domination after all. Who'd of thunk it? Not the Romans, surely.

Finally, it is incumbent on us to consider the actual origins of the First German War. What happened was: Britain was the sponsor of France, France was the sponsor of Russia, and Russia was the sponsor of Serbia.

Serbia started behaving very badly — by Vattel’s standards. There is no doubt that the Serbian cabinet was an accessory before the fact to Sarajevo. (Try [Sidney Fay’s](#) *Origins of the World War*.) In Vattel’s world, Austria had every right to invade Serbia, and it was none of anyone’s business. Certainly not Britain’s!

In Benjamin Franklin Trueblood’s world, of course, it was incumbent on Austria to make peace before making war. I can’t help noticing that Benjamin Franklin Trueblood’s world, now that we have it and all, (a) doesn’t have a whole lot of peace, and (b) does have a whole lot of terrorists. Perhaps this is not a coincidence.

The general behavior of Britain and the Entente before the First German War was to provoke Germany in every way possible, but to make the result appear as if Germany was itself acting unstably and aggressively. The unsurpassed chronicle of this story, for its brilliant writing as well as its early date, is [Francis Neilson’s](#) *How Diplomats Make War* (1915). I will not excerpt this. Read the whole thing. It is timeless.

Neilson was a friend of the great [Albert Jay Nock](#), with a similar writing style. Like Nock he was a [Georgist](#), which occasionally produces a slight kooky effect. But he was also an MP who in a Britain of another day would have been in high office — an unbelievably learned and expressive man, after the time of his institution. If you really want to immerse yourself in the Second German War, go through interlibrary loan and get Neilson’s almost-unobtainable 5-volume diary of the war, *The Tragedy of Europe*. It is unsurpassed. Neilson is constantly wrong in his analysis, in all the little things — and right about almost everything big.

The origins of the Second German War are somewhat more debatable. However, they originate in the Treaty of Versailles, which originated in theories of history which by the 1930s had become discredited among scholars. Most responsible statesmen agreed that the confiscation of German territory by the French client states of the Little Entente, Czechoslovakia (which you may search for on a map today) and Poland, was unjust.

Therefore, we may consult our Vattel and reason that Germany had every right, under classical international law, to go to war with Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia, or anywhere else. The fact that Nazi Germany invaded Poland does not, believe it or not, imply that its next step would have been to invade Brazil. Frederick the Great invaded Silesia in the 18th century, and he made no claims whatsoever to Brazil.

Fascism existed in a world of Benjamin Franklin Truebloods, who were attempting to replace Vattel with Benjamin Franklin Trueblood. Dangerous itself, it had dangerous enemies. It did not attack the democracies unprovoked. Like the Confederates, who were more than a little fascist themselves, its attacks — even those of Hitler — can be seen as a case of “fear biting.” Hitler would have accepted unconditional peace with America and Britain at any time.

While we are discussing misconceptions, another common misconception which is seldom uttered, but often assumed, is that the Allies entered the war to save the Jews from Hitler.

At least, the Allies often seem to get credit for this, although factually we know that (a) they had no interest in saving Jews [before the war](#), (b) no interest in saving Jews [during the war](#), and indeed (c) preferred not to mention Jews at all.

The Jews of the New Deal were Universalist and assimilationist, not Zionist — they were not even particularly fond of the backward, Yiddish-speaking Jews that Hitler was killing. (If you hear the word “jargon” used to refer to Yiddish, you know you are in the presence of a German Jew whose nose needs breaking.) In fact, far from it being Allied propaganda, the New York Times actually [covered up](#) the *Aktion Reinhard*. But the guilty flee where no man pursueth, and tremble when accused of offenses they have not committed.

The *Aktion Reinhard* is not even really part of the history of the Second German War, because it had almost no impact on that war. It was not used as propaganda until after the war was over. It is best considered as the first event in postwar history. And indeed, entire histories have been written around it. It is no exaggeration to call it Hitler’s greatest gift to his followers.

We here at UR are not in the business of ranking political murders or murderers, so we will respectfully decline the implicit invitation to compare Hitler to Stalin, Genghis Khan, etc, etc. We can just say that none of them were nice guys, and the same is true of FDR. But at least FDR left a corpse that someday could be dug up and hanged, like Cromwell.

So this is fascism: a dangerous and aggressive movement, with even more dangerous and aggressive enemies. I’m afraid there are not a lot of good guys in this awful century, the 20th.

And fortunately, the other two groups are the same discussion. *Revolutionary* doctrines are best seen as a subclass of the more important *democratic* class. A *revolutionary democracy* is one in which power changes hands through violence. Otherwise, the two are the same form, and they will generally be found in alliance.

For example, in my survey of *Soviet Life* back issues, it became immediately clear to me that the Soviet 19th century and our 19th century were the same century — the same laundry list of democratic heroes is celebrated.

(If you need a prequel to the 20th century and you are only allowed one book, perhaps that should be C.B. Roylance Kent’s [The English Radicals, A Historical Sketch](#) (1899). The Radicals of the 19th century, English and otherwise, are indeed these great progenitors. And a sorry lot they are — when the sketcher is not a Radical.)

Moreover, this relationship did not end like clockwork in 1900, or in any other year. The official

sentiment of kinship between the Western democratic establishment and the Soviet Union, though often imperiled by the latter's various heinous crimes, was never really severed — not even in 1947, with the Anglo-Soviet split. Simple proof of this fact is the extreme variation in Anglo-American treatment of the national socialist and international socialist regimes.

If you care to see the Soviet side of this continuing relationship, you could try reading the memoir of [Alexander Feklisov](#), who was or at least claims to have been the handler for many KGB agents in USG before 1947. These agents — by Feklisov's own description — were not the same types of people as the random low-life losers, like Aldrich Ames, who we remember from Newsweek articles.

No. They were people like [Alger Hiss](#), [Harry Dexter White](#), [Laurence Duggan](#), and perhaps even [Harry Hopkins](#), and they were at the center of the New Deal state. It is simply inconceivable that these people were in any sense spies, or that they concealed anything from FDR. They were his direct agents. These contacts must have been authorized informally at the highest level, and they must have been considered a normal [backchannel](#) by those who participated in them.

Governments everywhere operate in a conspiratorial style. Ie: they keep secrets. Often they keep secrets even from their own employees, or some subset thereof. This requires activities that appear nefarious. Since they are authorized, however, they are not nefarious at all. At least not in the context of FDR's regime, which was one of personal authority at the top.

However, since they *are* authorized, they are no less official. Therefore, the regime can be held responsible for them, as for all its official acts. (It can also be held responsible for its official sins of omission, but that's another post.)

The relationship between the democratic bloc and the revolutionary bloc is like the relationship between an Appalachian father, Bobby Ray, and his teenage son Dwight. Dwight is a hard case, no doubt about it. Bobby Ray does not condone his activities in the slightest. In fact, the two are even found screaming at each other and a few times have come to blows. Sometimes they don't talk for months, and once Bobby Ray once hit Dwight so hard with an axe handle, he broke the axe handle.

But Bobby Ray and Dwight are family. You know, if the revenuers come, Bobby Ray and Dwight will be standing together. It is true that Dwight done shot that man down in Campbell County, but Bobby Ray obviously is not concerned in that. And besides, he deserved it.

For example, Herbert Hoover, in his [biography of Woodrow Wilson](#), notes that:

During the Armistice all of the Allied and Associated Powers were involved in supporting attacks by "White" armies against the Soviet Government. In Siberia, the United States and Japan were supporting the White Army of General [Kolchak](#). From the Black Sea, the British and French were supporting the White Armies of Generals [Denikin](#) and [Wrangel](#). The Allies, including the United States, had taken Murmansk on the Arctic to prevent large stores of munitions, sent to aid the

Kerensky regime, from reaching the Communists. Later the British supported a White Army under General [Yudenich](#) in an attack directed at Petrograd from the Northern Baltic.

The British and French exerted great pressure on Mr. Wilson for Americans to join in a general attack on Moscow. General Foch drew up plans for such an attack. Winston Churchill, representing the British Cabinet, appeared before the Big Four on February 14, 1919, and demanded a united invasion of Russia.

The Americans then experience a sudden change of heart. Not only that, they ponder the large war debts owed by their allies to them. In an internal note by [Tasker Bliss](#):

It is perfectly well known that every nation in Europe, except England, is bankrupt, and that England would become bankrupt if she engaged on any considerable scale in such a venture.

Ie: “Hey, can you guys really afford that?” Hoover himself supplies additional reasons, in a letter to Wilson (bear in mind that Hoover had considerable experience as an engineer in Czarist Russia):

We have also to... [consider], what would actually happen if we undertook military intervention. We should probably be involved in years of police duty, and our first act would probably in the nature of things make us a party with the Allies to re-establishing the reactionary classes. It also requires consideration as to whether or not our people at home would stand for our providing power by which such reactionaries held their position. Furthermore, we become a junior in this partnership of four. It is therefore inevitable that we would find ourselves subordinated and even committed to politics against our convictions.

In other words: no way is the Light of Democracy, the Republic of Eagles, going to help put the old Baltic barons back in charge. Time’s arrow has moved on, baby. The wind of change is blown. The great experiment must commence.

And indeed, the British and French pulled their support and the Whites were slaughtered. (Many of the Whites were more brown than white at this point, anyway. Hitler was not the inventor of anti-Semitism.) The Soviet Union was the world’s first pure progressive state, although its violent succession and lack of free elections places it in the revolutionary, rather than democratic, category.

Although the US did not recognize the Soviet Union until (obviously) 1933, there were strong ties of friendship well before then, just as there remained such ties after 1947. Alger Hiss and his ilk obviously would have felt quite self-righteous in feeling that they were being prosecuted for a policy that was official when carried out. Nor would they have betrayed this secret. They were, after all, honorable men.

The truth is that, from an ideological level at least, the revolutionary states are best considered as American client states. They are very different from normal client states, such as France (I take it as understood that the USG of today has clients, satellites or puppets, not friends, allies or neighbors).

The normal client state can be described as a *total client* — it is friendly with all important elements in the sponsor state. The revolutionary states were (and are) *partial clients* — they are friendly with some elements in the sponsor state, and hostile (often to the point of actual war) to others.

The hostile elements are typically the problem of the friendly elements, and the client at the very least diverts their energy. Thus, the relationship is profitable to the sponsor. In return, the client needs the sponsor, because the friendly elements protect him from the wrath of the hostile elements. Thus the relationship is symbiotic, and can continue for decades.

So, when you ask: why were there American soldiers in Russia in 1919, anyway, if what Hoover says is true? The answer is the same in all cases. They were fighting a partial war. They were not intended to win, and in fact they didn't. This, too, is not an isolated event. Nor is the demise of the regimes who made the mistake of getting to the right of American "public opinion."

So, for example, during the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Stalin did not become an enemy, like Mussolini, or even a neutral under intense pressure, like Franco. He was a loved friend who had made a terrible mistake. America's goal in interacting with Stalin during the years of the Pact was, as usual, to convince him of American friendship and woo him back to sanity.

So, for example, after the demise of the Soviet Union, everyone (including me) expected the world to enter a millennium of peace. Fat chance. The evolutionary niche was unoccupied, and the next-generation neo-revolutionary regimes of Iran, Venezuela, etc, have arisen to fill it — not to mention that wonderful fossil, North Korea.

For the New Dealer and his successors, the world-straddling geniuses of Foggy Bottom, the rule for handling a partial client is simple: whenever it does something bad, the only solution is to placate it. You will note that this is also the recipe for generating the worst possible teenager. This is not anyone's conscious decision, as usual, but I would not describe it as a coincidence.

In contrast, the rule toward actual enemies is simple: press them as hard as possible, threatening constantly, never taking yes for an answer, always responding to some new concession with some new demand, never being afraid to use violence, and always going for the jugular when the jugular is in sight.

In the second half of the 20th century, actual warfare was generally unnecessary — countries such as Rhodesia, South Africa and (early in the 21st) Israel were easily intimidated into suicide. And Rhodesia was the only true enemy nation — USG had strong friends in both South Africa and Israel, these people being of course citizens of the world. It can have partial enemies, just as it can have partial friends.

The reason that since 1945 we have not seen USG fighting to its right — where it fights without mercy — is simply that it has no true enemies, having defeated them all. Thus, we never get to see its real fangs. It is only in a historical sense that they even exist. Nonetheless, it is a fundamentally carnivorous organism,

and I suspect its lack of prey is a major cause of its present difficulties.

Therefore, what we discover today is that the Democrats are right: transnational bureaucracy is the true spirit of USG and of American democracy. Even the governments of Europe, conquered, occupied and reconstructed right down to the brains of their subjects' children in 1945, are more pure expressions of the American political spirit, of democracy itself, than is found in America itself. This is completely normal with an exported ideology. However, the purest, most refined, and most American form is transnational bureaucracy. And the Soviet Union was no more than American democracy in Russian translation.

It is actually the counterrevolutionary forces in America — the conservatives, the Christians, the “Amerikaners” — who are the most un-American of Americans. They have spontaneously reinvented old European forms of government. For example, while America is a Protestant country by descent, Christianity of the salvationist or “born-again” flavor is a dead ringer for the niche of Catholicism: it satisfies the natural human craving for discipline, obedience and spiritual authority. I’m not saying it’s good, but it works, sort of.

Also, while conservatives believe in democracy, they believe that democracy is best used as a tool to make the government act less like a democracy, ie, to not be socialist. Socialism is the stable state of democracy, for obvious reasons. By making the people universally dependent on the State, their minds as well as their bodies can be controlled. The conservative thus spends his time agitating for un-democratic policies in a democracy — his goal is reactionary democracy. Obviously, if the People can be made reactionary and persuaded to stay that way, this works. But one could just as easily invest one’s efforts in inventing water that isn’t wet.

(Hey, I never said this wouldn’t hurt your head.)

Our interpretation rather absolves Mr. Hiss and his ilk, personally, of collaboration with the crimes of Stalin. But unfortunately, it transfers that responsibility onto the *New Deal itself*.

The Anglo-American progressive establishment, having spawned the Bolshevik monster in [their minds](#), inflicted it on the chief backwater of Europe, shielded it from its foes in its youth, and fed it money and equipment, not to mention lives and territories, in its prime. It is therefore indicted, on the good general principle of Roman law in which the master is responsible for the deeds of his servant, for the crimes of the Soviet Union.

That it never actually ordered the murders at [Katyn](#), for example, is not particularly relevant. It arguably made them possible. It is certainly an accessory after the fact, because it accused the Nazis of having perpetrated them, while knowingly closing its eyes to the truth.

And if you want to know how I can put USG in the same category as the Third Reich, that is my answer. I consider view both criminal regimes which history will rejoice to see abolished, because I feel that

Washington can no less escape the crimes of Moscow than the Wehrmacht can escape the crimes of the SS.

Also, this is convenient because it obviates any conversations about [strategic bombing](#), [German prisoners of war](#), etc. Instead, we get a laundry list of gigantic barbarities: the [ethnic cleansing of the Ostdeutsche](#), the [Ukrainian famine](#), the [Gulag](#), etc, etc. All of these are the crimes of socialism. And socialism and democracy are one thing. Case closed.

Nor is the motive mysterious. During the Second German War, the New Deal became a true one-party state. Its enemies were not simply defeated. They were barred from legitimate political or intellectual occupations for life, and this ban was not revoked at the end of the war. (Consider the case of [John T. Flynn](#). Then, read his [Roosevelt Myth](#).) Indeed, this descent from freedom of speech is the ancestor of our modern political correctness.

With the Nazis and the Japanese, everything that was not Universalist — everything counterrevolutionary, everything old — went down in flames. Even if it was not physically destroyed, it simply became unfashionable. An aristocracy is not an aristocracy unless it is both good and powerful, and if it loses its power it rapidly ceases to become good. And that power ended up in Washington, courtesy of Benjamin Franklin Trueblood.

This is true even in the US itself, which has no true reactionary elite and has had none for quite some time. The postwar American conservative movement is a 1950s forgery — not unlike the fake Presidential candidate of 1940, [Wendell Willkie](#), who was a Democrat until the year before the “election.” If you don’t realize that this party is fraudulent by 2009, there may be no hope for you. It is not and has never been a real opposition. It should disband itself at once.

Moreover, since the publication of George Victor’s extremely convincing [Pearl Harbor Myth](#), it has become clear that the long-bruited rumors of FDR’s prior awareness of Pearl Harbor are quite simply true. (If you doubt this book, just go to “Search Inside” and look at the back cover. And yes, this is the exception.)

Victor’s book is also unusual because he is a supporter of FDR. He believes that governments must sometimes act in Machiavellian ways, and he thinks USG did the right thing in going to war with Nazi Germany. The same can be said of Thomas Mahl, whose [Desperate Deception](#) recounts the assistance of [British Security Coordination](#), accounting for two whole floors of Rockefeller Center, in getting the US into the war — by every dirty trick imaginable, including forgery of public documents and political warfare against American politicians, all with FDR’s clear blessing.

Moreover, even if Victor’s controversial hypothesis is not true, it is quite clear that the US intentionally provoked Japan into war in order to enter the Second German War. See the best book of how and why the US entered the war, [Back Door to War](#) by the diplomatic historian Charles Callan Tansill. For all

those who complain of Bush's illegal war in Iraq, thou shalt complain no longer. See, how UR hath quieted your frets.

All this is no more than the normal operating procedure of a criminal regime. Its misdemeanors are as miserable as its felonies are appalling. USG must atone for these deeds, and it can only atone with its life. Its employees, however, should receive unconditional amnesty — it is the ideology and the institutions, not the individuals, that must be held responsible.)

I refuse to admit that a criminal sovereign can subsequently become legitimate without at least some substantial breach in symbolic continuity. It is not the deeds that trouble me — power is always bloody. It is the lies. Moreover, now is always a better time than later.

The fundamental argument on which USG rests its present legitimacy and its claims to “world leadership” is its moral supremacy. It has none. Indeed, as we will see, it has less than none. Far from saving the world, USG has wrecked it. The least it can do is apologize and go home.

There is a traditional analogy, not much used in the 20th century, which perhaps can be adapted to tell us the story of the 20th century in one little anecdote. Let me give it a shot.

The [*upas-tree*](#), as is well known, kills all animals which approach it. What's less well-known is that it kills all the trees around it, as well. (It needs a clear space in which to hunt.) This un-neighborly result is the effect of a toxin which the upas-tree's roots secrete.

But the upas-tree itself is not immune to its own toxin. It is just more resistant than its neighbors. When they are dead, it itself is merely dying. But it must succumb all the same. For it was not evolution, but grim destiny, that designed the upas-tree.

In case it's not obvious, in the reactionary version of the 20th century, the upas-tree is America and its toxin is democracy. Thus we see the same result: American democracy is the last philosophy standing. Not because it is sweet, but just because it is more lethal to its neighbors than itself.

What underlying pattern produces the upas-tree effect? There's actually a simple and appealing answer. Democracy looks just like the memetic equivalent of an invasive, parasitic species.

The parasite's native habitat is most resistant to it. The Anglo-American countries are the most resistant to democracy, because they are the native habitat of democracy. They thus harbor not only the roots of democracy and its most diverse expressions, but also its most potent natural enemies. Thus they degrade slowly without any sudden descents into anarchy.

In the presence of said enemies, political pluralism is a chronic, degenerative, probably still terminal, but slow and manageable condition. When this parasite jumps to another species of tree, however, it meets no defenses, and the victim shrivels, blackens and burns overnight. So the same effect is seen when

kudzu jumps from Japan to Arkansas, as when democracy jumps from England to France.

The international democratic movement predates 1900, of course. It predates America herself. The leftist or democratic tradition in Anglo-American history is almost four hundred years old. If you read Hobbes' *Behemoth* ('Or, *The Long Parliament*'), it'll pop right out at you in 3-D. Our upas-tree is indeed of considerable antiquity, and it was toxic from the very cotyledon.

Whereas in the democratic version of the 20th century, all this death and destruction is the fault of the *enemies* of democracy. Therefore, the experience of the 20th century demonstrates that human civilization can no longer tolerate the existence of nondemocratic states — since they caused all this death and destruction. Flawless logic!

And so we see democracy conquer the world and produce an outbreak of peace. At least in those areas properly conquered by democracy. Is it ill-mannered to note that the conquests of Genghis Khan had exactly the same result? To conquer is to pacify. The fact tells you nothing.

Basically, the self-interpretation of Universalism today is that America conquered the world *in self-defense*. Which may be, but it sounds strangely. We also are to understand that America conquered the rest of the world *for its own benefit*. Again, perfectly plausible.

But did it benefit? Actually? Did anyone? Actually?

Consider the world of *Penrod*. This book is really a must read, not for the hapless Penrod Schofield, but for the quality of Tarkington's writing, and the wonderful rendering of the world in which Penrod lives.

The world of Penrod is the world of Olde Towne East, or at least those who once lived in those mansions. Tarkington himself was an Indiana man, but it's all the same. Fake to begin with — but not without a certain grandeur, acquired through time and tradition. It is as gone as Caesar's ghost. What killed it? The same thing that killed everything else. USG.

The world of 2009 is the root-ball of one ancient gigantic, shaggy and rotting redwood: the Anglo-American tradition we call Universalism. In the redwood's shade are the seedlings she has thrown among the blackened stumps at her feet. Some of them have prospered and some have not. Some have even evolved a little, but all began as redwood seeds.

In a typical Orwellian fabrication, we call the "nations" of the UN era independent countries. Most are American satellites at best, possessions at worst. Even those that have recreated something like sovereignty, Russia and China, are sterile and uninteresting upstarts, with no real relationship to the old-growth civilizations of the Romanovs or the Ch'ing. Europe also contains some genuine trees, though their independence is questionable and their individuality is nil. They are pallid clones of Massachusetts, planted in grim, mechanical rows. Latin America is a shambles — a festering sink of crime, tyranny and disorder. Africa makes it look healthy.

And everywhere, everywhere — except of course the Anglo-Saxon core — tyranny and rebellion, war and destruction, anarchy and murder, dragged their plow at least once across the land. And not always once. For many, they remain permanent conditions of normal life.

Consider [this](#), which the Times in a strange War Nerd moment plays, almost, for laughs:

BISSAU, Guinea-Bissau — Just after sunset, the general got up from under his favorite mango tree. As he climbed toward his second-floor office, a remote-controlled bomb under the staircase exploded, crumpling the building's flank into a jumble of rubble.

His nemesis, the president, died less than 12 hours later, after heavily armed men fired a rocket-propelled grenade into the front door of his house. They shot and hacked to death the man who had ruled this tiny West African nation for 23 of its 35 years of existence, leaving behind sprays of blood, a rusty machete and bullet casings.

In almost any other place in the world, the death of a democratically elected president and the chief of the armed forces would be met with horror. But in this former Portuguese colony, the brutal murders of President João Bernardo Vieira and Gen. Batista Tagme Na Waie have been greeted with not just equanimity but optimism.

“Good riddance to both of them,” said Armando Mango, a lawyer in Bissau. “We have been held hostage by these guys for too long.”

Indeed. Three cheers for Mr. Mango! For far too long indeed. But how, exactly, did Guinea get to be in this state? What happened?

Ms. Polgreen is not so kind as to inform us. And while at a certain practical level it becomes difficult to give a shit about the rest of the world, the upas tree is [not immune](#):

TONY BRANCATELLI, A CLEVELAND CITY COUNCILMAN, yearns for signs that something like normal life still exists in his ward. Early one morning last fall, he called me from his cellphone. He sounded unusually excited. He had just visited two forlorn-looking vacant houses that had been foreclosed more than a year ago. They sat on the same lot, one in front of the other. Both had been frequented by squatters, and Brancatelli had passed by to see if they had been finally boarded up. They hadn't. But while there he noticed with alarm what looked like a prone body in the yard next door. As he moved closer, he realized he was looking at an elderly woman who had just one leg, lying on the ground. She was leaning on one arm and, with the other, was whacking at weeds with a hatchet and stuffing the clippings into a cardboard box for garbage pickup. “Talk about fortitude,” he told me. In a place like Cleveland, hope comes in small morsels.

[...]

The number of empty houses is so staggeringly high that no one has an accurate count. The city estimates that 10,000 houses, or 1 in 13, are vacant. The county treasurer says it's more likely 15,000. Most of the vacant houses are owned by lenders who foreclosed on the properties and by the wholesalers who are now sweeping in to pick up houses in bulk, as if they were trading in baseball cards.

Piranesi's Rome, cows in the Forum and all. Though I'm not sure Cleveland is safe for cows.

A gentle introduction to Unqualified Reservations

(part 9a)

Thursday, September 3, 2009 at 3:30 AM

Today you begin your irreversible descent into black, unthinkable madness.

In retrospect, of course, the process will appear as it is — an ultimate *ascent*. Out of the Computer's infinite fluorescent maze. Into the glorious air of pure, unfiltered reason. The last hatch is unlocked above your head. The ladder is at your feet. Warm sunlight, green grass, and real reality — this alone is UR's program. Dare you continue? It is not too late to turn back.

For part 9, the *last* of the GI series, is also the *true* red-hot pill of sodium metal — now igniting in your duodenum. Smile grimly! You have almost passed through the flame. You know what history really is, and what it really has to teach us.

Now, all you need to learn is *what to do about it*. What is the Reaction? The Procedure? The Three Steps? Laugh-a-while you can, monkey-boy. One day, your kids will come home from school and explain it all to you.

(I feel it's essential, at this tense moment, to break the ice with a link to the best Wikipedia page ever: [*Glossary of the Greek Military Junta*](#). Read the whole thing. While UR could use a glossary itself, it must bend its neck before this awesome, and totally unknown, Hellenic masterpiece. Who needs a Modern Structure — when we have a *Synodiporia*? What is Universalism — but the *Skotadismos*? And what is true peace — but *isichia, taxis kai asfalia*?)

Anyway. Obviously, like any real phenomenon of history, the Greek colonels' regime had its pros and its cons. I am not equipped to measure them. I just like the doxology.

Real things happen. Usually without a plan. They have to be judged as what they are. One can still plan, however. And since we cannot plan the real, we can only plan the ideal.

The *Reaction* is an ideal plan for a discontinuous transition of sovereignty, or *reboot*. The *Procedure* is what you can do, dear reader, to help make the Reaction happen.

A sovereign is defined by its *decision structure*: the institutions and mechanisms by which it decides to do whatever it does. A *reboot* is any complete and instantaneous replacement of a sovereign decision structure. The new management inherits full control over all the assets and liabilities of the old enterprise, discarding its procedures and discharging its employees. It is of course free to retain both, but

it probably won't.

For example, your old decision structure might be: the Constitution of the United States of America, under the laws of Congress and the several states, as executed by the President and judged by the Supreme Court, answering through free and fair democratic elections to the self-governing American people. Your new decision structure might be: Chuck Norris.

So, at 11:59:59PM on Reaction Eve, the Constitution etc, etc, is as valid as ever, and you get yourself just as arrested as ever if you try to fsck with it. At 12:00:00 AM on Reaction Day, the Constitution is out and Chuck is in.

So what do you do on Reaction Day? Go to work, or school, or church, or whatever a decent citizen like you does with your peaceful, productive day. In theory, the Reaction could happen on a Tuesday night and the rest of your workweek would continue as always. In reality, it may be impossible to prevent spontaneous outbreaks of massive partying. If you haven't already seen the [silent majority](#) in the streets, grilling hotdogs and grinning like fools, you'll see them now.

In short, a reboot has about as much in common with your common, or garden, *revolution* as a beautiful young woman has with a Gila monster. The two are, quite simply, opposites. Whether your reboot is the true Reaction, dear reader, or some improved model of your own design, please do not use that other R-word. For to describe it as soiled, is to describe shit as shitty.

Of course, the Reaction does not actually hand USG over to Chuck Norris's tender mercies. Not that I would object to any such thing. Just that I suspect better outcomes can be achieved. So let's rewind the tape, and remember that our little Vulcan nerve pinch is an engineering problem, not an action movie.

First, as *political engineers* — a discipline of nontrivial antiquity, much neglected in our time — we'll have to start by getting our terms straight.

Before the Reaction, sovereignty is held by the Modern Structure. After the Reaction, sovereignty is held by the New Structure. Its predecessor, renamed to connote its new status as museum furniture, becomes the Old Structure. The Procedure is so slow, the prospect of any New Structure so remote, that for now it's easy to just talk about the Structure.

(Please remember that that this term, despite its sick *Logan's Run* ring, is quite neutral. Every institution, sovereign or otherwise, has some *decision structure* by which it decides its actions. The term *constitution*, as in [unwritten constitution](#), though synonymous, is easily confused with some capitalized formality. If a structure is poorly engineered, formal power and real power inevitably diverge over time, leaving the former as fraudulent camouflage — in Carlyle's simple word, a [sham](#).

For instance, no sensible person could describe the [Constitution of 1789](#), as now amended, as an accurate description of the process by which Washington, in 2009, makes decisions. But still, true if feeble

sovereignty, the [imperium maius](#), exists in Washington. It is held by the Committee of Nine, who dictate the Central Record. If you have never heard of these fine institutions and cannot remember whether or not they appear in *Logan's Run*, they are otherwise known as the [Supreme Court](#) and [constitutional law](#). Neither has much to do with 1789.)

In our American Reaction, we're replacing the decision structure of USG. This is an inherently discontinuous transition. To make the change as clear as possible, the new USG will need a new name. Let's be unimaginative, and call it NUSG — versus OUSG. NUSG is to inherit all assets and liabilities of OUSG, and none of its decision structure. The transition is nondestructive, instantaneous, and unconditional, like any civilized change of management.

(I'll assume the sovereign being rebooted is USG. For one thing, USG is the only true sovereign in the world today. Even the independence of Russia and China is dubious. But for UR's readers overseas — if you want to be an independent country in the 21st century and you're not the United States of America, you need to do two things.

One: withdraw from the UN and other “international” institutions. These are actually American institutions — duh. By remaining in them, you're declaring that you remain one of America's outer provinces — client, satellite, and dependent of the Beltway, at least in some ideal future. You must make it clear that, to you, this future is dead as the Holy Roman Empire. Declare [unilateral independence](#); revert your foreign relations to [classical international law](#); equalize your balance of payments; expel all foreigners who are not tourists or businessmen. If America needs to talk, it has your email.

Two: restore your *intellectual* independence. A regime is not independent unless it can think for itself. Your bright, shiny New State needs a new history and a new economics for certain; even the hard sciences could use a good bit of [auditing](#); and [actual theological work](#) is by no means out of the question. At present, you import all these commodities from America — specifically, Harvard. Some are good, others not so good. It is not worth your time to tell the difference. We must deal with Harvard, and we will; you can keep your smart young people at home and pay them to think and write. They will. Your nation's success depends on the extent to which they arrive at actual truth, rather than the old democratic nonsense or some new [pile of wack](#).)

Of course, there's already a term for a complete transition of sovereignty: [regime change](#). There's even is a term for an internally-initiated regime change. That term is [coup](#), or (more Continentally) [putsch](#). We resort to UR's customary weakness for invented doxology because, while every reboot is a coup or *putsch*, not every coup or *putsch* is a reboot.

And the Reaction is a reboot, but not every reboot is the Reaction. To be precise: the Reaction is a nondestructive and unconditional transition in sovereign control to a new decision structure which is secure, effective, and responsible.

Everyone to whom this sounds scary and awful, please raise your hand! See, it's not so bad. In plain English, all the Reaction does is toss out the present grinning, incompetent bastards and replace them with actual adult supervision. What could be simpler, or more desirable?

The only catch is that the Reaction has to work perfectly and on the first try. We're performing an unprecedented experiment on a hot, running sovereign. If it blows up — anything can happen.

Hitler, for instance. We may not have Hitler. We may not be Hitler. But we could [clone](#) Hitler! (And if the Russians have lost that skull fragment, we can back-breed a *new race* of Hitlers. Indeed, this has already been done — [with cows](#).) Without any field-testing at all, with only one try to get it right, can we satisfy ourselves that the result of the Procedure will be actual sane government — and not Hitler?

Indeed we can. But not through hope, good thoughts and the power of positive thinking. There is only one dark, half-magical art that can produce reliable quality on the first try. It uses no newt blood at all. It is called *engineering*.

The Reaction is Hitler-free because its engineers the Hitler-phenomenon understand precisely, and to avoid it take precautions effective and redundant. Unlike [Wernher von Braun](#), we at UR care where the rockets come down.

Rocket science is a perfect analogy. Every time NASA fires off some colossal shoulder of techno-pork to some random, godforsaken interplanetary destination, it ships one or two hundred custom widgets, each of which is designed to work perfectly on the first try. Often, all do. Sometimes, one or two fail. Then backups take over, and work a little less well.

Political engineering is rocket science, too. It demands no less cogency and care. In particular, romantic illusions are as misplaced in the political engineer's cubicle as a topless calendar in the gynecologist's office. The reactionary takes the biped as she is. Reality alone — bleak, elegant, mindless reality — is the null device on her black flag. Anyone who tells the truth, who believes her own lying eyes, who knows whereof the fsck she speaks, is in that moment as bitter and uncompromising a reactionary as ever put foot on the earth.

(The classical colors of reaction: [black](#), [white](#), and [orange](#). In any tricolor pattern: [red-white-black](#). A [fleur-de-lys](#) can't hurt, either, and [St. George's Cross](#) is not to be mocked.)

And best of all: we don't have to make it all up from scratch. Reactionary political engineering, in the spirit of [Machiavelli](#), or [Hobbes](#), or [Filmer](#), or [Dean Tucker](#), or [Michels](#), or [Jouvenel](#), or [Burnham](#), is not an entirely lost art. We cannot obtain our dead white males' actual advice. But thanks to Google, everyone on earth owns their complete works to 1922. The reactionary may have no friends in real life, but the Balrogs in town are all on his side.

(Perhaps the best blueprint for reaction ever published was Daniel Defoe's [Shortest-Way with the](#)

[Dissenters](#), still a smashing read — we'll have these damned Puritans shipped to the Indies yet. (Defoe was a tricky fellow after my own heart. He too expects you to add your own salt.) But speaking of shipping and the West Indies, I would trust anything I heard from [Admiral Semmes](#) or [Professor Froude](#) over today's *ad usum Delphini*. If you follow these links, you'll see that UR's flavor of reaction is actually quite moderate.)

The essence of any 21st-century reaction is the unity of these two forces: the modern engineering mentality, the great historical legacy of antique, classical and Victorian pre-democratic thought. The adept, to achieve reactionary enlightenment, observes that *both yield the same result*. What can it be, but the truth for which all good men seek? Armed with this sure and fearless faith, the Reaction conquers all.

Dear reader, I admit it: nothing quite like the Reaction has ever happened. But why not try it anyway? Lots of things happen for the first time. Nothing quite like the world of 2009 has ever existed, either. The forces against you are unprecedented. So are those at your disposal.

Dear dedicated reactionary: can you really overthrow USG? It can't be easy, surely? It isn't easy. For one thing, I can't imagine it being done in less than 10 years. 25 is probably more realistic. Let's be safe, and call it 50. For another, by definition you can't replace a sovereign decision structure without someone shooting at you — either metaphorically, or actually.

And so what? As [Åvejk](#) might have put it, regime change isn't as simple as taking a dump. It's not soft and easy to chew, like a hamburger, and it may not be as fun as lying on the beach in Coney Island. The Reaction demands balls and brains, prudence and pure craziness, both vast ambition and genuine humility. It will take you not months or years, but decades. Deal, or don't.

That said, let's jump right in to the Procedure. The Procedure comes in *Three Steps*:

I. *Become worthy.*

II. *Accept power.*

III. *Rule!!1!*

You think I'm kidding. But I'm not. Let's go straight to the -

First Step.

What could this possibly mean? Is it Zen? It sure sounds like Zen.

It is Zen to the bone, bitches. The First Step is the most difficult of the Three Steps. To be frank, it's quite possible that your Reaction will never make it past this step. It's more than possible. It's almost certain. But waste your time on the First Step — and what have you wasted?

Confucius said: to set the world in order, first set yourself in order. Nigga wasn't kidding, either. He may well have been reading [Eugen Herrigel](#), who taught us that to release the arrow, one must first not-release the arrow. Fact: not even UR is as reactionary [as Zen](#).

Another fact: if you show up for your first fencing class, they don't just hand you a bardiche. The Procedure too is dangerous. It too has its prerequisites, although it only has one.

Before you begin any positive work on the First Step, you must master the daunting spiritual discipline of *passivism*. This exercise itself may consume a lifetime. But with UR's simple and down-to-earth instructions, it will go much more quickly. You may even find that you have already completed it.

The *steel rule* of passivism is *absolute renunciation of official power*. We note instantly that any form of resistance to sovereignty, so long as it succeeds, is a share in power itself. Thus, absolute renunciation of power over USG implies *absolute submission* to the Structure.

The logic of the *steel rule* is simple. As a reactionary, you don't believe that political power is a human right. You will never convince anyone to adopt the same attitude, without first adopting it yourself. Since you believe others should be willing to accept the rule of the New Structure, over which they wield no power, you must be the first to make the great refusal. They must submit to the New; you must submit to the Old.

The reactionary's opinion of USG is that it is what it is. It is run by the people who run it. And at present, the present management may well be the best people in the world to run USG, and even if they're not he can't imagine what might be done about it — short of replacing the whole thing. This simple and final judgment, like the death penalty, admits no possible compromise.

In particular, passivism is to Gandhi as Gandhi is to Hitler. Hitler, before 1933, was a violent democratic activist; Gandhi was a nonviolent democratic activist. Passivism is not any sort of activism. Passivism is passivism. In plain English, you may not even begin to consider the rest of the Procedure until you have freed yourself *entirely* from the desire, built-in burden though it be of the two-legged ape, for power. Break the *steel rule*, change your name to "Darth," don't expect to keep your internship at the Jedi Council.

As a matter of *both principle and tactics*, the passivist rejects any involvement with any activity whose goal is to influence, coerce, or resist the government, either directly or indirectly. He is revolted by the thought of setting public policy. He would rather drink his own piss, than shift public opinion. He finds elections — national, state or local — grimly hilarious. And if he needs to get from Richmond to Baltimore, he drives through West Virginia.

The passivist has a term for democratic activism directed by the right against the left. That term is *counter-activism*. Passivism does not dispute the fact that counter-activism sometimes works. For

instance, it worked for Hitler. (We'll say more about Hitler.) However, it only works in very unusual circumstances (such as those of Hitler), and is extremely dangerous when it does work (eg, the result may be Hitler).

In case this isn't crystal-clear, the *steel rule* precludes, in no particular order: demonstrations, press releases, suicide bombs, lawsuits, dirty bombs, Facebook campaigns, clean bombs, mimeographed leaflets, robbing banks, interning at nonprofits, assassination, "tea parties," journalism, bribery, grantwriting, graffiti, crypto-anarchism, balaclavas, lynching, campaign contributions, revolutionary cells, new political parties, old political parties, flash mobs, botnets, sit-ins, direct mail, monkeywrenching, and *any other activist technique, violent or harmless, legal or illegal, fashionable or despicable*.

As a broad analogy, the passivist's relationship to USG is much like the relationship of an American expatriate in Costa Rica, to the government of Costa Rica. He has no illusions about it. He submits to its authority in every detail. He is happy when it succeeds, and sad when it screws up. And he's about as likely to try to horn in on its decision structure as he is to move to Iran and run for Grand Ayatollah.

One excellent way to make this relationship concrete in your mind is to use the word "subject," rather than "citizen." If by some unfortunate coincidence you remain a resident of the British Isles, you are already taught to say "subject." So you'll have to shift to something even more demeaning, like "peasant." This may still overstate your political impact.

The *steel rule* has one exception that demonstrates the rule. As a passivist, you can still address direct, individual petitions to the sovereign — eg, calling your Congressman. Individual petition does not violate the *steel rule* because any petition from subject to sovereign is already a confession of abject submission. Only the powerless beg. The rite, of course, is ancient.

Voting is a borderline case for the passivist. Is it an aggressive act of defiance to refrain from voting — or does electoral participation constitute impermissible political intervention? Either way, you might be breaching the *steel rule*. Perhaps the most careful policy is to always vote for the candidate or measure that the newspapers expect to win, abstaining only in close contests.

But obviously, the impact of all votes of all passivists put together will be trivial. Or if it isn't, someone has been evading the *steel rule*, and the name no longer means itself. As a passivist, your vote is an irrelevant detail of personal conscience. It's improper to even mention it.

And obviously, in urgent matters of self-defence, the *steel rule* (and the entire Reaction) go out the window. The Procedure is a long and difficult preparation for future winter storms, to be started in spring's calm sunshine. If a freak May blizzard strikes in the First Step — if the [midget race war](#) breaks out — obviously, no one can blame you for resorting to more direct strategies.

And that's the *steel rule*. I don't think it gets much clearer. But, um — why?

Why, exactly, are you a passivist? You thought you were trying to *seize* power. But here you are, renouncing it irrevocably! What's up with that?

Ah. But there is no contradiction at all.

Passivism is Zen. It is non-Zen. It is counterintuitive and romantic. It is trivial and cold-blooded. It is deeply principled and tactically deadly. Passivism is only the first step of the First Step — but its spirit informs the entire Reaction. Let's take a quick peek ahead, and see why.

In the First Step, passivism is a no-brainer. Why should you be interested in influencing OUSG? You're trying to replace the Structure, not join it.

Even in the precarious and impossible Second Step, the *steel rule* should hold. In the Second Step, you do not *seize* power. You *accept* power. As we'll see, it's totally different. And even if this bold assertion is not perfectly validated, your long and rigid training in the *steel rule* will help you guard your soul from any inadvertent or unavoidable contact with the plutonium.

Some lingering contamination is acceptable — because in the Third Step, you relinquish any power you may have held. Undivided personal authority is achieved. *Someone* reigns. But that someone is not you, nor anyone else associated with the Reaction. Sorry! Perhaps there's some other [coup](#) that would suit you better.

Thus, passivism is no obstacle to any of the Three Steps. With this obvious objection disposed, we can look at the four major *tactical* benefits of passivism. I'm sure there are more than four — but these four should be enough.

First tactical benefit: the passivist immediately drops off the Structure's defensive radar screen. While it must at all times be kept in mind that the Structure is not a conspiracy and has no [star topology](#), it can be described as the organization of all those corrupted by power. If there is one thing these people understand, it is activism — the art of controlling USG from outside its formal boundaries. It is *their* art. And they sure don't like it when it's turned against them.

If there is one thing progressives are good at, it is identifying and targeting a competing activist who is attempting, futilely as we have seen above, to out-mafia the mafia. Right-wing activism acts as a sort of adjuvant to the Structure's immune system. It activates every possible defense mechanism. Some of which are really quite nasty.

Since the Left is now thoroughly in control of the State's bone marrow, there is only one way for the Right to evade quick, efficient destruction by its T-cells: avoid deploying any surface protein that the Left recognizes. The Left's own weapons are trivial members of this set. And this is why counter-activism is basically a bad idea.

What does the difference between activism and passivism look like in practice? Let's take blogging. Obviously, in a democracy or anything like it, a blog is a political weapon. But the correct tactics for activist and passivist blogs differ.

The activist blog, which seeks power through democratic means, must seek to build an intellectual *clientela* of the largest possible size. Unique reader count is the best possible metric for the success of an activist blog. Naturally, anyone who reads blog X has that much less time to read blog Y, so X and Y, activist blogs, must be competitive. And obviously, anyone who seeks power must seek to take it away from someone else — activism is inherently aggressive.

The passivist blog does not seek power by any means at all. Its activities are neither aggressive nor destructive, but constructive (ideally leading into a reaction center, as we'll see later). Therefore, it is concerned not with the number of people who read it, but with the *quality* of people who read it. If it takes the next step and becomes a reaction center, its construction workers must be found among this motley crew.

Result: a counter-activist blog, if it achieves any success, will automatically (a) be identified by the T-cells as a dangerous, quasi-fascist Internet cult, and (b) attract a *clientela* who live up to exactly this dossier. Either way, any further effectiveness is precluded.

Whereas the passivist blog will appear, at worst, harmless and extremely strange. There's something going on here, Mr. Jones. But you don't know what it is — do you, Mr. Jones? As an existential enemy of USG, the reactionary may well deserve some immune attention. But he won't get it, and he is quite happy with that.

True fact: the author of UR has received over 7 zillion very interesting emails, all of which deserve responses, often long, that most have not received (but will). Number of hostile communications received, in over two years of blogging: *zero*. One can ascribe this result to many hypothesis, not all flattering, but I put it down to passivism.

Second tactical benefit: the problem isn't just that stimulating the left's immune system is harmful to the right. If it was harmful to the left as well, that might be tactically acceptable.

But since leftism is a decentralized movement, not a centralized conspiracy, stimulating the left's immune system just means stimulating the left. So the counter-activist loses on both sides of the equation. He brings hell on himself, and he donates energy to the Death Star.

In case this isn't obvious, let me digress for a moment, and illustrate it. I am not sure most conservative (counter-activists by definition) understand their place in the progressive psyche.

One of the best ways to sample the evil Sith energy of the leftosphere is to take a deep breath, summon up your inner Herakles, and perform the Augean labor of reading the purest, nastiest, most

Vyshinskyesque progressive blogs you can find. Sample the baths of clear venom that ooze from the scaly, withered lips of la [Hamster](#). Incline your pate before the government philosophers of the well-named [Crooked Timber](#). Or suffer all the vices of both in one, with [Brad DeLong](#).

It matters what these people think. They exist, and they are powerful. If you want to live in the present tense, you have to decide whether you want to serve as fuel for their hate machine.

In your tour de Left, you'll notice many oozing zombie wounds and heinous, glowing Ringwraith "tells." The varieties of adaptive propaganda are uncountable. However, one of the most common tropes you'll notice is a willingness to excuse self-serving ethical deviations through arguments *tu quoque*. This is one of the major metabolic reactions of the progressive movement. Basically, dear conservative, your struggle is its food. Without you, it dies.

In the *tu-quoque* mindset, any form of resistance to progressive government is defined as naked, illegitimate aggression. It naturally produces a counterreaction which is just as aggressive, often more unprincipled, and always much stronger. A fine example is the complete extirpation of the pre-Buckleyite American right, which repaid McCarthyism [ten dollars on the dime](#). If you imagine an America in which Communism suffered the same fate as McCarthyism, you imagine a very, very different America.

Perhaps the most diabolical instance of this Poland-invades-Germany syndrome was the [legal-realist](#) movement, which in the 20th century converted the Anglo-American common law from asset to liability. The legal realist reasons as follows: the [vast right-wing conspiracy](#) (TM) does not really believe in natural law and textual interpretation, but is a big liar and legislates from the bench for reasons personal, venal, or conspiratorial. Therefore, we, the Left, are suckers if we don't fight just as dirty and spin just as hard.

[Qui vult decipi, decipiatur](#). As Voltaire said, if you can make a man believe absurdities, you can make him commit atrocities. The VRWC is really no more or less absurd than its Jewish counterpart. There are no Elders of Zion, and nobody dances on Halliburton's strings. But there is a Left, though it is a movement rather than a conspiracy. And the Left, in power, must pretend to contend against some great, imagined enemy, which it naturally models on itself.

I.e: there is a Structure. There is no counter-Structure. But the leftist, knowing his own world, finds it very easy to visualize a symmetric and opposite edifice in loving and fabulous detail. In a word: he [projects](#). It's only human.

For example, one thing I always had trouble understanding about the history of World War II is why Japan never attacked the Soviet Union. Clearly, Japan and Germany could easily have defeated Russia by attacking from both sides, splitting Eurasia between the Axis. Or at least, this is an obvious strategy given the *ad usum Delphini* version of this historical event.

So why didn't it happen? The simple answer is that there was never any such entity as "the Axis," at least not in the sense that there existed "the Allies." The former imaginary entity was a pure product of fascist

propaganda organs, whose opposite numbers were happy to play along. In reality, “the Axis” was three separate countries — Japan, Germany, and Italy — neither of which really trusted each other at all, but had put their names together on a [treaty](#) or [two](#). Given that all parties to these pacts were on the record as considering all treaties worthless scraps of paper, we know exactly what they were worth in private.

Nothing like the joint military planning of the Allies existed between the Axis. There was no great plan to create a Nazi South America, a Japanese Australia, etc, etc. And there was very little to suggest to the Japanese that, in the long run, they would come out better if they added another enemy to their war. After all, Japan was already fighting an obviously losing battle for its life against the US.

Thus, the standard terminology of the war is an exact inverse of the reality. The Allies were an axis, cooperating ruthlessly and efficiently; the Axis was an alliance, cooperating grudgingly and without trust. The Allies were the Empire; the Axis were the rebels. The Axis never had a real plan for world domination, whereas the Allies had it figured out [long before](#). Again, projection. (And note that this structural analysis tells us nothing about the relative goodness or badness of either side.)

This inversion is a permanent feature of the leftist optical system. The leftist, in all times, of all races, in all nations, is really, genuinely convinced that the right, although evil rather than good, works exactly like the left. Except more so, of course.

The left is one vast alliance — [proverbially](#), a leftist sees no enemies to the left, and no friends to the right. So doesn't the rightist see no friends to the left, and no enemies to the right? The left has a party line. Doesn't the right? The left is full of people who have obviously mortgaged their souls for power. But isn't the right?

For example, it's very easy to excuse the relationship between Bill Ayers and Barack Obama, when you realize that Dick Cheney is a longstanding personal friend of Klaus Barbie.

If you actually know anything about the American right, you realize that it is a tiny pimple on the ass of the American left. For one thing, the right has no Rockefeller or Carnegie or Guggenheim. (It had a Pew and a Ford, but the money was stolen.) On the right, the most blatant acts of desperate corruption, extracting the most grudging of contributions from the most disreputable of sources, yield a tiny, sporadic creek of cash, like the dribble of an 85-year-old man.

Whereas on the left, heaven pisses money like an African bull elephant. You'll see this pattern whenever you compare the two apples-to-apples — for example, compare the funding for anti-green research to the funding for pro-green research. Or compare the political affiliation of celebrities, a fine proxy for the feelings of the ultra-rich.

But thanks to constant, near-unconscious bombardment with evidence of a vast right-wing conspiracy, the progressive mind is the eternal slave of an imaginary golem. Quite a percentage of the binding energy

of progressive activism consists of man's strongest emotional glue: *fear*. Just as with anti-Semitism, no invention is needed to create this nightmare — just magnification.

Like the Republican of 1859, the Democrat of 2009 is genuinely convinced that he is defending his tribal village from a vast onslaught of ruthless, pitchfork-wielding Huns, all trained to chant and march in lockstep at the synagogue of Satan. Against so barbaric and deviation a foe, any hesitation is fatal; any mercy is a crime; any scruple is tantamount to suicide. Therefore, Han must [shoot first](#).

Do I have that right, libs? Of course, what your lib does not realize that, since his cause is [advancing](#), his opponent's must therefore be reversing. Therefore, Euclid tells us that he is *attacking* and his foe is *retreating*. A strange thing, this retrograde aggression! Progress convicts itself, through its own name.

The terrifying Jesus monster you see, libs, is quite real. It is a small house spider of the genus *Suburbia* — species, *minivanii*. Stay out of its hair, and it will stay out of yours. Otherwise, it might bite you, and you might get a small, itchy spot.

It's true that massive, deadly arachnids in this family are found in the fossil record. It's also true that they've been shrinking steadily for the last 30 million years. You might well be face-to-face with a living fossil. Anything can happen. But first, look without your reading glasses. I suspect you may have the magnification set too high.

Take an example: where was gay marriage in 1979? The era of Anita Bryant and the Briggs Amendment? Of the Hard Hat Riot? Dear progressive, you can hardly admit that progress hasn't happened — by your own definition.

But this means your cause is going forward and your foe's is going backward, which means you are attacking and he is retreating. So shouldn't it be the spider who's afraid of you, not you who's afraid of the spider? I know I am beating a dead horse here. But you probably have friends who haven't seen the light yet, dear reactionary. Try this one out on them.

And to get back to the point: fear is seldom found on its own. It almost always generates another emotion. That emotion is *hate*. Living in San Francisco, I have seen plenty of both fear and hate. But one thing I *haven't* seen much of is: hate in the absence of fear.

Since, as all external observers can agree, the progressive movement is largely held together by hate, active resistance from the right is not just a waste of effort. It actually *contributes* to the left's metabolism. I am not the first to notice this: call it the [Dabney effect](#).

If the Dabney effect is feeding the parasite, cutting off the Dabney effect can only starve the parasite. Thus, passivism should in theory act as a kind of antibiotic or chemotherapy against the left. Or if you prefer sports metaphors, it's just the old Rick Mahorn move of [pulling the chair](#). Mr. Mahorn was not renowned for his overall gentleness in the post position.

It's even possible that if the *entire* conservative side of the fence could somehow convert itself to passivism, a prospect which is of course inconceivable, progressivism would lose too much energy to continue existing. It would reach its [Roche limit](#), so to speak, and collapse of collective apathetic sclerosis like its cousin, Communism. (Think of what the Kremlin would have paid for a tame opposition which was credible, loyal, often irritating, and never dangerous.)

The alternative, of course, is to crank up the activism until the 85-year-old man actually outpisses the bull elephant. The belief that this has a chance of working sits oddly with the general tragic vision of the conservative. It is not the only such inconsistency.

Moreover, if counter-activism somehow actually does work, we arrive at the converse of our third benefit. That is, of course: Hitler. While successful counter-activism might not *always* produce Hitler, we cannot avoid the fact that it *did* produce Hitler. Thus...

Third tactical benefit: Hitler prevention. To an orthodox reactionary, Hitler is basically the poster child for what happens if you break the *steel rule*. Fascism is reaction, but laced with cancerous tumors of democracy — “right-wing populism,” as people say these days. If it loses it loses; if it wins, the tumors grow. An improvement on Communism, but not much of one.

Just about all of Hitler's shtick, right down to the name of his party, was ripped off from the Left. Who introduced nationalism to the Continent of Europe? The Hapsburgs, or Garibaldi? Under this camouflage, which never convinced anyone with a college education, Nazism was never in any way leftist. Rather, it was a demotic corruption of the old Prussian tradition.

Even before WWI, the tradition of Frederick had become heavily contaminated with romantic-populist jingoism. By the '30s, the German right was armed with all the nastiest brass-knuckles that the international left could supply. Everything evil that the Nazis ever did, the Bolsheviks had done first. Everything there was to learn from [George Creel](#), Goebbels knew.

Contra [Jonah Goldberg](#), even contra [Kuehnelt-Leddihn](#) (whose jockstrap Goldberg is not fit to carry), Hitler was not a leftist. He was a rightist. Leftism is like a club: you can't just say you're a leftist, and be one. You have to actually be accepted into the club. You have to be *part* of the Left, and if you're not you are part of the Right — ie, the set of all those competing, unjustly of course, with the Left.

On a social network graph, it's very obvious who is and who isn't. And National Socialism was never, ever part of the graph. It had very few friends, connected very weakly, in the US and Britain. Compare it to Leninism, and you'll see the difference instantly. Hitler and I are not in the club, and nor are you — and if you are, you won't be for long.

(Since the Right is a negative set, unorganized by definition, rightists cannot be expected to share any consistent pattern of attributes, or to cooperate effectively on any positive project. Thus, they tend to lose

— an almost infallible historical marker of rightism.)

Since most people are neither historians nor philosophers, the fact that Hitler was on the extreme Right, and this Reaction is also on the extreme Right, raises some natural concerns. Again: the only way to face these concerns is to (a) provide a complete engineering explanation of Hitler, and (b) include an effective anti-Hitler device in our design.

The reactionary's basic answer to the Hitler Question is the Law of Sewage. (This is not my invention, but I don't know where I got it. Heinlein, perhaps?) The Law is: if you put a drop of wine in a barrel of sewage, you get sewage. If you put a drop of sewage in a barrel of wine, you get sewage. You'll find that this rule applies perfectly to many fields of human endeavor.

Thus, Nazism contains a great deal of reactionary wisdom, because those who created it were quite familiar with the old Continental tradition of government. However, the Nazi movement originated as a democratic political party. Thus Nazism combined the venom of democracy with the experience and efficiency of Prussia, an understandably dangerous combination.

The mixture, again, was sewage — and I say that as one who has plowed through *both* Sven Hedin's [*Germany and World Peace*](#), and Cesare Santoro's [*Hitler Germany*](#). (Margherita Sarfatti's 1925 [*Life of Mussolini*](#), though, is not entirely unentertaining.) The best fascist work of the '30s I've found is British: Francis Yeats-Brown's [*European Jungle*](#). The best Nazi memoir may be Reinhard Spitzzy's [*How We Squandered the Reich*](#). But none of this is saying a lot. Here at UR, our diligence is your indolence.

You can say one thing for Hitler, at least the young Hitler. He was successful. 1933 in Germany was a real reboot — as was 1945 in Germany. (Here at UR, we feel free to learn from both. Wine will be found in either barrel, as will sewage. The mix goes in the test tube, not in your mouth.)

But 1933 was a revolution, not a reaction — just as wine mixed with sewage is sewage. Like all 20th-century regimes, the Third Reich controlled its subjects by seducing them with the mirage of mass political power. As Robert Michels [*had already explained*](#), “the people,” by any name, can never hold power. Power is held by an oligarchy at most. Whether Nazi Germany was more monarchical or more oligarchical can be debated, but it certainly embraced the principle of popular sovereignty. The classical monarchy and the 20th-century one-party state are very different political forms.

How does this work in practice? In practice, an activist policy attracts supporters because humans (of all races, alas) are apes, and apes are attracted to power. Typically the activist's superego explains this in terms of the noble goals which he will achieve with said power. (These noble goals are generally found to include making other apes dependent on him.) His good old ape ego, however, is attracted to the *work* — the feeling of collectively struggling for power.

This is where passivism, by abjuring democracy, vaccinates itself against Hitler. True: at a higher level, the reactionary seeks to cause a transition in power, and thus in a sense seeks power itself. But he is not

an activist, because he is not *working* for power. His actions do not excite the human political instinct, the love for forming coalitions and tearing hell out of the apes across the river.

For one thing, said actions bear no resemblance to normal politics. For another, they cannot bring any actual power to the actors, even if they succeed. Which, however likely, must remain intuitively implausible — if not laughable. And thus the project of reaction does not attract those with a real taste for power, which if nothing else is very un-Nazi-like.

In fact, since Nazism violates the first two tactical advantages of passivism, we can wonder how it managed to work at all. Yet again, Hitler is the exception that demonstrates the rule. Yes: using activist tactics, Hitler rebooted Germany, although not cleanly. But *why* did these tactics work for Hitler? And why have they *not* worked, or come even *close* to working, for anyone since Hitler? Ponder that, [John Tyndall](#).

My guess is that counter-activism worked for Hitler, and Fascists in general, because they came to power in a society that still contained the carcass of an *ancien regime*. Wilhelmine Germany still existed beneath the surface of Weimar. Principles, traditions, and even many institutions remained intact. For example, the Weimar judiciary was notoriously indulgent to right-wing hoodlums. Try that today, kids.

Thus, in the 21st century, Hitler is exactly what he is supposed to be — a lesson in what not to do. First, lacking said carcass, any modern adaptation of Nazi techniques is a certain passport to fail. Second, even if it works, you end up with Hitler. In fact, I'm sure Hitler himself, who as a politician was just as practical as he was visionary (yes, I've also read [Hitler](#) — go for the *Table-Talk*, skip *Mein Kampf*), would endorse the first point. He would certainly find neo-Nazism of every flavor pathetic — much as he laughed at, say, [Alfred Rosenberg](#).

Because Hitler — like Boromir, had Boromir been a little Jew-hating faggot — attempted to oppose democracy with its own foul arts, because he gazed into the *Volk* and the *Volk* gazed into him, and especially because he at first *succeeded* in this black design, evil crept into Germany. Ultimately, the Third Reich is best classified among the many strange, dark epiphenomena of the cult of the People. Chalk it up to the 20th century.

Fourth tactical benefit: passivism allows the Reaction to recruit both progressives and conservatives — so long as they abandon their activist programs. Tactically, this may be so obvious that it merits no discussion at all. But this is UR, so let's say a little bit.

Needless to say, regardless of the passivist's personal background, the *steel rule* bars any political affiliation with either “red-state” or “blue-state” sides of the “culture war.” How is this a tactical advantage? Two armies of rabid, determined, frothing-at-the-mouth cadres are available — and the passivist chooses — *neither*?

As we understand quite well here at UR, “red” and “blue,” Amerikaner and Brahmin, are no more and no less than the two main branches of American Protestant democracy. Anyone’s cultural roots are permanent — you can take the boy out of Brooklyn, but you can’t take Brooklyn out of the boy. But identifying politically with one side of a tribal conflict is a very different thing. And it may be the most spectacular way to flame out on the First Step.

(I mean: what are these people even *thinking*? A religious conflict can end with the eradication of one side or another. There are certainly a number of progressives who would like to eradicate conservatism. Which strikes me as a little drastic, but if it’s voiced honestly, one can respect it. It’s rather inconsistent with certain other progressive beliefs, but hey — nobody’s perfect. And what do conservative activists think will happen to progressivism, and how? I have never quite been able to discern this.)

It should be obvious that any responsible management will instantly shift USG to a posture of strict cultural neutrality, allowing both competing communities — Amerikaner and Brahmin — to live peacefully according to their own principles and preferences, and cleanly divesting both of their political aspirations. It will certainly not invest a *single cent or breath* in turning Amerikaners into Brahmins, or Brahmins into Amerikaners, or even in forcing the two to live as next-door neighbors in harmony as brothers forever. If this isn’t adult supervision, what is?

Of course, there’s no way to avoid the fact that in USG as she is today, it’s the Brahmins who hold the stick, and the Amerikaners who get its short end in the tail. Inside the Beltway, it’s always Giuliani time for the flyover states. The only question is how deep the plunger plunges.

In the reactionary’s book, the cure for this awful, degenerate scenario is not to give the Amerikaners more political power, but to remove all political power from both Brahmins and Amerikaners. After democracy, they no longer have any way to fight. Remaining belligerent pretensions become comical, the nasty political arms of their respective theologies atrophy, turn black and fall off, neither has to drink the other’s beer, and the common decency of both sides, despite the insufferable, naive pomposity of the Brahmins and the irreparable boorish ignorance of the Amerikaners, reasserts itself. Reaction can only succeed as a movement of national unity.

Again, the long-term tactical potential of this peace should be self-evident. It offers a decent deal to both sides of the war. In exchange for abandoning the hopeless dream of resistance, Amerikaners get to feel what life is like without constant colonic splinters. In exchange for abandoning the sadistic thrill of domination, Brahmins get to feel what life is like without the constant fear that Jesus is about to capture Washington and turn NPR over to Pat Robertson. All sing “Kumbaya” and “Dixie,” agree to disagree, the farce is over, and the show is cancelled.

Once again, this ending is a long way away. Traditionalist religious conservatives, in particular, should consider this: what traditionalist sects in America have been most successful in preserving their values and society? Answer: probably a tie, between the Pennsylvania Dutch and the Brooklyn Chasidim. What

do both these communities have in common? In a word: [passivism](#). To survive, submit and adapt. To be destroyed, try to fight back.

Thus we see the tactical power of the *steel rule*. I'd like to think the [Baron de Batz](#) would approve. If the moral principle doesn't convince you, the tactics should.

We will now assume that the *steel rule* is indelibly engraved in your soul. With your qi fully charged, your brain laundered and your spiritual center centered, we can talk about *what to do*. Boldly, you stride forward on your quest — which will continue next week.

A gentle introduction to Unqualified Reservations

(part 9b)

Sunday, October 11, 2009 at 4:27 PM

Okay. So where were we? Oh, right, trying to take over the world.

At last count: we have started by cleansing our heads of trying to take over anything. We have adopted the ideology of *passivism* — the antithesis of progressive “activism.”

Passivism follows directly from the reactionary revocation of the Lockean [right of rebellion](#). The passivist replaces Locke’s chestnut with an older, true formula: *might makes right*. USG has the might, so it has the right. The passivist does not rebel against USG, because *he has not the right to do so*; he has not the right to do so, because he has not the power to do so.

(Can a person believe that might makes right, and still call himself a libertarian? Easily. The converse of the principle is that where USG has not the might to act, it has not the right. Thus the reactionary libertarian, believing that might makes right, believes it is wrong of USG to ineffectively outlaw a little plant that anyone can grow in his closet. Sovereignty, being absolute, must therefore be boolean.)

Notice how backward and reactionary passivism is. We have popped ourselves right out of the 20th-century Anglophone tradition, and turned the clock back to the 17th — on the *royalist* side. The conventional intellectual history of the 17th century in England has Locke on the left and Hobbes on the right. Here at UR, we have [Filmer](#) on the right and Hobbes on the left. Locke? Dig him up and hang him, like Cromwell.

Royalists must acknowledge the need for an occasional change of dynasty. But they see nothing romantic in the matter. Regime change can only be a question of necessity, never one of “right.” Might makes right. No one has the right to rebel, unless of course he also has the might.

Observe the self-stabilizing effect of this political design. When might and right become misaligned, they quickly realign themselves. Contrary to your good socialist education, stability is generally a desirable feature in a political system.

So we are not really trying to take over the world. All we are doing here is studying the lifecycle of the present owner. Said owner believes itself immortal. Some of us disagree. In that case, it seems prudent to have a plan. All we are doing here is writing one.

The Modern Structure — democracy on the American design — is quite stable in one sense of the word.

To date, its effective performance in commanding the political loyalty of most of its subjects, and the acquiescence of all, is unmarred. It is very unlikely to suddenly collapse. However, the Structure is unstable in the sense that its quality of government deteriorates progressively over time. No pun intended. Many people realize this; not all have worked through the implications.

(Apparent increases in quality of government across American history tend to follow informal regime changes, as in 1861 and 1933. It is not that the class of people in government improves, but that a new class of people comes into government, where power at once begins to corrupt them. The simple monotonic pattern, as described above, is seen more often in democracy's foreign colonies. In any case, with government in the hands of a clerical elite, there is no prospect of any further nondestructive update. Even if Pat Buchanan's peasants do drop by with their pitchforks, which they won't, they will not leave without setting some papers on fire.)

Therefore, "sclerotic" is probably a better word for the "stability" of the Structure. Sclerotic systems follow the pattern of life: they work until they fail completely, constantly experiencing unidirectional changes. Such is the lifecycle of cars, cats, stars, and Soviet Socialist Republics. There appears to be some principle of institutional entropy at work, common to large, complex, long-lived systems.

If you try to infer the future of any such system — a cat, a star, etc — by looking at the history of *that one system* alone — you will immediately assume that since this system has never died, it will live forever. Of course this is a completely unwarranted assumption. But it follows logically from the procedures by which even most educated people intuitively predict future from past.

As it ages, the Modern Structure has accumulated stable disequilibria: things that make no sense, but that nonetheless are not about to go away. (Like Obama's Stalin Prize.) When it collapses, these regions of local insanity merge in the mind of all into one general *pattern* of insanity. It is generally seen that the Structure itself makes no sense. Rather, it is generally realized that the entire American system of government is best understood as an enormous practical joke, which is not at all funny.

This perception is permanent and fatal. And just like that, the entire edifice recomposes itself as a heap of masonry. [M. Valdemar](#) recapitulates his deliquescence. Within months the fact that this rubble was once a great building, with spires on top, seems no less dreamlike and fantastic than any other part of the story. All this was seen in the East. Either it will be seen in the West, or the Structure will stand forever. Your choice, glasshoppa!

The first big secret of the Procedure: it is not a way to destroy the Modern Structure. Oh, no! It is quite the opposite. It is a way to *recover* from the *spontaneous failure* of the Modern Structure. Airbags do not cause car crashes. The Reaction can simply be considered as a safety measure for a potentially spurious failure mode that will probably never happen.

Should the Americans remain forever content under their good and ancient Constitution, including of

course the innovations and institutions now conventionally ascribed to it, they will remain forever in the grips of the Structure. For better or for worse. The Structure is not some nefarious organ within Washington. It is Washington itself. It must be taken or left.

This choice, though few realize it, is boolean. When the Americans repudiate Washington, they are just taking the piss and playing games until they repudiate Washington as a whole. It makes no sense to keep the Constitution but move the capital to Kansas City, ditch the Constitution but keep the Supreme Court, liquidate the Department of Education but not the Department of Energy, etc, etc, etc.

(Generally, it is a mistake to keep operating with any of the same staff in any of the same agencies in any of the same buildings. If any box on the org chart survives, it should be only as some ironic bureaucratic exception — which demonstrates, by sheer pathetic scale, the weight of the wave that has scraped and filled the lower Potomac back to good Chesapeake clay. Imagine if some obscure *Unterunteramt* of the SS had survived, intact, into the European Union. Would this surprise me? Yes. Would it cause me to totally reevaluate my perception of reality? No. If the Procedure is properly executed, surviving bureaucratic tissues of USG (security forces excluded) should be in the same probability ballpark. USG is not by any means the SS, but sterile is sterile — regardless of bacterium.)

Until you recognize that the whole system has to go, you are a supporter of that system. Period. The choice being so drastic, so outside every man's ken, it is possible that the Americans *will* remain forever content. In which case: the Procedure is a fun hobby and absolutely harmless. It is also possible that they *will not* remain so content, and Washington will so abuse them that they declare a case of government failure.

Clearly, there exists some withdrawal of consent after which Washington can no longer continue to govern. No government, as a whole, is incapable of losing the consent of its subjects as a whole. If this is the fate of a democratic government, that government will cease to exist. Indeed, it will cease to exist more certainly than its autocratic competitors, because they are to some extent designed to resist this attack. A democracy is quite intentionally not so designed.

In which case: what comes next? The purpose of the Procedure is to answer this question. If keeping Washington is Plan A, what is Plan B? Obviously, in the case that the Americans *do not* remain forever content with their noble overlords, something must be done. Clearly, this plan has been entirely neglected and is of considerable importance. Devising it can only be construed as a public service.

If this Plan B is never used, it should at least be entertaining to construct, and at best have some other social utility in the world of Plan A. If it is used, on the other hand, it should work as well as is possibly foreseeable.

The second big secret of the Procedure is that airbags, um, *do* cause car crashes. (Or, at least, [anti-lock brakes cause car crashes](#).)

How? Because drivers modify their behavior when in a vehicle without these safety features. Although any Plan B is no more than a safety feature, it may also have some indirect effect on political behavior.

Basically, a viable Plan B is like a red “Eject” button in a plane which appears to be going down. The game-theoretic situation of democratic voters becomes very different if this button exists. Persuading a pilot to push the button, and eject from his plane, is normally quite difficult. It obviously involves pointing out a serious and irreparable mechanical emergency. If there is no eject button, however, it is even more difficult to persuade your pilot to open the window, crawl out on the wing, and try to use his pants as a parachute. He would almost always rather stick with the plane — which generally has *some* chance of landing in one piece.

The task of the First Step is to build this red button. Which is not, of course, a political weapon. Especially since it must be constructed without any advantage of sovereignty whatsoever, and indeed every disadvantage of it. When the question is evaluated rationally, however, we guess that if the button existed, some force with the power to do so might appear and push it. The exact nature of that force is of an entirely speculative nature, and there is now no reason to speculate on it.

In the '70s, the notorious Edward Luttwak wrote a very entertaining book, [*Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook*](#). Since the task of the First Step is to figure out what happens *after* the coup, the product of this work exercise could be called *Coup d'Etat: The Sequel*. Actual coup planners are notoriously negligent in neglecting this crucial phase.

Let us explore this duality between airbag and coup d'etat a little more closely. Is it quantum? It is definitely quantum. The First Step has this total wave-particle Tao nature:

Since it is only the First Step of a complete Procedure, its ultimate goal is presumably *some* sort of actual action.

Yet, since the ideology of the Procedure is fundamentally and unchangeably passivist, this Step must also be complete in itself. The State is no green apple to yank from the branch. No! It can only melt into the hand, like a ripe peach.

In case anyone, perhaps not having watched enough Kung Fu episodes, remains morally confused about how sincere passivists can assemble a political weapon, passivism turns out to be just one special case of a more general principle: *do not act until it is proper to act*. Since it is nowhere near proper to act, the difference is irrelevant — now, and for the foreseeable future.

So the First Step is (a) a fun hobby which enhances, invigorates, relaxes and entertains the [*soul of man under socialism*](#) (*); and (b) an information weapon to be used offensively in the Second Step, and defensively in the Third. It is not a compromise between these two objectives. It is both, at once, completely. But how can anyone succeed in such a daring enterprise?

Glasshoppa! Step outside your linear, Western way of thinking. If we raise a spirit to contend against democracy, it cannot be some half-assed imp cooked up in a bathtub from a dead rabbit, a quart of bleach and 27 boxes of Sudafed. It must be some great ghost from the glorious past — older by millennia than the fad it returns to dispel. One country holds such ghosts: China.

The spiritual core of the First Step is the famous and ancient Chinese principle of the Mandate of Heaven, or *Tianming*. This can be condensed as the principle that power flows toward the worthy. To attain power: become worthy to rule. Since becoming worthy is a worthy exercise by definition, it satisfies our need for quantum Buddha duality. It is simultaneously harmless and deadly — both, at once, completely. Moreover, no one can laugh at it, because I did not make it up myself. *Tianming* is quite literally ten times as old as American democracy, and far better proven by experience.

To defeat the Modern Structure, create a New Structure which is more worthy to rule. *Much* more worthy to rule. Once this (perfectly passive) task is complete, the New Structure has only to wait. The law of *Tianming* tells us that power will flow to it — as the rains return to the ocean.

Now, if you are still stuck in your linear, Western way of thinking, you might ask: how exactly does this law of *Tianming* operate? Is it anything like global warming? Is it based on the strong nuclear force, the weak nuclear force, or the black Tibetan opium? When USG's time is up, will there be a comet in Sagittarius, an earthquake in Rosslyn, and a great flood in Rock Creek Park? Your question, glasshoppa — my answer.

Remember the analogy of the eject button. The reason USG is so stable is not that it is (a) is structured militarily to retain power without the broad consent of its subjects. Nor is the regime (b) especially loved by said subjects. Rather, USG is permanent because there (c) exists *no credible alternative* to its services.

No one can press the red button, because there is no red button. This precludes all forms of effective collective resistance — political or military — to the continued rule of USG. If your goal is to abolish USG and then figure out what to do next, you are crazy and no one will support you. If your goal is to reform USG, you are ignorant, dense or deluded, and you will fail — not personally, of course, but just in achieving your goal.

Whereas for a story with the right ending, consider the fate of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, whose fate some of us would like to see USG share, collapsed because it was a structural disaster. (USG, for its threat to call war loans to the British and French if they continued assisting in the attempted restoration of Russia, and for its general permanent affection for Robespierres, Lenins, Castros and Mugabes around the globe and across the centuries, bears significant institutional responsibility for this disaster.) Bolshevism provided government of a truly spectacular awfulness.

Nonetheless, it is *not* (as most conservatives believe) true that the Soviet Union collapsed solely because it provided such awful government to its subjects. No. It wasn't just that the Russians were governed

incompetently and reprehensibly. It was also that they had a clear alternative which was readily available and apparently superior. Ie: American democracy.

The movement that ended the Soviet Union was not, as it still superficially appears, one of pure rejection and nihilism. It had a positive and constructive plan around which everyone who cared to be a dissident could agree. It had a red button, and under that red button was a little heat-printed plastic strip that said, in Cyrillic: *SURRENDER TO AMERICA*. Or more precisely, as it turned out, to George Soros.

Which turned out to have its disadvantages. (Frankly, I think the jury is still out on the transition from Brezhnev to Putin; a case can be made for either, but the nadir surely lies between.) But the Soviet Union could fall because this *single clear option*, quite unsusceptible to any decoration or amendment — surrender to the West — formed a [Schelling point](#) around which large numbers of its subjects could trivially coordinate. (Note also the [original Bolshevik slogan](#).)

Since there is no credible alternative to USG, its opponents have no Schelling point. Moscow could surrender to Washington. Washington has no one to surrender to. The East had a West; the West has no West. Thus, its only option is to live forever. And thus, the *Tianming* strategy for bringing it down: create a credible alternative. Ergo: become worthy, glasshoppa.

The USSR, for pretty much its entire lifetime, had also been indoctrinating its subjects to hate the West like the devil hates garlic. The Schelling point was extant; the target was well-adapted and resistant. Nonetheless, the Soviet youth, educated for three generations to resist Western bourgeois decadence, succumbed instantly and with hardly a whimper.

USG has no possible resistance to a *new* Schelling point. Therefore, according to some optimists, constructing one should make it at once turn black and drip into the bedsprings, like the corpse of M. Valdemar. Everyone will be amazed in retrospect that this 18th-century relic survived into the early 21st. Even if this rosy scenario does not occur, the device once assembled creates many practical options.

Consider the difference between the Procedure and the democratic strategy of conservatism. Conservatism seeks to either halt the decay of USG where it is, or return USG to some ideal state of the past — restoring, for instance, the Constitution of 1789. Or at least the Constitution of 1932. Or maybe just the Reagan Administration.

But these misty ideals are mummies that disintegrate on contact. They are not true things, but false things — not alive, but dead. You cannot wake them up with a sip of Red Bull. What, exactly, would it even mean to roll back the New Deal in 2009? Answer: no one has any frickin' idea. Not a single flack at a single right-wing think-tank has any real plan for any such thing. Conservatism can never be a coherent alliance, because it is not a single strategy but a blur of good feelings. Thus, irrespective of its many other faults, it cannot form a Schelling point and cannot win.

Ie: it may be obvious to anyone who takes a clear look at the matter that America was better governed in

1909 than 2009. But this study produces neither any consensus on what year is preferred, for what issue, or how to translate that year's form of government into 2009. There is no little blue manual for going back to governing America like it was really America. This would be your conservative Schelling point, if it existed, which it does not and never will.

Again, this is only one of the reasons that the apparent, but false, alternative of conservatism is not a Schelling point. But since it is not, it functions on behalf of the Structure itself, acting as a sort of democratic speed-limiter and political crab-trap. Any opposition that can be redirected into conservatism is not only harmless to the system, but often indeed salubrious. Without conservatives, for instance, Washington could fly much farther into the domain of the preposterous — thus further attenuating the loyalty of its already bored and weary audience.

Conservatives, whose political motive is generally mere human altruism, and whose tightest point of natural agreement is an abstract, ill-defined ideal which has no clear recipe for implementation, is generally stated as vaguely as possible so as to attract the largest possible headcount, and exhibits patterns of error perfectly adapted to deflect the respect of the intelligent, cannot conceivably compete on any level playing field with the self-coordinating progressive movement, which has no ideals at all — being defined only by the willingness to swallow some drop, teaspoon, quart or vat of epistemic ordure, as a ticket to hop on the big bandwagon, inhale the party line and join the winning team. Conservatism cannot focus; progressivism is focus alone. Whatever the party line is today, your progressive will always support it. And thus in the *longue duree* conservatism loses and progressivism wins, and thus the former is best seen as a sort of decoy, lure, bait or shill for the latter — not a true competitor. The entire democratic complex is defined by its secular drift to the left; those who ask its future must look in that direction; those who could reform it, could educate a snake; those who would beat it must beat it as a whole.

Since anyone with a good intuitive sense of history, which lots of people have, can sense the irresistible nature of the giant, grinding bulldozer that is the democratic movement, they respond intuitively with the natural human response corresponding to passivism: *apathy*. This behavior is also known as [learned helplessness](#). Contrary to democratic dogma, LH is the normal human response to tyranny. It is almost always far more rational than resistance.

Any of the democratic political theorists of the 18th century, or any practitioner of the 19th or early 20th, would be simply stunned at the official abuses which the Americans (especially, but by no means entirely, the suburban white Americans), not only accept but certify with their votes. The Founders in particular would be amazed at such learned helplessness, which they would find much more reminiscent of the subjects of the Hapsburg or Bourbon monarchies.

Yet this response is perfectly rational. We learn to feel ourselves helpless, because we are helpless. No rational person can avoid perceiving this fact. Therefore, the inference is correct and your mental organs

are functioning correctly, at least in a Darwinian sense.

Conservative parties perform a valuable service in slowing the decay of the Structure, moderating the acute, fulminating sepsis of revolutionary democracy, a real danger for any state at any time, into a mere chronic degenerative disease. They can resist, they do resist, and they should resist. No one living today can even imagine the horrors that would have seen America and the world had the US been captured by revolutionary Bolshevism in the 1920s, an event not at all outside the realm of counterfactual [possibility](#). Question: why did this not happen? Answer: [conservatives](#). However, once the ultimate futility of the movement is understood, its attraction becomes quite limited. At the very least, it needs an offense to go with its defense.

The fact that it has no real chance of success, and thus stimulates the innate tribal response of learned helplessness, causes an observer to greatly understate the political force that is latent in the conservative movement. If conservatism — or any other movement designed to defeat the Modern Structure — stood any real chance of success, it would become far more powerful than you can possibly imagine. It could seize the state with ease. It would.

If you identify this as a case of circular reasoning, you are right. More precisely, it is a case of game theory — even more precisely, a [coordination problem](#). The only way to break this cycle is to create a Schelling point: a credible and precise alternative. A red button.

So this is the strategy. What, exactly, is this mysterious device?

In the First Step, we do not replace all of USG. We just replace its brain — the University. With a new device we call the Antiversity, which is pretty much what it sounds like it is. The Antiversity is described more fully in the next post, but here is a summary:

The Antiversity is an independent producer of veracity — a *truth service*. It rests automatic confidence in no other institution. Its goal is to uncover any truth available to it: both matters of fact and perspective. It needs to always be right and never be wrong. Where multiple coherent perspectives of an issue exist, the Antiversity must provide all — each composed with the highest quality available.

(If the point must be belabored, compare this to Wikipedia's policy on [sourcing](#), [forking](#), etc. With the exception of the [remote loading](#) prohibition, a blatant anticompetitive measure which reflects poorly on the project, Wikipedia's policies are perfectly appropriate for Wikipedia. Wikipedia is not designed to be an independent provider of veracity. It is not producing truth at all — just repackaging it.)

The power of a truth service is its reliability. It may remain prudently silent on any point; it must err on none. The thesis of the Procedure is that if we can construct a truth service much more powerful than USG's noble and revered ministry of information, we will be able to use it to safely and effectively defeat USG. Indeed, I can imagine no other way to solve the problem.

Once this device of great veracity, the Antiversity — expressing not only razor-sharp analytical intelligence, not just exhaustive learning, but also great prudence and judgment — is fully armed and operational, it is straightforward to ask *it* the question: *chto dyelat?* [What is to be done?](#) What is the sequel to the coup d'état? What is Plan B?

The Antiversity will promptly deliberate, in its accustomed fashion, and churn out a hundred-page report. Probably with a DVD-sized appendix. And this will be Plan B, which describes how the institutions of NUSG are created outside power and installed in it. Plan B, in short, is the constitution of the Second Step.

Once this Plan B is complete, the Americans are finally ready to face the question. Are they happy with their present government? Or would they rather replace it? Once they decide that the answer is the latter and act collectively to make their will known, actual work can begin.

In the Third Step, the Antiversity continues to guide the New Structure toward stability — acting as the brain of NUSG, just as the University acted as the brain of OUSG. However, where the University pretends to advise the Modern Structure but in reality directs it, the Antiversity pretends to advise the New Structure and in reality advises it.

Sovereignty is irrevocable. Power is not being transferred to the Antiversity, but *through* the Antiversity. However, it must bear the Ring for a time, and even use it. Its hive mind must be built like a fortress; that fortress had better be fully armed and operational. Few institutions indeed are fit for the task of holding power *permanently*. The Antiversity must design and install an institution which meets this specification — a tremendous task. It itself need not meet it; but even for temporary sovereignty, brick-shithouse engineering is essential.

The problem thus narrows to the essentials of the coup. The coup is a boolean choice: do you support NUSG, or OUSG? Which of these organizations should the police and the military follow orders from? A wide variety of individuals can influence this choice, in a variety of ways. Numbers, of course, are always helpful.

But since those orders filter down from the collective minds of the University or the Antiversity respectively, any reasonable, well-meaning person's answer to this question will depend on the relative credibilities of University and Antiversity. If you find the Antiversity more credible — *much* more credible — than the University, you are probably ready to at least contemplate a surgical transition of sovereignty. You believe that the police and the military should follow orders that are more sane, rather than orders that are less sane. Otherwise, you can hardly describe yourself as a reasonable and well-meaning person!

Becoming more credible — *much* more credible — than the University is a difficult task. But it is a task at which the Antiversity starts with considerable advantages, because the University has sacrificed its own

credibility in so many ways, which it has absolutely no mechanisms to repair. (For instance, the statistical engineers who derived a global apocalypse from a [single tree](#) remain and will remain honored scholars. “Stay thirsty, my friends.” McIntyre, like Clapton, is God.)

Nonetheless, it is an eminently *solvable* problem. At least, it would occur to no one to describe it as an inherently *unsolvable* problem. Would it? Why should it be?

(We have to start by asking the obvious skeptical question about any strategy for taking over the world: why has it not been used in the past? Quite simply, the past did not have an Internet. Since it’s almost impossible to build the Antiversity even with an Internet, we can see how impossible it used to be.)

The Antiversity’s task of *becoming worthy* can be divided into two parts: becoming more right (*much* more right), and becoming more popular (*slightly* more popular), than the University. To be credible, one must be (a) right and (b) believed. [Esse et videri](#) — though if you have to ditch one, definitely ditch the *videri*.

Both of these, of course, are extraordinarily difficult problems. I will save the former for another week, and devote the rest of this interminable torrent of drivel to the latter.

So let us assume we have built this Antiversity, and it is *much* more right. How do we make it *slightly* more popular? Or at least, popular with whatever set of people is needed to collectively decommission the Structure and initiate Plan B? This, of course, is a large set. But there is certainly no law of politics that tells us who it must contain, or even that it must constitute a majority.

To win, all the Antiversity must do is obtain the personal conversion of this set. It must wrest their souls from the University, and claim them for its own. There is no secret here. There is nothing subtle about the scale or the methods of this operation. It is politics, which is far older than democracy. The Egyptians, the Sumerians, the Inca would understand it perfectly.

Let us begin with the enemy — the Goliath in the sights of this odd little sling. The University.

The basic problem with the University is that it has become part of USG, and has been corrupted by power — thus impairing the high level of veracity it purports to provide. Since any scheme for either reversing this corruption *in situ*, or excising the University from the Structure, is *prima facie* impractical, the University is ‘totaled’ and must be replaced.

Another way to say this is to say that if you want to build a reliable truth service, it is much cheaper and easier to *not* start with Harvard. If you have Harvard, your best first step is to discard it. Harvard is valuable and wonderful in a thousand different ways, perhaps. It is just not valuable as an initial ingredient in a reliable truth service. You cannot purge it, nor can you assimilate it intact.

That said, it’s important to remember that the University remains quite alive and has many points of

genuine vitality. It is very difficult to corrupt, say, chemistry. The University survives and rules because it is *by far* the most reliable, responsible and veracious institution in the modern world. As so often in European history, its clerics are the most intelligent and knowledgeable people of their era. Just guillotining them would be a terrible mistake.

(Potentially, the institutions themselves could be salvaged by rebuilding from the true science and engineering departments. But even the substantive disciplines can only benefit from a savage, existential reorganization. Chemistry is real, biology is real, etc, etc. But the institutional woodwork of the whole edifice is all dry rot and white ants. Burn it! Burn it all! Let it burn! Science, like God before BÃ©ziers, will know its own.)

There is no alternative to the fire. Defeating the University means ending its political dominance, which cannot be accomplished without ending its political role, which cannot be done without demolishing the institution in its present form, which cannot be done without either liquidating it or subjecting it to political domination — the former being highly preferable. Someone must rule; no empire is forever. Thus, the cause of the Antiversity is in a sense capital. To conceal this would be to err from day one; and yet, the matter may and must be disregarded on a day-to-day basis.

As is fit, the crime of the University is also capital. Assuming the robe of [Pio Nono](#), it asserted its own infallibility. Unlike Pio Nono, it joined that infallibility to the sovereign power. It held the powers of the Grail. It misused them, and served the Serpent of Lies.

Those who lied, served the Dark One directly. Those who did not lie misled by omission, for they did not refuse to associate with the others. Those who honestly believed were negligent, for they chose not to inquire more deeply into the matter. One fate is meet to all.

If you taught chemistry at a university, you taught chemistry at a university which had a [chief diversity officer](#), a department of African-American Studies, etc, etc. You knew what these people were. You knew what these people did. At least, you knew that whatever it was, it was not scholarship. You said nothing. What kind of servant of truth are you, sir? You served not truth, but the Party. Sign the form, sir.

So the Antiversity is not without some initial advantages. It could not possibly prevail, were it not competing against a deeply power-corrupted and morally compromised institution. Obviously, the University through its great temporal inertia is quite capable of carrying these liabilities, but they *are* liabilities, which are vulnerabilities, and not about to go away.

We then turn to the playing field: the minds which the Antiversity must infect with its benign countervirus. This need not be everyone. It need only be enough of everyone to initiate the unconditional transfer of sovereignty. Again, this is obviously quite a difficult task, but again when we look at it we find it in the solvable category.

First, consider the existing state of these minds. They believe that when they engage in democratic

discussion about what programs and policies the Structure should pursue, they are engaging in meaningful political activity. Therefore, any attempt to engage an unsurprising supporter of the University will make first contact with this module. If the conversion is to continue and succeed, the democratic module must be decommissioned, so that the mind can think about *who* is sovereign, rather than *what* they should or should not do. However, it cannot be decommissioned until it is engaged and defeated.

Therefore, the first question our Johnny Appleseed of the good news, our carrier of the countervirus, our Typhoid Mary of truth, will face: okay, so if we have a regime change and replace our old government with your new government, what will your new government do?

The answer, which must of course be given honestly, will include steps like cancelling the Constitution, withdrawing from the United Nations, and imposing martial law. Or other stuff like that. It will not be difficult to portray any such step as taking up where Hitler left off, and we all know how hard it is to go around the office taking contributions for Hitler.

I mention these difficulties because the easiest and most obvious sales strategy for any ordinary right-wing activist is to get as far away from Hitler as possible. In general, on the right it pays to approach the center and maximize the accessibility of the message. Ie, to play the [Hotelling-Downs game](#). This again results in standard conservatism, which may put a flack or two in a nice corner office, but can never actually succeed in its mission.

The Antiversity is especially precluded from winning power through a Hotelling-Downs strategy of gradual moderation. If it starts mincing, sidestepping and kissing up to the left, in the usual fashion, something has gone really terribly wrong and the experiment needs to be terminated.

First, the program of the Antiversity will (unless I am completely out to lunch) be simply too far to the right to derive any benefit from any incremental shift to the left. It cannot sell in the same market as conservatism; it must create its own market. And there will always be a categorical barrier between the two.

Second, moderating its program means diluting its truth service with tactical fiction, a compromise of which it is constitutionally incapable. Unless, of course, it has been corrupted.

Third, and perhaps most important, choosing the Antiversity over the University is a boolean choice — there is no way to split the difference. For this choice to remain clear, of course, the Antiversity has to be right *every time* it disagrees with the University.

On all three counts, we see a clear separation. Basically, I believe that the Procedure can succeed because I believe there is an isolated political maximum, or [island of stability](#), several orders of magnitude to the right of the present-day political spectrum. If you stay on the island — the Right Pole, as it were — you

have a chance of actual victory. If not, you might as well go work for David Frum.

This might be called a Martin Luther strategy. Luther had many predecessors, often quite talented and vigorous, who worked to reform the Church. The result: barbecue. But Luther, who worked to *abolish* the Church, died in his bed. Not that he abolished the Church, but not that it abolished him either. Why? Because the island of stability is a perfect Schelling point.

The set of all people who want to reform the Church is not a trivial coalition. How do they want to reform the Church? What, precisely, is their agenda? Anyone can say he wants to reform the Church, and mean anything by it. The bishops can be for it. The cardinals can be for it. The Pope can be for it. Reform! Yes, by all means, we shall have reform.

The set of all people who want to *abolish* the Church is a trivial coalition. Either you are a Protestant or a Catholic. It is not possible to be a Protestant on some issues and a Catholic on others. Neither side will accept those who are lukewarm. The result: cohesion and commitment.

The set of all Catholic reformers is a natural mob. It is fuzzy around the edges. It has all sorts of aims. It can never be defined or precisely constrained. It may be organizable, but it certainly does not lend itself to organization. The set of all Catholic *apostates*, on the other hand, has exactly the opposite quality. It is a *natural army*. It *wants* to organize itself. It contains no inherent internal conflicts, besides the inevitable personal frictions of any organization.

Let's look at this Right Pole, this island of stability, a little more closely. What are its attractions? The island cannot be a Schelling point unless people actually want to move there. Besides the innate excitement of extremism — which you can get any day at Kos or Stormfront (have Kos and Stormfront ever thought of cooperating on some kind of anti-Jew initiative?) — what are the mental attractions of the Reaction?

I see two: one obvious and one not. The obvious one is that, since the Reaction is the Antiversity and the Antiversity is always right, the attraction of truth is always present, and never dispelled by even the smallest injection of fiction. Not everyone has a nose for pure truth, but many do. Moreover, the pattern in which those who have a nose for pure truth come to it and feast en masse, like tadpoles on a dead fox, is recognizable to many of the rest.

The less obvious attraction — though perhaps even more important — is that, unlike conservatism, the Reaction actually has a credible strategy for achieving power. If sufficiently large numbers of people abandon the University and shift their trust to the Antiversity, the Modern Structure will fall, the New Structure will be born, and those who overthrow it will receive power. The details of this transition are completely unimportant, at least for this discussion.

In other words, it is quite straightforward to picture a future in which reactionaries recapture USG. It may not be *likely*, and in fact it is not; but the picture can be constructed. It is not straightforward to

picture a future in which conservatives recapture USG, because conservatives are nowhere near having a plan to attack the University, the Civil Service, the Press, or the structure surrounding them. (What conservatives mean by victory: more jobs for conservatives.) Since no actual attack is contemplated, no victory can be imagined. And since the Structure is not about to go away on its own, no realistic world without it can be portrayed.

Whereas the reactionary narrative is easy: everyone becomes a reactionary. More or less. When there are enough of us, we seize the State — “by any means necessary,” as Malcolm put it, although as reactionaries we must at once add *and proper* — and complete the Procedure.

You start to see why building the Antiversity is such a tremendous task. The Antiversity has to become so credible that it can serve as the definitional backbone of a political movement which could not otherwise exist: the movement to replace the Constitution with the Antiversity. (More precisely, with a transition plan of the Antiversity’s design.)

Even once the First Step, which is a tremendous and impossible task, is done, the Second Step, which is a tremendous and impossible task, remains. You cannot change this! Glasshoppa, you cannot change this. Nor can you change the order of the two, nor run them in parallel. The sentences run consecutively — and the Third, too, is tremendous and impossible. Only now see you the true height of these fierce and snowy mountains. Tremble, glasshoppa.

The mountains exist. But there *is* a path — I believe. And if I am right, if there is a path, this path is the basis for exactly the same type of feedback power generator that was born as the Progressive movement, and grew up to be the Modern Structure. I note, however, that the National Socialist German Workers’ Party was plugged into just the same feedback reaction. So the effect is both powerful and dangerous — as we should expect, in any recipe for sovereignty.

Basically, if you see a plausible strategy for domination whose *only* missing ingredient is the number of supporters, it is rational to join this strategy, especially if it costs you nothing to join. Thus progressives crowd around the supple progressive line, constantly twisting to support whatever policy gives progressives the most victory and power. Watch them twist now, on Afghanistan! It is always sad to see others in [mental pain](#). But they adjust.

Most progressives are socially normal human beings, who in any political environment, would just be choosing the largest, best-appointed bandwagon for their personal conveyance. In Nazi Germany they would be Nazis, in Russia they would be Bolsheviks, in the kingdom of Louis XIV they would be all for Louis XIV. This is one of the many reasons there is no need to guillotine them. Au contraire: one way to know you’ve actually seized actual power is that these remoras latch on to you. The effect is unmistakable and quite pleasant. It is also useful.

At the beginning of the Second Step, the Antiversity is already a well-established institution which has

consumed hundreds of man-years of individual effort. It is, in a word, a success. It cannot be laughed at or ignored. It may still appear improbable that it will defeat the University in the struggle for control over USG, but it can no longer appear impossible. Therefore, some probability factor can be applied to its success.

It is the product of this probability with the magnitude of the success — the expected value — that matters. The feedback takeoff effect should occur when this product, which should be nonzero, exceeds the equivalent product for progressivism, the University and the Modern Structure.

Young supporters continue to be attracted to progressivism, because progressivism offers them impact, ie, power. Very small slices of impact. Very, very small. Ie: bogus internships at second-tier polar-bear foundations. But — still. The magnitude is very small, but the probability is 1 by definition. The Structure rules, and apparently will always continue to rule.

Obviously, after becoming the Establishment itself, our old revolutionaries have very little free power to offer. Everything they could get their fangs on, they have sucked and discarded. The remaining prey is very small, very elusive, and very indigestible. The progressive movement is rapidly experiencing a crisis of power starvation — its supporters, who feed on victory, demand *action*. But there are precious few victories left to win.

A reboot strategy, such as the Reaction, offers a slice of impact in a more probabilistic way. Although it has a low *probability* of victory, the magnitude of victory — a whole new regime to construct — is so large that their perceived product is not insignificant. At least, it should be comparable to the starvation rations of the progressive. Let alone to those of conservatism, in which the probability of victory is significant but the magnitude of the victory is negligible.

Thus the Reaction has the ability to become fashionable with amoral elites, which was clearly a prerequisite for any kind of political success in the 19th and 20th centuries. Instead of a tiny slice of power in the existing regime, which is real, it offers supporters a large slice of power in the new regime, which is hypothetical — but which will become real, as soon as enough people support it. This is sufficient to stimulate the chimpanzee power instinct, which is if anything more developed in the most cultured and educated of minds.

If we consider the set of Reaction supporters as a social network, we will see that the core of this social network is the set of extremely intelligent, learned and prudent scholars who have created the Antiversity. Since its strategy for success involves expanding that social network, it must do what all successful social networks do: start with the elites, and work downward.

So, again, the Reaction has two engines: truth and victory. By producing truth and only truth, it attracts those strange geeks who are attracted to pure truth. Because it has a strategy for actual, complete victory, it attracts those normal remoras who are attracted by victory. With the combination, it is built to win —

like [Kimbo Slice](#).

In the American context, victory can only be produced by a coalition of civilized unity, ie, a party containing both Vaisyas and dissident Brahmins. Once a sufficient quantity of the latter can be recruited, the former will recognize their natural leaders and fall into line. However, organizing any number of Vaisyas by any method which precludes the recruitment of Brahmins is a waste of time. Even in a democracy, the great contest is for minds, not heads. Once the minds are won, the heads will follow.

Tactically, conservatism concentrates on exactly the wrong side of this problem. It concentrates on recruiting the largest number of Vaisyas, by any means necessary. It goes straight for the democratic bait. The bait is indeed tasty and can generate a very realistic impression of power, but it is a mob rather than an army and cannot organize itself for any real political capture. I would trade the entire red-state population for a quarter of the Burning Man attendees — because, if I had the latter, I could easily get the former back. Again, political actors naturally recognize their natural leaders. Forge the spearhead, and the spear will show up on its own.

If this coalition of the middle and upper classes — the civilized classes — can be formed, victory is certain regardless of the numbers of the underclass. When the civilized classes are united, an underclass population of any size is not a political problem, but a security problem. And not a difficult one in this day and age. If the civilized coalition is outvoted, it can simply bid directly for the loyalty of the security forces, a contest it will always win.

The civilized coalition is politically conceivable. Hints of it, for instance, were seen in the Giuliani era in New York. Of course “Giuliani time” in New York developed orders of magnitude less power than would be required for actual regime change. Nonetheless, it was found possible to appeal politically to the upper crust to perform the normal or healthy role of aristocrats, ie, cooperating to preserve civilized society. Which was admittedly in a somewhat dire condition.

One of the chief features that makes the Modern Structure pathological, in the present era, is the inescapable alliance of the upper class and the underclass against the middle. Rather than a Brahmin-Vaisya alliance, we have a Brahmin-Dalit alliance. As political structures go, this one is quite sordid and inefficient, but also quite stable.

However, observed in retrospect from a future in which the civilized coalition has reasserted itself, the Brahmin-Dalit alliance makes a distinctly negative impression on the student of history. This impression is easily conveyed to impressionable high-school students — sealing, in a generation or two, the historical fate of democracy. NUSG will certainly have no difficulty in making its predecessor look bad.

In short: all the Reaction must do is convince reasonable, educated men and women of good will to support stable, effective and reliable government. If this cannot be done, we are most certainly all [doomed](#).

So there are no real Jedi mind tricks in the Procedure. There is no magic jujitsu that will make Washington go away instantly. There is just a very large amount of extremely hard work. Given the number of people currently devoting their efforts to strategies of resistance that have no change of success under any circumstances, however, this one strikes me as relatively promising. I hope you agree.

(* — the name of this pamphlet (1891) is so catchy that most everyone has heard of it. But few have read it — until now, including me. Who would have thought the author [of](#):

Slavery was put down in America, not in consequence of any action on the part of the slaves, or even any express desire on their part that they should be free. It was put down entirely through the grossly illegal conduct of certain agitators in Boston and elsewhere, who were not slaves themselves, nor owners of slaves, nor had anything to do with the question really. It was, undoubtedly, the Abolitionists who set the torch alight, who began the whole thing. And it is curious to note that from the slaves themselves they received, not merely very little assistance, but hardly any sympathy even; and when at the close of the war the slaves found themselves free, found themselves indeed so absolutely free that they were free to starve, many of them bitterly regretted the new state of things.

would be... Oscar Wilde? I mean, what a crisp reduction of Mr. Aubrey Herbert's book, [*The Abolition Crusade and Its Consequences*](#). A queer man, our Mr. Wilde.)

A gentle introduction to Unqualified Reservations

(part 9d)

Thursday, November 19, 2009 at 2:00 AM

Today, we're going to step boldly forward in the Procedure and look at how to capture America.

This essay should be of interest to anyone seeking instructions for any kind of fascist coup. However, this coup design (which is not fascist, but reactionary) depends on the information weapon we've just designed — the Antiversity. If you don't have an Antiversity or anything like it, I'm afraid you'll need a different recipe.

Note that no one now has an Antiversity or anything like it, and they don't exactly grow on trees. So, if you'd rather not have a fascist coup at all, there is no need to fear. Really!

That said, I will take the liberty of speaking of the First Step in the past tense. In the First Step, we built the Antiversity — a new intellectual power supply for USG. In the Second Step, patriotic Americans peacefully exercise their democratic rights to disconnect the present power supply, the University, and plug in the Antiversity. Once the Antiversity holds full sovereignty, it continues the Procedure, dissolving USG and replacing it with a New Structure of its own design. America under the New Structure is the Third Step — to be considered later.

First, let's tackle this interesting word: *patriotic*. Can a patriotic American support a reactionary coup whose ultimate goal is to terminate democracy? Absolutely! He is patriotic because he genuinely loves America, his great country, and its good people.

He is patriotic *not* because he attaches his unreasoning affection to any particular acronym, rulebook, or personnel force. Or to any name, flag, slogan, or religion. He takes those things as he finds them. He need not find them good. If he has to choose between America and USG, he will always choose America. In short: he is a patriot, not a moron.

Can democracy terminate democracy? Isn't this a contradiction in terms? Not at all. Here is one straightforward way by which Americans can terminate democracy: elect a President who has promised to cancel the Constitution. Once he is inaugurated, he can cancel the Constitution. Of course, the military must also support this [autogolpe](#). This given, the operation is trivial and entirely safe. Self-coups are the best, safest and most reliable kind. Unfortunately, they are not always the most practical, but they at least set the standard we must strive for.

The basic question facing any potential supporter of a coup is: do you prefer *this* government, or would

you rather take your chances with *that* government? Do you want to stick with the serviceable old Modern Structure, or go wild with the high-tech New Structure? Since sovereignty is irreversible, this is never an easy decision. The New Structure is designed to last forever. Of course, so was the Modern Structure. Do you think it will? That would be pretty good for 1789. Or even 1933.

You *support* a coup if you would like to see this change, assuming it can be made instantly and nonviolently. This is a much lower bar than *joining* a coup, which is something you should do only if you think it *actually* will succeed. Otherwise, your efforts are a waste of time — at best. Governments don't like to be existentially threatened.

The coup planner faces three basic tasks. First, he must *design* the new regime — yes, *before* the coup. (Poor attention to this task is perhaps the most common cause of coups gone wrong.) Second, he must *recruit* enough supporters to complete the operation. Third, he must coordinate his supporters to *perform* it.

In the Internet era, coups — especially democratic coups — are much easier. Why? Because, once enough people have stopped supporting the present government, a coup is simply a matter of communication and coordination. The Internet is very good at these things.

Still, without the Antiversity, I'm just not sure it can be done. The problem, in a coup, is not getting people to oppose their present government. There is never any shortage of *potential* supporters. The coup planner's problem is getting people to support *his* coup. This, as so often here on UR, is a coordination problem. The Left is spontaneously coordinated; the Right, alas, must coordinate itself. (If there is one reason why the Left tends to win, this is it.)

This coordination problem, along with many of the coup planner's other tasks, is no longer solvable by an individual — or even a conspiracy. The job can be done only by an institution — such as the Antiversity. Again, for an individual or conspiracy, you need a different recipe. Sorry. Also, no one can use this formula now, because there is no Antiversity. Sorry if I repeat myself — I would just hate to scare anyone out there in the viewing audience.

To begin the Second Step, the First Step must be complete. When the First Step is complete, the Antiversity exists, and it is not a baby either. It has come together as a genuine institution. It is a *substantial* institution — perhaps not with as many contributors as Wikipedia has today, but in that ballpark. It is a *prestigious* institution, widely respected for the excellence of its collective judgment — if not always agreed with. And it has some *central* decision-making body which can make it act, more or less, as a unit. I would be shocked if any such thing existed before 2019.

That said, 2019 will happen sooner or later, and so will 2029. The future exists — it is just uncertain. And history is by no means over! So let's take this bad boy out for a spin and see what she can do.

First, the Antiversity challenges USG by just existing. The University is a comprehensive Ministry of

Truth. It provides a complete and accurate official truth service. So who are these asshats, who claim to have their own truth? Some bureaucrat, charged to look into it, finds that the asshats *do* have their own truth. He grows disheartened. He does not complete his report.

Simply put, the Antiversity is the root of a belief system which is to USG as Protestantism is to the Catholic Church. Everyone who has even heard of it knows it is possible to stop believing in the University, and this alone is a serious problem. USG is not a military despotism. It is a democratic government. It is and will always be existentially dependent on popular support. Since USG is guided by the University, if you don't believe in the University, you don't believe in USG. You think the Pope is just some guy in a funny hat. You're a problem, buddy.

But the Antiversity is not just limited to just existing. It can attack. It should attack. It *will* attack. How does it attack? The Antiversity attacks USG by *studying* it.

USG has never received anything like an independent historical audit, let alone the brutal proctoscopy to which the Antiversity will subject it. USG is, of course, part of history; the Antiversity cannot study history without it. So it will eventually be asking the questions: what the hell happened? And why? How, for instance, did Washington take over the world? And why?

At least in the first volume, the Antiversity's consensus is likely to pay a heavy debt to the 19th-century British perspective — such as that of [Lecky](#). Up through the middle of the 20th century, the London view tends to produce the most independent, learned, and distanced interpretations of America: for obvious reasons. Duh. Therefore, if you have to start somewhere, start with the Victorians. Today's Americans are entirely innocent of the Victorian narrative — and *especially* innocent of what that bad boy looks like when projected *forward* to 2009. Kimbo Slice is in the cage, wearing full lawn-tennis attire.

But history is only a start. Most Americans do not care about history — except recent history, which they call “the present.” One can regard the study of USG *present* as a case of history, but this approaches the pedantic. It probably deserves its own department: Washingtonology.

Washingtonology is an *applied* discipline, like archaeology. Its mission is simply to study the real Washington. This mission requires no engagement with any of USG's PR arms. Washingtonology is not journalism. It is the study of what Washington *is* and *does* — never what it *says*. Unless that speech is in some sense an action.

(One of the few systematic mendacities that I see across the *entire spectrum* of American punditry is the convention of writing as if political actors personally wrote, or believed, their lines. Of course, all these pundits know that the speeches are composed by teams of professional writers. Nonetheless, they invariably report these speeches as if they were actually personal productions. They never say: “Today in St. Louis, President Obama read a White House speech which called for...” They never say: “Today in St. Louis, the White House called for...” They say: “Today in St. Louis, President Obama called for...” This is a

classic Orwellian [abuse of English](#). The Founders would have considered the institution of professional speechwriting, and the resulting cardboard television presidents, one of the stranger and more contemptible features of our contemptible and very strange Modern Structure, which somehow masquerades as their own invention.)

What does the Antiversity do when it proctoscopes USG? For every agency, unit, or acronym within USG, it creates a knowledge base. It knows, more or less, what the acronym does, who works for it, what its budget is, etc. It understands the acronym's bureaucratic purpose, decodes its public emissions, identifies its friends in Congress, etc, etc, etc.

More daringly, the Antiversity can (within the bounds of law) develop a way to verify the *identity* of USG employees. This allows Washingtologists to develop secure, reliable and anonymous inside sources within the Beltway. It can even create communities for them — for instance, host a conversation in which employees of agency X, and agency X alone, can communicate safely and anonymously. Not only does this compromise the loyalty of the agency X, it ensures that the Antiversity can understand it better than its own management. More on these custom communities later...

Moreover, the Antiversity is not at all limited to the study of USG proper. It can study the entire EUSG — University, Press, NGOs, contractors, and all others controlling or controlled by USG. This opens up a remarkable number of tempting targets. For instance, every working journalist and every working professor deserves his or her own dossier at the Antiversity. No, this is not even slightly creepy. When you accept the responsibility of informing the public, you accept the public's right to study you and your work.

USG is a huge creature. Almost no one knows anything about it. Washingtology is a vast task of collecting, assimilating, and selecting information about this beast. As always in history, the end product is a story: what is it? What is it doing? What has it done in the past? What is it likely to do in the future?

I actually know something about seeing governments in this way, because my father was a Foreign Service officer, and he used to let me proofread his (unclassified) cables. Essentially, Washingtologists will study USG the way USG studies its satellites. Since the assessments in State Department reporting are not meant for public consumption, they are reports on the *reality* of the satellite government — with which Foggy Bottom (purportedly) concerns itself. This reporting style is not generally available to the public, and no one reports on Washington itself this way. At least not since [Dupuy de L'Ã´me](#). Nonetheless, it can be [done](#).

Comparing Washingtology with journalism is like comparing a discussion of some issue in the cable traffic from US Embassy Lisbon, to the same issue on the front page of the *Jornal de NotÃcias*. It's not just that the two are written in a different language, although there is that too. It is not even that the former has more facts, though perhaps it does. It's that one is designed to inform the natives, and the other is designed to inform the desk officer.

America — and America alone — has no desk officer. But the truth is out there. The Antiversity must thirst like a viper for this unknown knowledge, and extract it from the sand's very dew.

There is a little bit of Washingtology in the world today. The British site fakecharities.org is an excellent bit of work on the other side of the pond. Righty-o, chaps! David Horowitz has produced a decent prosopography of the broader Left at discoverthenetworks.org. Most amusingly, the Washington Post itself has come forward with the hilariously named, and hilariously peppy, whorunsgov.com. I cannot avoid rhyming the first syllable with “door.” Compare this site with the [Post itself](http://Postitself); see the difference between Washingtology and journalism.

Once the Washingtologists understand Washington, they can *report* on it. Ie, write short narratives describing its latest doings. This, too, is not journalism. At least, it is qualitatively distinct from the present profession. Perhaps the word should just be retired. “Blogging” sounds a lot better.

(Under the New Structure, having been a Modern Structure journalist will be a nontrivial point of personal ignominy — like having worked as an officer in the Wehrmacht, or a DP for *Girls Gone Wild*, or a trader for Madoff. Not something you want on your resume. Solution: learn to surf, then claim you were surfing. To get your name off the public list, you'll also need to file a full disclosure, and sign some forms. Really not a big deal. Certainly nothing like some *other* fascist coups I could imagine. Why fly with the rest? If you need to fly, fly with the best.)

The Antiversity, of course, is not a propaganda device. It is a truth machine. Its efforts are devoted to obtaining the truth for itself, not spreading the good news to others. The latter is a relatively trivial task given the former, and confusing the two greatly interferes with the former.

Nonetheless, once the Antiversity learns the truth, anyone can blog about it. Or produce an audio segment. Or a video segment. Certainly, by 2019, the Antiversity will have no trouble in communicating its truths to the People, through any medium which can stimulate their senses.

Public communication, originating entirely outside the Antiversity, cannot and should not be controlled. However, outlets within the general idea sphere of the Antiversity, and responsible to it rather than the University, can easily identify themselves as such. If they do not, or if their communications are inaccurate, it is obviously not the Antiversity's fault.

The trick with public communication is to move down the IQ ladder very cautiously and steadily. It's important that distorted versions of the Antiversity's vision not circulate among morons, as of course they will. However, the effect must be minimized. When propagandizing on behalf of the truth, always try to bring the audience up to your level; never descend to its.

As this slowly descending inverse waterline creeps down to the meat of the bell curve, that population — accustomed to seeing USG, including of course its local arms, through authorized eyes, will suddenly

have the chance to see it through unauthorized eyes. Unauthorized and very critical eyes, with no interest whatsoever in illusions. The reality of USG needs no exaggeration.

But it is not that difficult to persuade Americans to despise USG. Americans already despise USG, although they don't generally put it that way. As an institution of propaganda, the Antiversity can whip them into a white rage with the artfully-presented truth. (Did I say a *white* rage? Sorry — poetic diction. A *diverse* rage, surely. Just white with *righteous justification*.) They are already remarkably annoyed and disappointed, however.

And they do nothing. Politically, the Americans are the victim of a vicious cycle: they are apathetic because they are powerless, and powerless because they are apathetic. The political apathy of the modern American voter would amaze and terrify his great-grandfathers.

Have you ever seen a contemporary description, perhaps by a European observer, of a 19th-century American election? It's like a college football game. Human madness unleashed upon the earth. Indeed, the fundamental human passion for tribal conflict has been transferred largely to harmless megasports — one of the real political achievements of the 20th century. (And indeed one bound to last. Which will outlast the other? Ohio State proper, or the Buckeyes?)

This change can be reversed. The gene pool has not changed much at all. Real political lightning is surely still hidden in the American heart — indeed the human heart. If not the chimp heart. If the hominid does not struggle for power, it can only be that he is powerless. Take your foot off him, and he springs up! But he is the opposite of a spring; the more he is compressed, the less he presses. He knows how to submit, as well as how to challenge and rule. This creature has quite a hunk of brain on the top of its spine. He didn't evolve yesterday.

This, for instance, is why there were few rebellions against the Soviet Union: the State had pressed its people to the floor. In general, weakness is the cause of all rebellion. Strength is the cure for all rebellion. You have heard the opposite, but you have heard wrong. Sorry.

Multiple-equilibrium games work like this. They are hyperbolic. They exhibit a [Matthew effect](#). They have — if I can bear to cite Malcolm Gladwell — tipping points. Populists and conservatives — ie, enemies of socialism — have been largely barred from the levers of power in USG since the Hoover administration. The longer they remain out of power, the more their power decreases. Thus, the level to which an *actual* grass-roots movement (such as the tea parties) can influence public policy is almost zero.

Conventional democratic politics can *stall* public policy, but cannot change its *direction*. The mob is notoriously absent-minded; it forgets itself, and worries about something else; the policy goes through. This is the natural result of civil service reform. Either the People control the government, or they don't. If they control the government, they can fire the bureaucrats. If they can't fire the bureaucrats, they don't

control the government. It really is that simple.

But our plan is not a plan to elect a political party, or to implement some policy, or to stall some policy, or etc. It is a plan for a democratic coup — a complete regime change. This cannot be done without actually capturing the government. Clearly, it is anything but a case of conventional democratic politics. However, *until* the regime change, it works entirely by lawful methods. *After* the regime change, of course, its word is law. The coup is a political singularity.

For instance, the rule in conventional democratic politics — followed rigorously for centuries — is to be as broad and vague about your ideals and desires as possible, so as to attract the largest possible base. Consider the tea parties. What were they about? Their namesake — a thoroughly left-wing phenomenon, a mob of vandals who masked their faces like Hamas to ransack a private business whose only crime was obeying the law? A mood, a feeling, a thought? Maybe an agenda, if a negative agenda counts? No to healthcare reform? But not *just* no to healthcare reform...

It was, and is, nowhere near clear. No surprise. The more people you get, the more powerful you feel. Unfortunately, if those people are milling about randomly in a “big tent” the size of Nebraska, you have accomplished very little in terms of coordinating support. You have not coordinated anything. All you have is a feeling. If you could get a million people behind some *defined objective*, you might be able to get that objective to happen.

But if the tea parties were promoting an actual manifesto, they would have had a much harder time recruiting. This would just have been weird. When you involve yourself in something like a tea party, you feel that you are contributing your thoughts, your ideas, your dreams, to a collective movement. This is the experience of conventional democratic politics. The last thing a democratic party wants to do is to crush those dreams, brutally, with its own.

Thus, conventional democratic politics cannot bring about a coup. No big surprise there. Only unconventional democratic politics can succeed. An *unconventional* party can only be organized along lines that will be familiar to any student of the revolutionary movements of the early 20th century, including both parties of the Right and Left. We can describe this as an *existential* party; it demands a fundamental and complete change of government. Such a party cannot, of course, be anything but upfront about this goal. It cannot mind being called anti-democratic. It *is* anti-democratic.

Power is what works; it can be used for good or evil. All significant existential movements, from the Bolsheviks to the Nazis, the Sandinistas to the Legion of the Archangel Michael, share these five design features:

One, the Party is *exclusive*, rather than *inclusive*. A democratic party is like a church: anyone can walk in, sit down, and listen to the sermon. An anti-democratic party is like a club: if you want to be a member, you have to apply. Moreover, if you want to stay a member, you have to keep paying your *dues*. Both

metaphorically and financially.

Two, the Party enforces an *ideological standard*. The Party leadership decides on the Party line. You are, of course, free to have your own opinions. You are just not free to confuse them with the Party's opinions. As a Party member, you know the Party line and can spout it like a tape recorder. You can also rant on your own account. And you know the difference — that's all. The Party is most certainly not a soul-enslaving totalitarian cult.

Three, the Party proposes a *concrete program*. If you vote to transfer power to the Party, you know exactly what you're voting for. You are not voting for the box labeled "Surprise." If everyone else puts their votes in that same box, you know exactly what's going to happen.

Four, the Party eschews and despises *partial authority*. The question of what a responsible statesman would do with an existing pseudo-executive position under the Modern Structure — mayor, governor, even President — is only theoretically interesting. A responsible statesman would never *accept* any such position. His work would be sabotaged by those who retain the rest of said authority. Therefore, it would visibly appear to have failed. Moreover, even if it managed to succeed, it might well be reported otherwise. Better to hold back. The Party is organized to transcend democracy, not to repair it.

Fifth, the Party is inherently a *shadow government*. It is perfectly possible for the Party to build the new government under the laws of the old government. It just can't be *activated* (no, not even a little bit!) under the laws of the old government. (It can give demos, however.)

This mechanism is not known to the American political tradition. What do I mean by a *shadow government*? As so often at UR, we'll use as our example... National Socialism. Remember, a Nazi pistol is just a pistol.

The distinguished Australian historian [Stephen Roberts](#), who lived in Nazi Germany between 1935 and 1937 and produced the essential prewar source *The House That Hitler Built*, wrote:

The machine, it is true, carried much dead weight, and organization in certain provinces was notoriously lax; but, on the whole, the Party came to provide a definite shadow State.

When I was admitted to the Party archives at Munich and shown some of the earliest documents, I was struck by the breadth of the point of view behind the system, even in the infancy of the Party. Here were no hasty pencillings and fugitive scraps of paper. Even when the Party had but a single stenographer, its files were handled as if they were the archives of a great nation, and the most insignificant details of meetings were minuted and checked and counter-checked. They were treated as State papers, and it is quite clear from the documents themselves that there has been no retrospective building up of a system that did not exist at a time. It is beyond doubt that the men who organized the Secretariat of the Party in the first few years acted as if they were managing a nation. The inculcation of such an outlook over a decade made the ultimate transference of power

much easier than it otherwise would have been.

Lenin's thugs, of course, played it the same way. Does this shock you? You knew we were talking about seizing power. Power, of course, can be used for good or for evil. By the Nazis, by the Communists, or by you and I.

You see the process of seizing power the anti-democratic way. First, you build a government *outside* the government. That government already has a mind: the Antiversity. All it needs is a body. The Party. The Party! Embrace it. Embrace the vision. Embrace the edge.

And all one must do, to join that Party, is switch one's intellectual allegiance — from the University, to the Antiversity. The convert must follow the latter as he once followed the former: absolutely and unconditionally. The client submission module is already in place. We're just changing the server address. Moreover, the doctrines of the Antiversity, because they actually make sense, are much more compact — they consume fewer neurons and demand far less background processing. Your very skull will sigh with relief.

You start to see the difference between this and the Nazis. For the Nazis, the equivalent of the Antiversity was... Hitler. Have you *read* Hitler? I have. (The *Table Talk* is the Hitler to read.) Frankly, Hitler reads a lot like me, if I lost 25 IQ points from drinking lead soda, and also had a nasty case of tertiary syphilis. I may have some of Hitler's talents — I will be the first to admit it. But I have no intention of applying for his job.

I would never be able to do it, anyway. I don't think anyone could. Again, a true collective intelligence is essential. The Antiversity must not only be much smarter than me, but also much wiser. (And better at answering its email.)

So, beyond the mere spreading of seditious truths — which is really First Step material — let's look at how the Antiversity organizes a coup. In the First Step, the Antiversity assembled itself. In the Second Step, the Antiversity has three action items:

First, the Antiversity must design a *Program*. The *Program* says: if we receive formal sovereign authority, this is what we expect to do with it. The *Program* includes both a decision architecture for the New Structure, and a policy roadmap for the transitional administration.

I see no point in discussing the policies of the Program. Again, I am not Hitler. The Antiversity must be built first, and that will take at least ten years. Who knows what the world will be like in ten years? Cogitation on the Third Step should be left to one's own private heart. Frankly, I have been rash in even mentioning these matters.

However, it's clear how the Program starts: the Party seizes power, and executes its policy roadmap. Or... actually, no. This is not how the Program starts. This is how Brand X starts. This, for instance, is how

Hitler started. And how Mussolini started. Needless to say, the Program has to be much more subtle, elegant and advanced.

There are many differences between the Program and the Nazi path to power. They both have one thing in common, of course: they produce an absolute dictatorship. However, this shocking resemblance can easily overshadow some critical engineering changes — notably the following.

The key safety change is that the Party is designed to *seize* power, but not *hold* power. The typical revolutionary party becomes an appendage of the revolutionary state — a permanent placenta. The placenta is a specialized organ for a specialized environment: the womb. Once the baby is born, it's useless. She'd never learn to crawl with this beef pancake hanging on her belly. If the Party must be preserved after its victory, it must at least be severed from power.

So here is how the Program starts: the Party holds power for only as long as it takes to *hire* a qualified administrator — an experienced corporate CEO, perhaps. It then presents that administrator with (a) a conflict-free responsibility structure; and (b) absolute sovereign authority. (b) will come first; (a) remains merely the Party for longer. (In the Program, there is never an administrator who is both absolute and irresponsible.)

But the entire transition should be complete within a year. After this, the Party has no more reason to exist; and, indeed, it should dissolve. Its central structure disbands. It continues to exist in a certain sense as a social network, but its organizational life is over. The Party is a temporary organism — designed to win and die. Its career is its larval stage.

Thus, though UR is completely attached to the theory that not only does power corrupt, but potential power corrupts, the Party can become as corrupt as it wants. Because it will never exercise actual authority in government — unlike the Nazis and the Bolsheviks.

Second, given this clever design, the Antiversity must actually *organize the Party*. Without actually prejudging the design, let us call the set of patriotic and responsible citizens who support the Program the *Plinth*.

The Plinth must (a) obey the principles of existential politics as described above; (b) conduct all operations in a perfectly democratic, transparent and responsible way; and (c) place its absolute confidence in the Antiversity and the Program.

As with any existential party, the goal of the Plinth is to capture absolute sovereign authority. If Americans do not have the power to entirely oust and replace their government by entirely democratic means, whatever proportion of the population they need to do so, they are simply the autocratic servants of those parts of state that they cannot so oust. Popular government is a corpse; that corpse, by its own principles, must be discarded by any means necessary. So it's six of one, half a dozen of the other. If you

can't have the Plinth — you need the Plinth.

And indeed, although the Plinth is not an *inherently* covert organization, it is certainly designed to operate covertly if for some ridiculous reason this ever becomes necessary. In much the same way that an A320 is designed for a water landing. Even in covert mode, the Plinth is not designed to commit any actual crime or injustice; but unjust laws can prevent it from operating at all, if it is required to operate according to these laws. Because it is designed along basically Leninist lines, it has at least the theoretical option of going underground.

Third, the Antiversity must continue to exist, so that it can *advise* the Plinth and its successor, the New Structure. It is intended to be a permanent design — which means it is intended to be a nonsovereign design. This one-time event should be its only brush with power. For the rest of the future, it produces *advice*. Which the advised are quite free to disregard. This is the honest relationship of a legitimate consultant — not the creepy hypnotic grip of an intellectual Svengali.

At this premature date, I feel this is about as far as a coup design can be sketched. Certainly the first and third parts above can stand little examination. The Plinth, however, is another matter. It is the thing that has to be *built*. But how can it possibly be built? Let us delve deeper.

First, I want to examine two *trends* that I think will advance over the next decade, making it easier to both assemble and install the Plinth. Here at UR, we skate to where the puck will be. Second, I want to look at two *processes*: the process of assembling the Plinth, and the process of seizing power once it is built.

The first trend is *spontaneous deprogramming*. Here is the problem: the Modern Structure is complete. The *ancien regime* is no more. Therefore, it is simply impossible for the progressive movement to generate anything like the energy it generated in the '60s. The whole Obama experience, in particular, is a major downer. But this apathy would be growing anyway. It is just increasingly obvious that the '60s will never be repeated. The logs it burned are ash.

What this means in practice: in practice, for a young person, it is very hard to squeeze any power or status out of the Left. All the institutions of the Left are bureaucratically stable. If you join them, you join them as an intern. If you want to achieve any status through them, you have to suck your way up a very long, greasy pole. It is just not *exciting* to be a mainstream left-wing activist. The lifestyle is grim and boring. You can be an extreme left-wing activist, like an Earth Firster, which is a little more exciting; but still exudes an ugly flavor of desire and futility.

Young people seek power and status. This is natural. It will always be the case. However, they are young; so they seek not the things that will bring them power now, but the things that will bring them power when they are of age to rule. Not, of course, that this is a conscious strategy; it is more a matter of evolutionary biology. But it still works. The number of former '60s radicals in positions of power today is

remarkable.

Thus, it is better to say that young people seek *potential* power and status. If an elite is open to new talent, they will seek it in that elite. If an elite is not open to new talent, or if the process of entering it excludes much of that talent...

In this case, we see a *prerevolutionary condition*. The classic case is late 19th-century Russia. Young elites, instead of being attracted to careers in the administrative or clerical arms of the Czarist state, were attracted to revolutionary activism — plotting to *replace* that regime. They seek a different path to power — not an existing path, but a *potential* and *hypothetical* path.

Why? I imagine that, to work and rise in the late Czarist bureaucracy, one had to both swallow and regurgitate some rather stale bagels of the mind. Certainly the literature of the period gives one that impression. Also, Jews were disliked. [Rather actively disliked](#), as a matter of fact. Some of my ancestors left Imperial Russia on account of this nonsense.

The alternative? Communism. Out of the fire, into the frying pan. Or rather — out of the sauna, into the crematorium. Nonetheless, a prerevolutionary condition is a prerevolutionary condition. Better the good should take advantage of it, than the evil.

Let me show you a tiny, microscopic, little prerevolutionary condition, right here in 2009. This is the hot new phenomenon of [Tweed Rides](#). Look at the gallery. What's going on here, Mr. Jones? Who in the bloody hell are these bloody [chaps](#)?

More to the point: why are ultra-British Victorian and Edwardian fashions fashionable, suddenly, in 2009? Does it have anything to do with Barack Obama? And will it last? Who the hell knows. I am anything but a trendologist. Here, however, is my theory.

My theory is that these eras are in fashion because they are edgy. They are *dangerous*. Every man and woman in the pictures you see is under 40 and went to an American or European college. In this so-called place of education, they were instructed that the eras which produced these clothing styles were *evil*.

Moreover, the most evil people in this era were rich white people — the people who wore *tweed*. People such as Edward VII. That's quite a difference, *n'est ce pas*? Barack Obama, and [Edward VII](#)? Nobody *thinks* this, I'm sure. The subconscious is quite sufficient.

Thus, the tweed craze is that most commonplace of youth phenomena — *symbolic rebellion*. Tweed culture is a lot like the [swing](#) movement in Nazi Germany — a relatively subtle denial of authority, delivered as a coded fashion message. Just as there could not possibly be any respect between the Hitler Youth thug and the Swing Kid, there cannot possibly be any respect between the Tweed Rider and the granola-munching hippie with whitey dreads. Culturally, this is war.

Of course, tweed is a harmless fashion statement. But you know: if a nigga has spent his entire Saturday trying to look like [Sir Henry Maine](#), dress like Sir Henry Maine, talk like Sir Henry Maine, and act like Sir Henry Maine, how hard can it be to get him to [read](#) Sir Henry Maine? That's what I'm saying: a prerevolutionary condition. (Or rather, a prereactionary one.)

There's no reason at all that reactionary ideology can't hitch a ride on reactionary fashion. The two should flourish for exactly the same reasons, under exactly the same conditions, in exactly the same kinds of minds.

Moreover, if I am correct in my somewhat optimistic reading of this microtrend, with its obvious potential to be as ephemeral as any other fad, it will not be ephemeral (though it may evolve). My reasoning: if the tweed life is a subtle protest, it is an exercise of collective power. If it is an exercise of collective power, this fashion statement in some form is likely to be enduring, for the same reason that ghetto thugs will never stop wearing baggy clothes: you can hide a piece under them. When fashion confers power, fashion sticks around. On the other hand, this whole Tweed Movement could be complete bullshit — the thing could disappear in a few months. UR does not make financial recommendations or confer fashion advice.

The second trend is what, for lack of a better word, I call *recorporatization*. Unfortunately, this requires using the word *corporation* in its unusual second meaning — that of [corporatism](#). Someone needs to invent a catchier locution. Unfortunately, I am fresh out today.

America was once renowned for its voluntary and independent community organizations. Tocqueville expends countless pages on lavish praise for the American passion of voluntarism. For various reasons, these were almost entirely atomized in the 20th century. For a modern American, your tribe is your employer, your university, or perhaps your church. Perhaps you volunteer at one of the many official charities. (Any charity which accepts grants is an official charity.) These are extremely cold, impersonal, and soulless forms of engagement. This is by no means a coincidence; basically, you are interacting with others through the Post Office.

Reactionaries adore the natural corporative structures of society, and diagnose a sick society by their disappearance and/or coordination. All 20th-century regimes destroyed or suborned the voluntary structures in their societies, producing the usual gray, totalitarian anomie. Why? To any inherently unstable regime, such as a democracy, guilds and orders and brotherhoods and lodges and the like are dangerous institutions; they are easily assembled into threatening combinations. The simple, atomized state of mere individuals is much safer.

The trend that we are seeing is the reconstruction, thanks to teh Internets, of private voluntary peer communities. A good example is [Sermo](#), a private discussion board only for doctors. What do doctors talk about on Sermo? I have no idea. I'm not a doctor. I can't read the board.

However, I discovered Sermo because I read some news story that mentioned [this press release](#). See this [document](#). Frankly: crap like this is the reason society was decorporatized in the first place. Who the hell do these people think they are? The AMA? The AMA supports President Obama's health-care reform. Now there's the legitimate voice of American medicine.

Well... no. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if at some point Sermo just assimilates the AMA, more or less the way the Soviet Union assimilated Latvia. What is the AMA? A bunch of guys in an office with a fancy name. What is Sermo? *Actual, legitimate democratic power*. Or more precisely, aristocratic power. Or even more precisely: corporative power.

For instance: there's really nothing stopping someone from recreating Sermo for... *the police*. Or... *the military*. In fact, if you read the comments on [police blogs](#), you'll see another prerevolutionary condition! And this is in public! (Albeit anonymously. *Verified* anonymity, as in "anonymous Marine captain in Texas," is an especially potent device.)

This is the art of the reactionary agitator. He is always persuading the little chips of uranium to cuddle up and get more comfortable with each other. Society has more than enough uranium for a Reaction. It is not *shaped* like a Reaction, but it is getting more so. Atomized, the doctors are nothing. Organized...

Another interesting and important class of corporative institutions is *local* institutions. For example: Sermo for San Francisco homeowners. If San Francisco homeowners develop a collective consciousness, their relationship to the government of San Francisco is not unlike Sermo's relationship to the AMA. Hm.

If homeowners think X, and supervisors [do Y](#), how do homeowners respond? Homeowners think: this is *our* city. This is *our* government. We're the ones that pay for it. And it's slapping us in the face every day. This is *simply unacceptable*. (Check out the comments on that last link — including the votes. Votes like 500 to 3 — for the reactionary position. In *San Francisco*.) Now, if we can have a meeting of the minds with Sermo for San Francisco policemen...

Once corporative institutions exist, they can think as communities. They can publish manifestos, like the Sermo appeal. They can develop party lines. They can liaise with other communities. They can perform all kinds of incredibly powerful and dangerous political stunts. No, there was very much a reason why 20th-century liberalism was so anticorporatist — just like the Nazis and the Bolsheviks. The corporatives must be assimilated, coordinated or destroyed. "As you wish, Lord Vader."

Worst of all, corporatives can consider and disseminate alternative narratives of anything — or everything. They can be *infiltrated*. The Antiversity is a dream and the Plinth is a dream squared; but it's never too soon to start infiltrating. (In fact, just the fact that you're reading this pretty much makes you a sleeper agent. Perhaps I should consider disseminating some sort of patches or cards, like Steve Zissou.)

It is the combination of rebellious reactionary exuberance, driven by the irresistible energy of youth and talent, combined with the rise of new voluntary community structures, that over the next ten or twenty years will begin to create a general prerevolutionary condition. But how do we exploit that condition?

All right. We're in 2019. Even given deprogramming and reincorporatization, given an Antiversity — how do we do it? How do we build the Party? The modern world, in 2019, will still be the modern world. How, in the modern world, do you recruit a Leninist party of pure Carlylean reaction, dedicated implacably to the downfall of the Constitution and its replacement with an iron-hard corporate dictatorship?

Actually, history has a precise example of what needs to happen to America. America needs to be *colonized*. It needs to be reorganized under *imperial* rule. Unfortunately, America is the world's greatest country already — no one is available to colonize it. Therefore, Americans will have to do the job themselves.

For instance, the acknowledged master of colonial government is [Lord Cromer](#), who found Egypt in chaos and bankruptcy and instituted a European standard of government. We, too, would like a European standard of government. To achieve this goal, we have joined our efforts in the *Colonialist Party*.

Or possibly the *Imperialist Party*. Or, perhaps not now but at some more daring day, the *Racist Party*. (Whose platform could only demand absolutely race-blind government.) Many other names of this general valence, utterly defiant yet somehow nonthreatening, completely serious but vaguely ironic, are available.

But let us eschew all these big, flashy banners, and call the project by its internal codename. This is what cool people who know it will actually call it. It's an unusual word, of no particular metaphorical definition: *the Plinth*. Again, I want to emphasize the fact that not only does the Plinth not exist, it cannot exist until the Antiversity exists; and the Antiversity does not exist.

The Plinth, quite simply, is the existential party of responsible thought. It appeals to responsible and intelligent people — parents, homeowners, schoolteachers. Doctors, lawyers, and engineers. Students at top-level universities. Republicans and Democrats, of course. Ice People, Chinamen, Hindoos; Boers, steers, and queers; mulattos, Hispanics, and Jews. Everyone intelligent, mature and open-minded, regardless of race, color, creed, or sexual preference. Of course, in practice everyone will be [white](#), just like at Burning Man.

The Plinth can recruit new members in only one way: educating them. To join the Plinth, you need to educate yourself at least superficially in the doctrines of the Plinth. These simple instructional materials, prepared of course by the Antiversity, contain a brief general reorientation, and a short overview of actual history, economics, and political science. Basically, you need to read a little book and take a little test. It's like getting your political driver's license. Not difficult at all.

How is the Plinth structured? Much like any revolutionary party of the early 20th century. All instructions come to you from the headquarters — Reaction Control. This is a small office of professional reactionaries, whose role is entirely administrative (not ideological) in nature. The Antiversity dreams its dreams; it floats its castles in the air; Reaction Control executes them.

Is this at all creepy? Let's stop, for a moment, and consider whether what we're proposing is creepy. I hold that it is not, in fact, creepy. And here is why.

To the extent that Reaction Control is the administrative creation of the Antiversity, it is indeed the case that the Antiversity is plotting to take over the world. If the Antiversity is plotting to take over the world, it can and will be corrupted by power in just the same way as the University. It might even be worse — before it achieves power. And after that, it will degrade quite rapidly. So, yes, this would be creepy.

Let's look at the safety interlocks on this baby. First, as we saw earlier, the Antiversity creates Reaction Control, but Reaction Control is not in any way *responsible to* or *governed by* the Antiversity. At least formally, this missile is [fire-and-forget](#).

Once Reaction Control is born, the administrative tie is severed; the relationship is advisory alone. Thus, the Antiversity is not intellectually contaminated by the activism and raw power lust of the Plinth. Or at least, it is contaminated temporarily and as little as possible. Moreover, the fact that the Plinth can only win by speaking the truth is a major barrier to any kind of power distortion.

And then, of course, there is another Morgul-condom: once the Plinth wins, it forms the New Structure and ceases to exist. Furthermore, it is a conflict of interest to hold or have held any formal responsibility in of any two of these organizations: Antiversity, Plinth, New Structure. At every step, the people have to change. Otherwise, we could expect contamination. There will surely be some bad eggs anyway, but there's no reason to invite them.

And please don't misunderstand: this is not a James Bond operation. Until it actually seizes power, everything the Plinth does is legal. The Plinth is not a *violent* existential party. Ie, it is not a *terrorist* organization. Quite the converse! The Plinth is a *nonviolent* existential party. It is merely conducting a campaign of *information* terrorism. This is not just legal — it's encouraged. Plinthers are merely *activists*. (In fact, volunteering for the Plinth next summer would look great on your college application. It's not like we don't have a plan to end world poverty.)

Reaction Control does three things. One: it assigns Plinthers to cells. Two: it publishes the Update. Three: it coordinates any distributed actions.

The general pattern of 20th-century revolutionary parties is a *cellular* structure. While this was originally designed for illegal, underground activity, in which the Plinth *does not engage*, it is also a perfect way to use the Internet to organize a social network.

Simply put: here's how you join the Plinth. Either (a) you are recruited by a friend, who is already in a cell; you study the [Short Course](#), pass the test, join your friend's cell. Or (b) you find the Plinth on the Internet, study the Short Course, pass the test, and are assigned to a local cell by Reaction Control. Either way, you spend three months as a candidate member, then are confirmed or rejected by the cell. If confirmed, you are a full member and must pay dues.

Cells meet — in person — at least once a month to maintain their active status. At a cell meeting, members can be expected to discuss the latest issue or issues of the Update, which is issued once a week and tells Plinthers what happened this week. There may also be reading assignments, etc. It's easy to assign reading when you're not particularly interested in reading anything post 1922. The fundamental goal of a cell is to maintain the Plinth as a social network with a well-informed, reactionary collective consciousness — this requires intellectual awareness. Note that this is more or less how the [CPUSA](#), for instance, operated in its heyday.

(And note what Reaction Control, in practice, does for your life. It goes out and finds you like-minded friends. It creates a social life. Many, of course, already have a perfectly adequate social life — but not all. This effect has been of tremendous advantage to revolutionary parties of the past.)

Cells also elect leaders, and these leaders form cells of their own. This is the traditional structure of a revolutionary party — why mess with what works? At the top is Reaction Control, whose leaders (while initially appointed by the Antiversity) are of course elected by the Plinth.

The Plinth, proper, is not designed to contain an electoral majority of citizens. Even once they had achieved power, the revolutionary parties of the early 20th century never made members of all citizens. The Party was designed to be a revolutionary elite, and an elite it remained, even in power. (The Plinth, of course, is dissolved once it wins — it is a sort of political placenta, not at all useful to the actual New Structure.)

Therefore, the Plinth will not prevail through the mere votes of Plinthers. It needs to recruit an outer core of sympathizers — supporters, but not members. To do so, it must propagate its message outside the actual Plinth. There are several ways to do so.

One is mass public action — demonstrations. These, of course, must be (a) entirely legal; and (b) extremely successful and impressive. Any demonstration of less than 100 people is a failure by definition. Also, all demonstrations must include fiery public speeches, preferably not by Hitler impersonators. Tweed or some other stylish, quasi-formal uniform is highly recommended. Colored shirts are most definitely out. Ties are good — cravats and bowties are better. Red, yellow, gold or orange are always good colors for male neckwear.

Two is [Gramscian infiltration](#). Everything that can be infiltrated should be infiltrated, of course, but reactionaries should focus especially on the least politicized and least official networks in society — the

workplace, and the new voluntary institutions. (Including, of course, Facebook.)

One simple, fun infiltration game is a subtle dress code, to recognize fellow reactionaries at work or play. For example, if your acquaintance or coworker wears orange, gold, or yellow shirts only on prime-numbered days of the month, he or she is almost certainly a reactionary. These are attractive colors on prime days, but very unattractive on non-prime days. If you note a coworker following this pattern, you may have a comrade in the office. Approach in private and give the password: “Pumpkins.” If the answer is “Carlyle,” the connection is made. You can watch each other’s back in work and play. Teams or groups of reactionaries may exhibit a visually striking, yet plausibly deniable, appearance.

Obviously, as the Plinth and Antiversity gain prominence and legitimacy, these tricks become less necessary. But they are still fun. Frankly, Americans have simply never experienced the excitement of political organization. This is because they have no meaningful politics. The idea that they could organize democratically to seize power is entirely foreign to them, simply because nothing of the sort has been practical for quite some time. It is teh Internets, of course, that have changed the rules.

What is the end of all this? The end is power. Let’s end our discussion by looking at how to seize power. The Plinth, after all this organizing and stuff, is going to have to seize power. D’oh!

There are two ways for an existential party to seize power in a democracy. One is the *direct* way: it can create new institutions of government, to which the people and/or security forces spontaneously redirect their allegiance. This was the method chosen by the Founders in 1787. The Constitutional Convention was authorized by the Congress of the Confederation, but it never returned to that Congress for approval. Rather, it solicited direct approval from the states.

The direct coup is harder and more dangerous. It really is technically illegal. It is essential to ensure the complete and undivided loyalty of the security forces. Nonetheless, once done, it’s done. The obvious rule of power applies: the Plinth never fails. If it would fail, it doesn’t try. If it opts for civil disobedience — ie, nonviolent lawbreaking — it does it once, for the stake of full sovereignty. And when it dares, it wins.

In the direct coup, the body that requests the loyalty of the security forces must represent the public opinion of *responsible society*. It is Sermo for all responsible people. It says, without shame or bashfulness: for responsible government, the responsible must rule. The rights of the irresponsible must be respected, but not their voices. The existing regime is irresponsible because it was selected by irresponsible people acting through irresponsible institutions. It supposedly exists to serve our purposes; it is not serving them. It had [sat long enough](#).

An indirect or self-coup, in which a democratically-elected executive tears up the lawbook and instead executes the Program, is much safer and more straightforward. It requires a real majority, however, which is hard — and can be made arbitrarily harder by the Modern Structure, which is intent on securing itself by importing an arbitrary number of new citizens. This, like many of its other tricks, is quite

familiar to the student of the late Roman Republic.

Finally, it's important to note that either of these paths can be practiced at any political level. The ideal level is the national level — the Program is a national plan. The Antiversity can also develop Programs for states and even cities that wish to secede and become sovereign, however. Any coastal or border state or city should find this relatively straightforward.

One of the things you learn when you read about 19th-century USG is that its 20th-century successor simply does not exhibit the same level of political cohesion. Apathy again. The 19th-century American was an incredibly politicized, democratically engaged, and — not least — macho and violent creature. It is not surprising that in 1861, when a bunch of states tried to secede, the rest broke out in a paroxysm of enthusiasm for a war to save the Union. (It was certainly not a war to free the slaves — not in 1861, anyway.) If you were teleported into that mania, you would speak the language, but you would feel no other cultural connection to the people. You'd feel more or less as if you'd been sent to an insane asylum.

In 2009, or at any later date, what will happen if a state government tries to secede? So long as it has strong internal public support and the support of the state security forces, it will — secede. Nothing at all will happen. The state will simply become an independent country. Washington simply does not have anything like the political energy to coerce a seceding state. It barely has the political energy to coerce a seceding *city*. Americans simply are not going to shoot at other Americans for this reason. If this assertion is true, as I believe it is, state police with shotguns can easily thwart the entire US military in a secession situation. The latter simply won't attack. They will not be ordered to. The hate just isn't there.

The idea that any national force could prevent a state from seceding strikes me as rather like the idea that the US will guarantee Israel against Iran's nuclear weapons, by promising nuclear retaliation against Iran if Iran nukes Tel Aviv. Frankly, I don't think the America of today — the America that prohibits its own soldiers from shooting back at the Taliban, if the Taliban are [shooting from a house](#) — has the stones to nuke Russia if Russia nukes America (not that it will). The proposition that Washington could or would incinerate millions of Iranians, whatever the Iranian government did to Israel, is ridiculous. It is simply reverse [presentism](#) — anachronistic translation of past assumptions to the present. Washington once had an ideology that allowed it to nuke cities for reasons of state, but not now.

Similarly, Washington once had an ideology that allowed it to coerce states, or combinations of states, or even cities, that wanted to be independent. But not now. I would not say the thing is trivial, but any state, or even major coastal city, can almost certainly succeed if it plays its cards right.

In short: the only proposition on which the Reaction depends is the proposition that *history is not over*. Historically, the political problem faced by the Antiversity and Plinth seems relatively solvable. It seems impossible in terms of conventional American politics, but the whole point of the Reaction is a return to historical standards.

By historical standards, there is arguably no meaningful democratic politics in America today. There is *certainly* no meaningful democratic politics in most of Europe. Thus the Plinth is doing what any dissidents in a totalitarian state must: working to restore democracy, in a state whose constitutional belief is that it already *is* a democracy. The Plinth differs only in that it does not believe pure democracy is a valid description of any stable sovereign decision structure — and therefore proposes its own structure, which is designed to be stable, responsible, and effective, but emphatically not democratic. In short, the Plinth is just like an anti-Communist dissident organization, such as Solidarity, except that it sees democracy as a means, not an end. To reach that end, it may be necessary to restore democracy. It cannot be necessary to *retain* democracy.

The fundamental question is: *can it be done?* Most, I'm sure, would say no. Most might well be right. For another answer to the question, however, I leave you with [Hilaire Belloc](#):

There is a triumph of influence which all of us have known and against which many of us have struggled. It is certainly not a force which one can resist, still less is it effected by (though it often accompanies) the success of armies.

It is the pressure and at last the conquest of ideas when they have this three-fold power: first, that they are novel and attack those parts of the mind still sensitive; secondly, that they are expounded with conviction (conviction necessary to the conveyance of doctrine); and, thirdly, that they form a system and are final.

Obviously, this profile fits UR to a T. In particular, observe the importance of *focus*. The tea parties, as a right-wing imitation of a left-wing phenomenon, are completely without focus; they are diffuse and distributed, as any leftist movement must be if it wishes to remain leftist. Therefore, they are weak despite their large numbers — they cannot *think* or *act* collectively. They will certainly never out-left the Left!

The essence of Right is effective *structural* and *intellectual* coordination. Operating a right-wing movement by left-wing techniques is an excellent way to fail. The Left spontaneously coordinates itself; the Right must be coordinated by actual *leadership*. In the Reaction, structural and intellectual leadership are supplied by the Plinth and the Antiversity, respectively. In the National Socialist German Workers' Party, they were supplied by Hitler and Goebbels, respectively. Hopefully the difference will be easy to observe.

Actually, Belloc (who was a bit of a Nazi himself) is not writing about the Nazis. He is writing (in 1906) about [7th-century Islam](#). With a century more hindsight, I'd actually venture to disagree with him on one point: I think armies are pretty effective in effecting the conquest of ideas. Nonetheless, his analysis is excellent and not at all restricted to the soldiers of Allah.

History buffs will note that contemporary commenters on the rise of National Socialism also often

compared Hitler to Mohammed and Nazism to Islam. They were liberals, of course, not neocons, and they meant real 7th-century Islam, not its modern imitation. (Our “Islamism” is just another strain of Third World nationalism, a bug that has been kicking around the planet for at least a century. It is best seen as an opportunistic infection of democracy.)

Therefore, my own designs are inspired by the experience of Hitler, Muhammad, and Jesus. As well as Octavian, Franco, and William I. Also important to my thinking are Frederick the Great, Mussolini, and Napoleon. And we can’t forget a few American luminaries, such as Ben Hill, J. Edgar Hoover, and Harry Hopkins. History is largely the study of political force, which is an extension of military force. Generals must study generalship by studying battles — any battles, all battles, without regard to the character or merits of the participants. Those who aim to design any system of political force must likewise learn from any and all parties, leaders and movements of the past, American or foreign, vicious or virtuous.

(And specifically, if the question is whether patriotic Americans are allowed to learn from the Nazis, I think that question was more or less answered when NASA shipped the German ICBM program to Alabama. When [SS-Sturmbannführer von Braun’s](#) spaceship landed on the moon, did patriotic Americans applaud? Or did they shout: “Boo! Hiss! Nazis!” Apollo 11, of course, was not made in underground caves by starving slave laborers. Therefore, it seems that one can copy the things the Nazis did right, and discard the things they did wrong. One can fail in this; one can fail in anything.)

Above all, then, the Reaction depends on one question. Will good people undertake it? No — will *great* people undertake it? If so, it will happen, and I think succeed. The most important thing about this entire project: at every step, in every thing it does, it must attract *the best*, it must repel, defeat or confine *the worst*, and it must be entirely and in the deepest sense of the word *fun*. If it is not possible to achieve these qualities, it is probably impossible to implement the Reaction. And of course, it may be impossible anyway. The required effort and achievement may just exceed human powers — even with the full power of teh Internets.

If so, there is no reason to despair. History has been a lot worse. It *is* getting worse; but not, by historical standards, that fast. (Unless you have the misfortune to live in South Africa.) And even if barbarism *does* steepen its pace, the [consolations of Boethius](#) remain available.

Better Boethius than [Claudian](#), I say. Better truth in a cage than lies in purple. Truth will not remain in a cage, nor lies in purple. Not gently does this inversion revert. The force is not ours; the force is Clio’s. Heck — God’s. But

[*“Nay, by God, Donald, we must help him to mend it!”*](#)

Mencius Moldbug

San Francisco; November 2009