

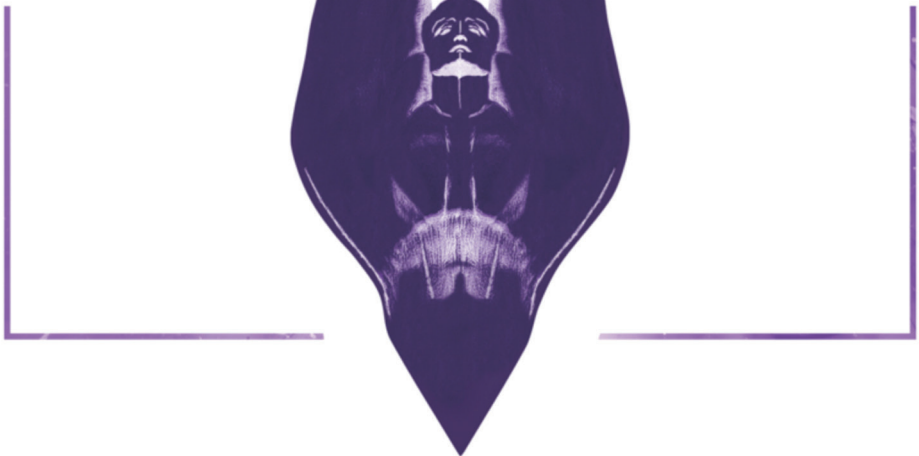


# THE ASYLUM



VOLUME I

ISSUE III



# THE ASYLUM

*VOLUME I ISSUE III*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank all those contributors who make this magazine possible.

*The Asylum III* welcomes writing by Anax, Paulos of Mythic Pilot (@myth\_pilot), Nostromo (@elcostaguanero), FischerKing (@FischerKing64), Apex (@apex\_simmmaps), Curtis Yarvin, Masaki (@MasakiJinzaburo), and Edward Luttwak (@ELuttwak). We are furthermore very grateful for the original art by Harald (@hmrkrm), Don Jelly (@DonLeadJelly), Runeseeker Visuals (@runeseeker\_arts), Mike Boreas (mike\_boreas), M.V (@mdvnsn), and Matthew the Stoat (@MatthewTheStoat). Please support their work by subscribing to their platforms, sharing their output, and when possible, buying their content. The cover of this was designed by the incredibly talented Mirumni (@mirumni), whose hatred of the internet trashworld has inspired his visual vendetta. Praise him!

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Political energy that has the power to move men will inspire different and even contrasting visions. Indeed, movements that become part of our shared narrative and reject the ahistorical default are first spiritual movements that speak to the nature of man himself, indifferent to the parochialism of human life as an “arrangement in society” and other such trivialities.

Those concerns are for the small-souled men, who think of life entirely in a priori language, and to whom nature has already turned away, showing her cold back. But repudiation is not immediately followed by extinction. That takes time. First, the life-wasters must add droplets of fiction into their own stream of meaningless existence, universalizing their own weakness, so that the banks of the river grow larger and larger, until the whole world is enveloped by an ocean of nothingness. This is what we fight.

But though our combative instincts are strong, our ideas cannot be judged like that Spartan child, scrutinized for defects and deformities, which once discovered are fatal. The energy here is still gestating, immature, waiting for the right time for parturition, when a real movement can be born. Therefore, mistakes and misdirections should be ruthlessly called-out – to avoid a miscarriage. At the same time, a certain charity should be shown to those writers who have risked putting their thoughts in print. We are no doubt a tough audience, but there is an even greater reason.

The sacred text for our times does not yet exist, and perhaps nothing like an etched tablet will be brought down from the mountains. At the very least, we cannot wait for it. And the man who rejects the best alternative, because it does not fit within his own circumscribed theory, will find himself tossing away precious ore for contaminating impurities. Such a man builds his own puzzle out of the universe, and then believes himself to be, alone, the holder of the secret key. On the rarest occasion this man is a prophet, but typically, he is a brain-fried panhandler or a self-important academic – lecherously dependent on some other soul to recognize his worth.

The writers here, conversely, do not – and *should* not – obsess over what the nebulous crowd thinks. They are very much men on their own, brought together but for a brief moment to share their ideas, before they soon grow tired of company and leave without valediction. *The Asylum*, by this analogy, is like a crucible in which smelting occurs. You will like some contributions more than others. We let you decide what is gold and what is disposable gangue. The only entry requirement is exceptional talent, and a desire to break through the global hovel of homogeneity. *The Asylum* is happy to host disputation and difference, but never does it permit mediocrity.

In this issue, we begin with three essays on vitalism. Energetically written, while reading these pieces you will *feel* the boiling aqueous humor being pumped

from the heart into the eyes and fists. Anax first announces the rebirth of physiology. Evidently inspired by Marinetti, he figuratively calls upon us to demolish the museums and libraries of the medical schools – not for the sake of leaving us in ignorance, but rather to destroy the prejudice of the button-eyed white-coats, who have corrupted our understanding of human anatomy and reduced the body to a mere mechanical device of illness and disease. Then, Paulos gives a fiery exhortation on art, and the necessity of aesthetic discrimination for the revival of its practice. His passion is so immense that you could read this piece before heavy deadlifts and still want to punch drywall. This *is* the art manifesto for the faction of truth. It is an essay that gives breath to the athletic statues, sculpted in Carrara marble, which encircle the *Stadio dei Marmi*, the location where BAP has promised to reveal himself once he is ready. Nostromo, concluding the section, presents the archetype of the mathematician, who among the other ancient spirits has also gone silent. He demonstrates the obsessive genius, the clear-headed intransigence – indeed the piercing blade of perspective – that makes up the mind of those who devote their life to pure abstraction.

We next have two biographical essays. FischerKing writes on a subject he knows exceptionally well: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe – the great German literary hero, whom Nietzsche revered as a free-spirit, because he “did not sever himself from life, he placed himself within it.” Goethe was indeed a master of valuation, and though he was no galaxy-brained Man of Reason, he could also temper his own passion when moderation was an advantage. FischerKing raises the importance of self-restraint, especially with young frogs, who daydream of *shahid*-ing themselves uselessly. Apex then writes *The Asylum*’s very first art history piece, on Francisco Goya. Goya is a painter who cannot be judged by simple critique. His art is beyond both politics and morality by showing the viewer the hidden depths of the human and natural world.

At last, we have three forefathers of the faction of truth: Curtis Yarvin (Mencius Moldbug), Yukio Mishima, and Edward Luttwak. Moldbug continues his mission in creating an instruction manual for monarchy, and with us, he writes about how our democratic structures could be hijacked to end the American oligarchy and bring forth a single ruler. No doubt, in Yarvin’s formulation, this autocrat would be, not the leader of the warband, but King of the Spergs. Masaki then provides an original translation of an excerpt from the essay “On the Defense of Culture,” in which Mishima first gives his technical definition of culture, before urging the reintroduction of the sword for its survival. Finally, I interview Edward Luttwak. He entreats us to return to the original formula of the Greeks, for whom war was the test of all things, and the womb of all European creation.

I would like to thank all of *The Asylum*’s contributors, both writers and artists, who freely give their work to this publication. I would also like to give special thanks to Mirumni, who designed the extraordinary cover of this issue.

Welcome back mein frogs!

Giles Hoffmann



**Runeseeker**  
*Torso I (2022)*  
Charcoal on Paper



# A BODY WHICH KILLS

## ANAX

In 1628, William Harvey published *De Motu Cordis* detailing a new conception of the circulatory system. In contrast to the dominant Galenic conception, Harvey sketched an image of the heart as a mechanical pump that recirculated blood throughout the body in a manner akin to the water in a (then recently invented) steam engine. Harvey's model is adhered to this day, with more and more accretions as cope for the fact that it's wrong. And while Harvey's research obviously impacted what would eventually become cardiology, it also became the initiator of "scientific medicine" as we know it: analytical and mechanistic, based on the pointless mutilation of animals, with a side of specious "calculations." Scientific medicine is worth understanding because its implicit assertions about what humans *are* – what *we are* – have become the touchstone of our deformed society and the credo of the cretins who would rule us.

Harvey's model was by no means an immediate success, in part because it makes no sense. A contemporary critic pointed out that, in order for the heart to pump the volume of blood necessary, the heart would have to be roughly the size of a whale's in lieu of the fist-sized organ found in an ordinary human. Details, surely. Harvey's mechanistic paradigm somehow carried the day, and in a pattern familiar to those of us with the internet, a campaign of confirmation bias

seems to reinforce his model. Scientific "discoveries" that support such a view are loudly heralded while experiments and common-sense observation of wound healing in the organism are considered somehow anecdotal. Genetics, "information" are lauded. According to Harvey and his children, a person is reducible to their body and their body is just a poorly designed meat machine. Disease, aging, death. These are all merely examples of "wear and tear" or shoddy manufacture.

Error has consequences. For once you have accepted the premise that your body is a machine, then the natural question is: Who will maintain it? Given that we are told that this is an extraordinarily complex and delicate machine, we must entrust care to the experts. Preferably highly credentialed, medical experts.

Look around you and you can see what the care of these experts looks like. "Tyranny" is too noble a word, minted as it was under the Aegean sky. "Hell" is more apt. Even before the large-scale retardation of COVID, large segments of the population's entire existence depended on one pharmaceutical product or another; whether that means SSRI, Viagra, HRT or birth control pills, it is largely a matter of degree. If you could escape from this hell, you must escape from scientific medicine.

"Yes", you may reply, "but science tells us how things *are* and is it not nobler to live facing reality than

in a premodern dreamland. With this new clarity, certainly we can ascend to heights previously undreamt of!" Well, let's review the reality, shall we?

It is important, first of all, to understand that neither anatomy nor physiology exist as such. They were both developed for therapeutic ends, which is to say, they were developed as a means to health, perhaps the least counterfeit-able end. So the question should not be "Is this physiology true?" but rather "Does this paradigm lead to health?" I think it's patently obvious that it has not. I won't insult you with charts or statistics, it suffices to look out the window and see the shambling wrecks that populate the industrialized world. Look at your own experiences and ask yourself whether it is healthy or desirable for young children to be experiencing chronic diseases historically reserved for the elderly. Then ask yourself if there is not at least a correlation between the ascendancy of a certain elite holding a certain conception of physiology and the complete devastation of such in our society in a single generation.

The good news, however, is that this is a solved problem. It is evolutionarily impossible that health relies on any of the bullshit invented in the last century since our forefathers could not have reproduced if they all had IBS and only relied on Pfizer to keep their pants clean. The answer must be in a return to traditional, pre-mechanistic conceptions of health and physiology.

Traditional views of life in general and human physiology in particular were what might now be termed "vitalist." It is important to recall that this term is anachronistic - being the common sense of all previous epochs, it needed no "-ism" to justify itself in the

marketplace of ideas. Vitalism's main contention is simply that the phenomenon of life (which even the midwit must concede exists) is not reducible to components available to sense observation; i.e mechanistic explanation. In its modesty, vitalism almost cannot help being correct, unlike mechanism, which according to its postulates none of us should be alive. From vitalism, it follows that no part of your body is "more you" than another part. Contrast for example, the various "vital centers" or chakras of traditional physiologies with the mechanist's obsession with an increasingly magical and inscrutable "brain", and organ which was inconsequential to the Chinese and which Aristotle thought was a kind of radiator for the blood. And since vitalism doesn't need to posit a ghost in the machine as the mechanists do, there is also no logical priority given to mind or body. Body and mind cause one another or maybe they both emanate from another (etheric? astral?) plane, one needn't decide. The most important thing about vitalism, though, is the implication that life is not one fact among many, life is the fundamental empirical fact. All matter, time, beauty, "politics" must justify themselves to *life* and not vice-versa.

While there are divergences between the major systems of traditional, vitalist physiologies, they are mostly in detail and terminology. The Galenic, Ayurvedic, Chinese, Unani (the Islamic heir to the Hellenic tradition), Tibetan and European folk medicines agree in their major points: the human body is a system for transforming environmental energy into growth or, in the case of damage, healing. Unlike the modern medical science, traditional medicines regard healing not as an aberration, but

as the primary function of the organism. If an organism fails to heal (or is chronically ill), then the cause or limiting factor must be sought and eliminated. Contrast this with mechanistic explanations wherein chronic disease is assumed to have an intrinsic (genetic) cause and the treatment is extrinsic; preferably a pharmaceutical product invented 3 weeks ago.

The most common traditional anatomy considers the body consists of a number of organs (usually 5, no brain required) connected with each other and the outside world by a series of tubes or channels. These tubes are concerned primarily with digesting food and air, assimilating what is useful from these and eliminating the remains. Energy thus extracted is used for growth, healing or reproduction, which on closer examination are the same thing. Health is defined as optimal functioning of these and, far from being an exceptional state brought about through the use of drugs and exotic exercise modalities, it is the default state of the organism. Healthcare consists of ingesting easily digested food, walking outside, sleeping adequately and reducing your responsibilities to a minimum, even to the point of being a flake. Tell everyone to fuck off, it's good for your health. Also, please understand that the foregoing applies to "mental health" as well: there is only one set of tubes. Most "emotions" are echoes of digestive problems. The occasional chimp out at an "independent" bookstore is a powerful purgative to fight emotional indigestion.

We can immediately see the appeal of the vitalist conception of physiology over the dominant mechanistic paradigm. While brainiacs from San Francisco will try to sell you on "AI" powered "precision medicine", per-

haps involving mining cryptocurrency using cancer cells. This promises to be the unique Californian combination of gay, highly expensive, and, given that the treatments will be administered by someone wearing Rick and Morty scrubs, prone to disastrous side effects. Of course the self-fulfilling prophecy of a life spent in the medical maze being "treated" for iatrogenic injury is not a bug it is a feature. On the other hand, the "low fidelity" medicine of tradition is cheap (basically) free, without side effects and systemic, which is to say, you needn't know exactly what is broken, you just need to support the body in fixing itself.

Many answers can be heard in response to the question of how to free ourselves from the spiritual prison within which we find ourselves. There are those in favor of the resurrection of old political forms. There are those who claim that answers are to be sought in the realm of the religious. Neither will suffice, however: only a return to a vitalist physiology holds any hope. The "political" issues of our time are openly biopolitical, concerned not with taxes and roads but with the militant enforcement of the mechanistic view of life whereby the "citizen" is treated as a particularly litigious hunk of meat. No major religion in the West has sought to intervene in this state of affairs. Whether this is through malice or cowardice is unimportant: anyone looking for help from those quarters is mistaken. The reason that neither "civil society" nor religion can stand against this tide is because there is no commonly held idea of what a human being *is* from a physiological perspective; only a common front on this issue can provide a toehold for escape.

The important thing to realize is that this regime of bioterror under

which we now live did not begin with COVID, but with the mass forgetting of the vitalist conception of humanity. The overturning of this regime does not need new technologies, new theories or new political blog posts. All that is necessary is for each of us that would be free should *remember*. Once you remember that you are not merely a reanimated corpse allowed to live through the beneficence of capitalism, but are a creature of living light. The threats of the regime will cease to have meaning. Once you see that health is free, you can be healthy. Being healthy, you will be beautiful. Being beautiful you will be content. And knowing contentment you will be able to birth a new regime founded not on “ideas,” but as an expression of the surfeit of energy inherent in life itself.

Avanti Arditì! 



**Runeseeker**  
*Lakeside Path* (2021)  
Oil on Watercolour Paper



## THOUGHTS FOR A VITALIST ART MOVEMENT PAULOS OF MYTH PILOT

Some years ago there was a mainstream podcast, NPR or something likewise where journalists speak with low fluted voices, where they sought to understand the male experience by interviewing people who, in one way or another, had experiences with testosterone.

Interviews included a mother watching her teenage son grow to manhood, a woman undergoing a transition who supplemented with massive doses of T, and most interestingly, a man whose body had completely ceased to produce testosterone.

This unfortunate man, a magazine writer, was afflicted by not only a complete collapse in desire, but also lost the ability to form any kind of interest whatsoever. He describes arriving home and staring at the wall for hours at a time, eating bland food with no complaint, and most interestingly, observing the world completely without judgement, where all phenomena; weeds in the sidewalk, bits of trash, the bolts in the hubcaps of cars: all of these would present themselves to him with perfect equality. He observed them, noted them, and found them all beautiful. For him, cut off from the body's appetitive function, everything was exactly the same.

We reject this attitude unconditionally. The aesthetics of the floating plastic bag, with its faux profundity, leads inevitably to the trash world in which we find ourselves now. To re-

nounce desire, to renounce the capability to differentiate, is to begin the long descent into total and final monotony, a boredom that is all the more intolerable because it is the aesthetic of slaves conditioned to subsist on gruel without complaint. To accept this would be worse than death.

Rather, we demand. We demand all the gifts of life untrammelled, life overflowing. We demand continuity with life primordial, life in struggle, and life triumphant from age and age to come. It is no accident that the vital impulse for desire and aesthetic judgement begins in the loins. It is through the loins that life asserts its claims, propels itself forward and escapes death. It is through the aesthetic impulse born in the loins that life reaches beyond itself to eternity.

We do not demand this of anyone but ourselves. We make no recourse to rights, we do not need them. For us, Art has rights, God has rights. Man has nothing but obligations which we take up gladly. Therefore what is required is a new aesthetic of the body, and a community of judgement to cultivate it.

We will develop and refine our taste. First comes the wide sowing, where artists are encouraged to journey to the very boundaries of the known world, where visions are to be found, and returning, to promulgate them. For we know the gods grant visions pri-



**Harald**  
*Sentry* (2022)  
Oil on Canvas  
16x20

marily to the mad, those seekers who are driven to strange extents. For them, satisfaction can only be found over the horizon, in wild realms. The work for most of us here will be to receive these seers; a vision is a gift from the gods, and doubly so when shared. We are to encourage them by hearing and sharing and giving kind words and patronage. It is an honor to host an artist.

Then, we will refine. Awakened to new moods, new expressions, subtle new ways of seeing, but perhaps incompletely expressed, we will draw out the most excellent and most focused satisfactions of these awakened longings we were previously unaware of. We will say that we “must live a certain way,” framed in the form of a demand: “we MUST live a certain way, or not at all.” In this we can be guided by Federico III, the great condottiere and patron of Urbino, who we can imagine putting aside his sword and spurs, hot from another victory, to wake Raphael in the dead of night with another demand. “Raphael,” he shakes the young artist awake. “You have painted me the Graces, and St. Michael, and St. Sebastian, you must now paint me a Madonna.” The warlord has thought of nothing else for weeks. Days in the saddle and the danger of the battlefield mean nothing to him; he has been seized with a terrible longing that only art can answer. He practically forces pencil and parchment into the young master’s hands and while Raphael sketches they discuss until dawn; the posture of the Virgin’s hands, the shape of her face, the particular tilt of her head. This is the aesthetic of desire! It obsesses, it demands, it creates!

Likewise, we will form a community of demand and judgment. We will refine and draw out our best work with

discussion and critique. In a world of universal mediocrity, our creative tyranny of taste will make fortresses, glittering complexes of aesthetics which, like the Impressionists, will begin with small cadres of wanderers whose association is all the more powerful through their isolation but will later explode upon the world. The Hollywood Ten were communist film-makers whose work was so good it eventually superseded any systems of censorship designed by Congress to curtail them. Their secret, as Curtis Yarvin says, is that they were good film-makers first, and communists second. Which is to say they were ruthless with each other, and competitive, but also bound together as comrades. They refused to accept bad work, and just as importantly, they refused to disengage from their self-imposed community of judgement. They had thick skins. Critique was smoothed by bounds of friendship, and to leave in a huff over criticism would constitute betrayal. It is absolutely necessary that we should form a similar kind of community expressed in all of the forms of a mature movement: publishing houses, salons, concerts, gallery showings, mechanisms of intercourse such as columns and magazines, theaters, and eventually film-studios and houses of patronage, the heart of which is cultivation and refinement. In this I must note that the work is already well begun and there are many projects underway already but much more is needed. This is a project for lifetimes.

Finally, if we are truly successful in our project, it will be for us to displace and decide. The art and literary world today has all the boredom of death and all the torments of hell. Imagine flat design forever, or Banksy forever, or the inter-

sectional warfare of YA literature forever, or multi-million-dollar auction collector grift forever, or glass architectural cubes in every city forever, or bottomless pits of branching fandom porn collections, each more obscure and disgusting than the last, expanding forever. Each of these dead little worlds offers only sameness; only reconfigurations of the same types, exhaustively consumed, are to be found here, and every moment they continue our losses compound, for their proliferation erases rich layers of meaning built up over centuries. We have lost modes of seeing that we cannot even recognize. Truman Capote's dust jacket photo for 'Other Voices, Other Rooms,' where he, reclining, directly confronts the camera with lowered gaze, was seen by the public as shockingly provocative but today would pass completely without notice. Madame Pierre Gautreau was laughed out of Paris not because John Singer Sargent's portrait of her was immodest, as many suppose, but because her profile was seen as unbearably cartoonish. Now these opinions have receded into a wash of undemanding tolerance which is so accepting of difference that it is incapable of even seeing them. All that is left is a boundless, self-referential morass of mediocrity that must be destroyed at all costs.

However, this abyssal edifice can be toppled with the merest breath of a mature and self-assured successor. You understand this already: all interest and energy and ferment in the world of ideas now lies only within our sphere. Some years ago there was a novel written by a mainstream novelist called Kunzru, the type to be lauded by Slate.com, intended as satire. It treated with a young man who falls into the sway of a thinly-veiled BAP analogue called Anton and is en-

tirely unremarkable except for this fact. Their brightest works are mere reflections of the energy of our sphere, like the moon is a pale reflection of the sun. They are tired, and descending. We initiate; all that is left for them is to wait in fear to be replaced.

When a viable alternative finally presents itself, the old will give way to the new like winter yields to spring. Only new life can overcome death, only individuation can destroy uniformity. Only great vision can stand outside the world and move it. All things are our concern, only we can offer them. Only in massive, structural individuation, and projects continued over lifetimes, can beautiful tastes develop and proliferate. As BAP says, only the aesthetic answers to these highly specific desires, which have been developed by individuals and people who are allowed to go their own way, are capable of defeating the grey sameness that blankets the entire world; and the entire world will gratefully yield to these visions when they finally manifest, because art is mimesis, art is desire. Insincere and limp opinions must give way to the discriminating, strongly felt, and strongly developed, because we must inevitably want what others want precisely because they want it more than we do. You see that Art gives her crown then, which is the power of judgement, to those who pursue her with most intensity and fervor. Therefore having detailed the outlines of the process, I will describe the contours of longing that we will attempt to explore.

We want the aesthetic of vital men and vital women, the exploration of their mastery over and enrichment of the universe, their alliance charged with creative eros. We want the depiction of human acts of infinite depth and weight;



our art should make public acts of worship, wrested from this dead world, where one sees once again the flaring of sacred flames, devotions designed for one thousand years, and beyond. We want the aesthetic of the war-band, stacked rows of muscle, insane drip, mythic weapons, the details of their friendships and triumphs and grave individual powers described. The individual as such for us presents no interest, unless it is the story of how the individual differentiates himself and builds a community around his great desires. In this way, our wish is to explore the full terrain of human association and the expansion of human capability embedded in context of human groups who are allowed to develop along unique and wonderful paths according to their desires.

I will explain with an image. Denis Villeneuve's *Dune* has been hailed by even mainstream critics as something "like stumbling across some fabulous lost tribe, or a breakaway branch of America's founding fathers who laid out the template for a different and better New World." High praise indeed. I was struck immediately by this film's monumental architecture and massive ships, juxtaposed with formations of human multitudes headed by great families. Beside these massive mechanical and architectural forms, the individual men and women of the Atreides house are un-diminished; the scale of technological forms is balanced by complexes of human organization, history, and power embodied by each individual. To meet one of these figures would be to encounter a structure of power in the same way that an ambassador carries the weight of a nation behind his handshake. Through their relation with each other these indi-

viduals are magnified, and in their dress and speech and physical form they carry an unmistakable context which is all the more significant because it has been allowed to differentiate over thousands of years according to their tastes and way of life. Therefore our aesthetic should likewise be profoundly human, an exploration of the vital man and woman in context with the past, with the future, and with each other; the aesthetic of the group in its process of growth and ascent, in which the individual is differentiated and ennobled through his or her relations with each other.

To continue the idea of expansion, our aesthetic must be the saga of mastery. Before us lies a great opportunity: in the wasteland of meaning, every small act of construction has the potential to become the seed of an understanding that can grow to cover the earth. In our present age, all universal complexes of meaning have been destroyed; to speak of universals is folly, but specific and local communities of meaning are entirely within reach just as they were when human clans, alone in the wilderness of Mesolithic Europe, first scratched images on the walls of caves and brought their inner worlds to life. Meaning is recovered when we are embedded in proper relation to eternity, to nature, and to each other. Therefore our project is one of formation and expansion: firstly the construction of meaning, the cultivation of community, and subsequently its growth and extension. We make concrete claims on the world, we bring up children, we call new people to our banner, we seek ownership over space. Ours is not simply a movement of the mind: we are engaged in a great crusade to re-enchant the world. We do not retreat from the universe, but seek

dominion over it through full and centuries-long expression of our earthy human bodily desires, which unite us with Nature, and our transcendent ability to regard and seek eternity, which is divine.

All of our art must therefore have its feet in the earth and its head among the stars. Our imagination is mythic, encompassing the largest scale possible, and our ambitions have no limit, but our beginning position is the body and the reality of our circumstance as mortal beings. We reach for eternity, but know that we will die. Indeed it is the knowledge of our mortality that spurs us to build for eternity; we look squarely towards our fate. We live, and burn brightly, so that when we die we might meet death as an equal and an old friend, with neither awe nor fear.


With our acceptance of mortality comes also our love for human limits. To eat, to drink, to stumble, to grow old, to be born in circumstances beyond our choosing, to be dependent on others in many ways, to be irrational: these are all things which we embrace even while we overcome them. If man were to develop such that he was no longer subject to these debilities, or had all his needs met through artifice, we would find this intolerable. Rather, we seek the aesthetic of the banquet: a joyful relief from human frailty that does not abolish it, but in relieving our weakness, enriches us. It is at the exact balance where life loves Nature AND contends with it that life finds its peak. We look into the cold winds of human fate and we do not seek to change our nature or even shelter ourselves. The mountaineer in ascent grows hot from exertion and so finds the bitter winds a cooling breeze. Likewise, we ask not for relief, but greater development along narrow paths that carry us deeper

into our humanity.

For us, with our great tasks, merely pretty pictures are not sufficient. Every image must have some edge of intent which connects it with our aesthetic and body of meaning, some element of challenge that communicates its affiliation. Simply, our art must MOG. This is critical, this is the difference between art and kitsch. Art does not merely comfort, but steps into the field of contention and makes its claim. Imagine the image of some beautiful family, a very typical family portrait, a man and beautiful woman with children arrayed around her, but now unsmiling and surrounded by elements of power: guns, soldiers, dogs, gold. They are serene but not inoffensive. Maybe they are white. They do not care for your approval. You understand why this basic composition, so common in history, could be something radical today. Also insufficient for us is nostalgia: we will retrieve and re-incorporate many historic forms, but we do not sip cappuccinos in crumbling ruins lamenting the passage of time. Our greatest works lie ahead. We acknowledge that our early and current efforts in retrospect will seem like the art of Carolingian courts: crude compared to what is to follow, but brave because at the outset we struggle against unimaginable odds. Nonetheless we proceed, knowing that we set in motion a long-traveling wave that will supersede any that has come before.

THEREFORE our art should inflame, provoke, inspire, menace, seduce, and enchant. We construct caravels of desire and send them over the horizon; we sail for new worlds. We were never meant to stay at home. We demand great sacrifices, great adventures, and GREAT LOVE STORIES. We demand

exuberant waste which is always an act of devotion. For us the whole range of human experience, with its heights and terrible depths, is our octave. We will work with the raw elements of myth, forms so fundamental and weighty that that the earth will groan under their reconfiguration. Every previous cultural product, such that it is sucked dry of meaning, will make our materials. The whole world is our canvas, for we make not only paintings and plays or novels and film but cities and personages, new human types, new forms of government, new ways of being, new multitudes. We announce a new futurist vision built not on machines but on blood. Our physicality is precisely the decisive point of the age, and we go directly to this battleground with joyful hearts. Men and women and their glorious bodies, the stirrings of feeling which emanate from their eyes, their wonderful hands which shape the world, their strong legs which carry them to new worlds, their breath that is the voice of movement among them, and their loins which are the fount of new peoples: these are the elements of our great work. We dare to make sex CONSEQUENTIAL once again, the weighty coupling that unites kingdoms and founds empires. Not one more empty act, ever again! We declare war on love itself. Yes we destroy modern love in favor of a love that burns forever, that has no limits whatsoever. Rather, we demand ripples of feeling, gathering associations, quickened along well-laid channels which collide up in creative eruptions, each greater and more concrete than the last, great dynasties of sages, warriors, artists, mystics, explorers, heroes, kings and queens, all straining for eternity. The consequence of these collisions will reverberate for

centuries. Nothing less could satisfy; no smaller wants could ever heal our wounds. In our wake we leave artworks, monuments, altars, entire cities built in commemoration of a prayer once whispered in the ear of a lover. The whole cosmos, every hill and valley, every forest and sea, every river and plain, every world and star entirely re-enchanted, brought under noble dominion, and imbued with new meaning. This is right and just. The volumes of this great conquest, the work of artists accreted over centuries, will become the mythic habitation of future civilizations. We claim all this, and we do all this, and we begin now because it is our curse, our birthright, our duty, and our destiny. Glory be to God, Glory be to GOD, GLORY BE TO GOD. 



M.V  
*Bull* (2021)  
Charcoal on Paper





**Matthew the Stoat**

*Study from Charles Sargeant Jagger's Royal Artillery Memorial (2022)*

Compressed Charcoal, and Chalk

## A REQUIEM FOR AN ATAVISM NOSTROMO

In Céline, Jünger, and Mishima — the doctor, the soldier, the samurai — the green-gloved man identifies three spirits of antiquity reborn in modernity. Where else did the classical man reappear? In this essay I identify another atavism: the mathematician. Like other ancient types, mathematicians are extinct — the last alive is Grigori Perelman, whose exploits will likely not be matched for centuries. Nevertheless, when studying a few mathematicians from the twilight of the West, we can recognize in their deeds and philosophy the rebirth of a savage spirit, and we can begin to grasp how antiquity, Nietzsche’s ancient fire, might reappear.

The true mathematician is an addict, a tyrannical “monster of will” who is cursed with a glimpse of pure power and beauty early in life, and who thereafter is compelled to spend the rest of his days seeking to recapture that infinitely brief moment of pure revelation — of pure valor — as a tortured and compulsive athlete. Schopenhauer justifies his mighty pessimism by comparing the joy of an animal devouring its prey with the suffering of the animal being eaten. The mathematician is the animal who experiences once or twice the infinitesimal and infinite pleasure of feasting — and who thereafter is burdened with the knowledge that *he* is the one being eaten, that all of his vain labor will hereafter amount to nothing more than

food for a more rapacious successor. Like the Renaissance artist or German philosopher, the mathematician of the twilight of the West, “despite” being sensitive and spiritual, possessed a warlike intensity that is scarcely comprehensible today.

As a younger man I was drawn to mathematics for its purity and austerity; from a distance it seemed like a refuge of objectivity, without politics, hand-waving, and academic grift. Indeed, math does provide this for a little while, for those whose minds are ready to receive it — I can’t forget the night I came across a grainy PDF of G.H. Hardy’s *A Mathematician’s Apology*, huddled over the screen, reading it in one sitting. In this 1940 treatise, beneath a mask of acerbic schoolboy wit, I began to discern an unfamiliar, older spirit, uncanny and severe. In subject and composition, it’s a distinctly *English* essay, the musings of an unmarried Cambridge don looking back on a distinguished career — but it’s entirely devoid of English sentimentality or port-soaked romanticizing. Instead, the ruse of disinterested scientific objectivity serves as a vehicle for the presentation of a Spartan philosophy of life, animated by a fierce love of purity, and the motto: *Wir müssen wissen, wir werden wissen* (*We must know, we shall know*).

*Statesmen despise publicists, painters despise art-critics, and physiologists, physi-*

cists, or mathematicians have usually similar feelings: there is no scorn more profound, or on the whole more justifiable, than that of the men who make for the men who explain. Exposition, criticism, appreciation, is work for second-rate minds...

If then I find myself writing, not mathematics, but 'about' mathematics, it is a confession of weakness, for which I may rightly be scorned or pitied by younger and more vigorous mathematicians. I write about mathematics because, like any other mathematician who has passed sixty, I have no longer the freshness of mind, the energy, or the patience to carry on effectively with my proper job.

This indicates self-knowledge of the highest order; a rare quality because it is painful; painful because it indicates (perhaps even an ascetic or erotic delight in) cruelty turned inward. Hardy throughout his life despised mirrors; he would instantly cover them upon entering a room. But what are the origins of his drives? Hardy soon offers an answer:

*I shall assume that I am writing for readers who are full, or have in the past been full, of a proper spirit of ambition. A man's first duty, a young man's at any rate, is to be ambitious.*

If we replace "mathematics" with "philosophy," and "ambition" with "will to power," Hardy's view might look something like this —

*But this is an ancient, eternal story: what formerly happened with the Stoics still happens today, too, as soon as any philosophy begins to believe in itself. It always creates the world in its own image; it cannot do otherwise. Philosophy is this tyrannical drive*

*itself, the most spiritual will to power, to the "creation of the world," to the causa prima.*

After 1889, there have been no philosophers and no new philosophy. But it has been mere decades, not centuries, since the creation of new mathematics of any significance, and of all the premodern human types that reappeared in modern disguises in the late West, the mathematician died last. A mathematician's psychology is interesting, but the real fruit of math lies in its practice, which sharpens the mind as lifting shapes the body. The cultivation of the *psyche*, the soul, must, following Nietzsche, begin with our physiology — and the physiological effects of mathematics can only be appreciated when the discipline is understood as the inborn pursuit of power and beauty in their most distilled and therefore most elusive form. Knowledge is recollection, and mathematics, alongside physical training and classical languages, provides a path *back into nature* for minds that have forgotten the primal aesthetic sense for beauty, a sense that is at heart anything but disinterested.

Hardy continues his *Apolo-gy* like Socrates, feigning innocence and a dispassionate approach. He draws a rigid distinction between "real" or "pure" mathematics and applied math, and asserts that pure math is both unfathomably more beautiful and also more useless than applied mathematics; pure math cannot be immediately used for war, and for this reason Hardy claims to be harmless. He also makes repeated reference to his friend Bertrand Russell, an ardent pacifist who focused on logic, and who gave us the finest description of mathematics: "Mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth but

supreme beauty — a beauty cold and austere, like that of sculpture, without appeal to any part of our weaker nature, without the gorgeous trappings of painting or music, yet sublimely pure, and capable of a stern perfection such as only the greatest art can show.” The mathematician devotes his life to this notion of beauty, a slave to his *inborn aesthetic sense*. I hope you can understand why I was drawn to it as a refuge of abstraction, objectivity and purity, and why I failed to perceive the inner meaning of Hardy’s essay. Hardy, like all true mathematicians, boasted of loathing the obligation to teach — “Whatever is profound loves masks; what is most profound even hates image and parable.”

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Now I’d like to introduce you to a simple and profound mathematical idea that is central to the discussion to follow. It is the bizarre notion of two different kinds of infinity: “countable infinity” and “uncountable infinity.”

*Countable* infinity describes the “size” of the set of positive integers, i.e. the positive whole numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, ... and so on.

The integers include all positive and negative whole numbers as well as zero: we can write them as {..., -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3, ...} and so on. The set of *all* integers is also — just like the set of *strictly positive* integers — «countably infinite.» *This is true because we can label every single one of the integers with a positive integer.* For example:

We label the “1st” integer as 0,  
the “2nd” is -1  
the “3rd” is 1  
the “4th” is -2

the “5th” is 2  
the “6th” is -3  
the “7th” is 3,  
and so on, continuing infinitely until we’ve “counted” all of them, both negative and positive.

This should give an idea of the strange concept of “countable infinity.” Georg Cantor, a titan of 19th-century mathematics, attempted to make such notions rigorous through the controversial *Mengenlehre*, or set theory. After helping to establish the theory of countable infinity, Cantor went even further in daring to define infinity: he introduced the notion of “uncountable infinity” to describe the *real numbers*. The real numbers constitute our reality — they include, in addition to the integers and the rational numbers (fractions and whole numbers), the irrational numbers such as  $\pi$ . Cantor launched an explosive dispute in mathematics by arguing that the real numbers are “uncountably infinite.” He proved that, *unlike* the set of integers, the set of real numbers is unfathomably *more infinite* than the “countably infinite” sets. Cantor did this by arguing by contradiction — he supposed that it was possible to “count” all real numbers in the way we “counted” all the integers above, and then proved that this attempt was logically impossible.

The implications of this project tore a deadly rift between Cantor and his teacher Leopold Kronecker. The battle between the sensitive, pious Cantor and the athletic Kronecker — a vehement, muscular manlet — is operatic in its tragedy; as one historian put it, “Kronecker’s attack broke the creator of the theory,” Cantor, who died in a mental asylum. The firestorm surrounding Cantor’s work — which has become ab-

solutely dominant in modern analysis (the field that encompasses calculus) — hints at the true nature of “reason” versus “intuition” and also, perhaps, of “Apollo” versus “Dionysus.”

In his book *Men of Mathematics*, which follows Vasari and Plutarch as a masterpiece of “monumental” history, the mathematician E.T. Bell says of Cantor’s theory:

*The controversial topic of Mengenlehre ... typifies for mathematics the general collapse of those principles which the prescient seers of the nineteenth century, foreseeing everything but the grand débâcle, believed to be fundamentally sound in all things from physical science to democratic government.*

In fact, Cantor was to mathematics what Darwin was to biology: the destroyer of comforting illusions and also, underneath the costume of extreme abstraction, a harbinger of Dionysus.

Cantor’s teacher Kronecker was himself a great mathematician and a brilliant student of philosophy and the classics. Kronecker was born into a Jewish family and converted to Lutheranism near death after a successful academic career. He was around five feet tall, fond of hiking and the outdoors, and vigorous and combative — “Possibly if Kronecker had been six or seven inches taller than he was,” writes Bell, “he would not have felt constrained to overemphasize his objections to analysis so vociferously.” One is reminded of BAP’s claim: “The manlet is the most revolutionary principle in world history,” and indeed, Kronecker was a revolutionary. Bell calls him “The Doubter”; Kronecker was said to have “no feeling for geometry,” and was more inclined to “make concise, expressive formulas tell the story and auto-

matically reveal the action from one step to the next so that, when the climax was reached, it was possible to glance back over the whole development and see the apparent inevitability of the conclusion from the premises.” Kronecker’s revolution was an attack on the bedrock of modern analysis; he rejected totally the contemporary idea of “infinity” and of proofs that could not be completed in a finite number of steps. He is famous today for this aphorism: “God created the integers, all else is the work of man.”

Kronecker’s philosophy of mathematics was founded on this conviction, and he set out to demonstrate that, in his words, “all results of the profoundest mathematical investigation must ultimately be expressible in the simple form of properties of the integers.” Kronecker believed mathematics was corrupted by abstract and ill-defined notions of infinity, and he wanted to “arithmetize” mathematics, to return it to the foundation of the integers. There was also a mechanistic quality to his work — in the words of one writer, “Since [Kronecker] is of the view that numbers are merely systems of representations with which calculations are done, the essence of number theory is calculation.”

Georg Cantor was born into a pious Lutheran family. His career was that of a first-rate mathematician condemned to second-rate institutions. He was obsessive and spiritual, with grand ambition that corresponded to a strong neediness. Biographer Joseph Dauben writes:

*With colleagues this ‘will to succeed’ was manifest in [Cantor’s] attempts to dominate conversation and in his delight at being the center of attention. He liked nothing better than to find himself surrounded by a group*



*of listeners, and he delighted in leading discussion on a wide variety of subjects punctuated by outspoken pronouncements. But with his family he apparently made little effort to dominate at all. In fact, during meals he would often listen quietly, letting his children develop the subject at hand, and then, before leaving the table, he would make a point of turning to his wife, thanking her for the meal, and asking 'Are you content with me and do you then also love me?'*

Like Kronecker, it is difficult to immediately classify Cantor as guided primarily by “intuition” or by “logic” according to Poincaré’s famous typology. Cantor was fixated on medieval theology, and saw his *Mengenlehre* as a theory that might reunify Christianity and modern science. After his dramatic break with Kronecker and first psychic breakdown, Cantor spent the remainder of his life oscillating between prolific research and long stays at the asylum, where he would die. He claimed inspiration from God and the muses; he wrote to Catholic bishops asking them to accept his theory; moreover, “the amount of time [Cantor] devoted to various literary-historical problems increased steadily.” He wrote a heretical Biblical text called *Ex Oriente Lux* and developed obsessions with scripture, the Church fathers, freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, theosophy, Shakespeare, and English history. He tried to abandon mathematics entirely:

*[Cantor] wrote to Ministry of Culture asking to leave math with a pension: He emphasized his qualifications, his knowledge of history and literature, his publications on the Bacon-Shakespeare question, and even added the provocative news that he had come upon certain information in the course*

*of his research concerning the first king of England, 'which will not fail to terrify the English government as soon as the matter is published.' Cantor tried to inject a note of urgency into the matter by asking the ministry to send him their reply within the next two days, for if they could offer him no alternative to teaching, then as a born Russian he would apply to the Russian diplomatic corps in hopes that he might be of service to Tzar Nicholas II.*

But Cantor could not excise or escape his passions, his inborn will, and the divine madness returned to him, each time more vehement and sudden.

Dauben likens Cantor to Galileo, standing boldly against the authorities of his time, but this is a trite understanding that reeks of reddit scientism. The closest spiritual predecessor to Cantor is Plato — both were “tyrant’s lickspittles” who masked their world-reshaping tyrannical Dionysiac madness behind abstraction, and both successfully tricked a dying civilization into taking the bait. Cantor propounded a physics founded on the mathematical “point,” clothed in Leibniz’s language as “monads,” uncountably infinite and absolutely extensionless. Like some contemporaries, but also like a Gnostic dualist, Cantor divided the world into “matter” and “aether”; he believed that the “corporeal monads” that constituted matter were *countably infinite*, like the positive integers, and that the “aetherial monads” were *uncountably infinite*, as he had proven the real numbers to be. Thus, he considered the world beyond “matter” to be far more “infinite” than the perceivable physical world itself. He claimed that reconciling infinity with modern physics in this fashion would deliver man from the trap of Newtonian mechanics

and materialism. Behind the arcane language of set theory, behind the protestations of innocence and objectivity, we can detect Cantor's terrifying ambition from passages such as these, on "order types":


*Cantor frequently chose a simple example to demonstrate just how powerful a unifying concept order types could be. The most diverse things could be rendered mathematically comparable with great exactness. For the sake of illustration he liked to compare a painting with a symphonic score. Every point in the painting could be ordered according to a horizontal and a vertical axis, by the wave length of color and by color intensity at a given point. The symphony could also be quadruply ordered, every instant arranged in sequence by time elapsed from beginning to end, by the duration of a given tone, by its pitch and intensity. Though improbable, it might even turn out that such heterogenous objects as a Rembrandt portrait and a Beethoven symphony might have similar order types.*

This is a naked display of the spiritual will to power, that seeks to remake the world in its image.

By now it should be clear that my youthful enthusiasm for "tight-assed reason" was mistaken. Despite the "austere beauty" there is something frightfully subjective and *alive* about mathematics; it is anything but an escape from life. Kronecker's philosophy might seem like a noble attempt to lead math back towards the integers away from abstract folly; but at heart he promotes a base pleb's mathematics that reduces all of life to calculation in order to avoid what Gauss termed "the horror of the infinite." Cantor's set theory might seem like an insane feat of

abstraction; yet upon closer inspection the revelation of *uncountable infinity* is an acid that dissolves the illusions upon which calculus was constructed. Apollo and Dionysus appear in strange guises, and merely receiving their whispers is the work of generations — are they even distinct?

This is just a glimpse at the significance of mathematics for those who want old monsters to return. Beginning with sources like Nietzsche, the writings of Poincaré, or aphorism 22 of *Bronze Age Mindset*, we can approach math like one might approach Greek, as both a preview into the minds of greater men, but also as a vehicle for the reawakening of older spirits — out of the *agon*.

Things in the ambit of Dionysus became audible which had lain artificially hidden in the Apolline world: all the shimmering light of the Olympian gods paled before the wisdom of Sile-nus. A kind of art which spoke the truth in its ecstatic intoxication chased away the Muses of the arts of semblance; in the self-oblivion of the Dionysiac states the individual with all his limits and measures sank out of sight; a twilight of the gods was imminent. 



**Mike Boreas**  
*Pater Familias* (2022)  
Pencil



## GOETHE: PARAGON OF MATURE VITALITY FISCHERKING

*Feeling is everything!*

- Goethe, *Urfaust* (ca 1772-75)

*The master demonstrates his craft in limitation. And only the restraint of law grants us freedom*

- Goethe, *Nature and Art* (1802)

*We are in the presence of a man who combines the vitality of youth with the wisdom of age.*

- T.S. Eliot, *Goethe as the Sage* (1955)

### I

Among those who identify as members of the “dissident” or “new” right, there are many young men who lack a sense of prudence and proportion. Emotions often run high, and online gangs - apparently organized in private discussion groups - delight in conducting witch hunts against those deemed insufficiently radical. Recently on Twitter, a moderately successful account undertook a sort of digital parody of seppuku (perhaps “bukkake” would be the better word for his performance), going on an hour-long rant of racial profanity for no apparent reason, after which his account was quickly reported and banned.

This impulse towards self-destruction is reflected in what these young men are reading. Names that appear with frequency are Jünger, Mishima,

and Nietzsche. More revealing is the limited selection of these great writers that the young men cite. With Jünger, it is inevitably *Storm of Steel*, which is a somewhat celebratory memoir of the greatest cataclysm in recent world history, the collective suicide of the European peoples. In Mishima, it's generally *Sun and Steel*, celebrating the cultivation of the body. That's a good read, but no one ever mentions that Mishima also wrote charming love stories, such as *The Sound of Waves*, or that his seppuku was a senseless performance following a farcical coup attempt. With Nietzsche it's hard to tell what people read other than a few aphorisms (“What doesn't kill me makes me stronger”), generally torn from their broader context. That Nietzsche went insane, that he wrote aggressive texts but was apparently quite meek and polite in private company, and that he appears to have been a forerunner of the incel - this is glossed over.

An author seldom (if ever) mentioned is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), who is the closest thing the Germans have to a Shakespeare. This is unfortunate for many reasons. For a start, it might broaden the horizons of some people who apparently believe German history consists of little more than twelve years of rallies and snappy uniforms. But more to the point, Goethe experienced and described the sort of unbridled passion that seems to drive



**Matthew the Stoat**  
*Study of G.F Watts - Physical Energy* (2022)  
Compressed Charcoal, and Chalk

many of these young men now, but did not succumb to it. As T.S. Eliot observed, Goethe's work combines the vitality of youth with the wisdom of age. This is not to say that Goethe should replace any of the talented authors people are reading now, only that he might supplement them, and offer a corrective to certain destructive impulses. A careful reading of a couple of his more accessible novels will illustrate the point.

## II

In this flat world of changing lights and noise, Goethe's biography is difficult for us moderns to conceive. Born in 1749, he witnessed the 1764 election of Joseph II as Holy Roman Emperor in his home town of Frankfurt am Main. Forty-four years later, he sat down for a discussion with Napoleon, who had recently abolished the Holy Roman Empire. He lived through the American and French Revolutions, the Napoleonic Wars, and the reorganization of Europe after the Council of Vienna. He was a poet, a playwright, a novelist, a travel writer, a scientist, as well as a lawyer and a high-ranking bureaucrat, serving the Duke of Saxe-Weimar for most of his life. In the midst of composing the last major epic poem of the Western literary tradition (*Faust*), and shortly before writing the first major Bildungsroman (*Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship*), he served as aide-de-camp to his boss, and witnessed French revolutionary forces defeat the Prussian army at the Battle of Valmy in 1792. He is said to have commented that the battle's outcome promised a "new era" of world history - an accurate assessment.

It was the 1774 publication of his first novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*,

that made Goethe a household name and opened the door to this eventful life. The novel, in its evocation of unhinged emotion, embodied the literary movement of the day, called "Storm and Stress," an abortive forerunner of Romanticism that quickly burned itself out. The novel became an international bestseller, and it caught the attention of Karl August, the young Duke of Saxe-Weimar, who invited Goethe to become his tutor and advisor. The book has never gone out of print, and is probably the most widely read of Goethe's works in English. It is also misunderstood.

The plot of *Werther* is simple. A passionate young man falls in love with a woman (Lotte, short for Charlotte) who is engaged to be married. *Werther* refuses to relinquish the doomed relationship, and generally rejects the conventions of society. This gets him into trouble with Lotte, her husband Albert, and members of the nobility with whom he consorts. His inability to get along in the world ultimately leads to despair, and then to suicide.

While unremarkable in terms of plot, *Werther's* command of language, particularly his ability to express natural beauty and the corresponding feelings it awakes in him, spoke to a generation. Long before Shelley wrote "I fall on the thorns of life, I bleed," Goethe's *Werther* spoke the language of Romanticism:

*My whole being is filled with a marvelous gaiety...When the mists in my beloved valley steam all around me; when the sun rests on the surface of the impenetrable depths of my forest at noon and only single rays steal into the inner sanctum; when I lie in the tall grass beside a rushing brook and become aware of the remarkable diversity of a thousand little growing things on the ground, with all their*

*peculiarities; when I can feel the teeming of a minute world amid the blades of grass and the innumerable, unfathomable shapes of worm and insect closer to my heart, [then I] can sense the presence of the Almighty...*

Goethe's description of Werther falling in love with Lotte in the midst of a thunderstorm, and evoking the poetry of Klopstock (all the rage in 1774) also presages the language of the Romantics, and is perhaps the most famous in the novel:

*We walked over to the window. It was still thundering in the distance, the blessed rain was falling on the land, and a most refreshing scent rose up to us with a rush of warm air. She stood there, leaning on her elbows, her gaze penetrating the countryside; she looked up at the sky, at me, and I could see tears in her eyes. She laid her hand on mine and said, "Klopstock."*

The novel is full of such passages. As its popularity grew, the story (perhaps apocryphal) is that young men all over Europe adopted Werther's mode of dress (blue jacket with yellow waistcoat and pants), and that some of them even followed him into death over unsuccessful love affairs.

But what was Goethe's attitude toward Werther? In conversations at the end of his life with fellow writer Johann Peter Eckermann (who published a collection of these *Gespräche*), Goethe acknowledged that Werther was partially autobiographical, and that he wrote the book to purge himself of negative emotions. Yet not only did Goethe not kill himself, he used his experience to write a wildly successful novel, and he proceeded to undertake a lifetime of productive work. This should tell us

something of Goethe's attitude towards his subject. Here are a few passages that shed further light:

*You ask whether you should send me books. Dear friend, I beg of you—don't. I have no wish to be influenced, encouraged, or inspired any more. My heart surges wildly enough without any outside influence....*

*My mother, you say, would like to see me actively employed. I have to laugh. Am I not actively employed now, and does it make any difference, really, whether I am sorting peas or lentils? Everything on earth can be reduced to a triviality and the man who, to please another, wears himself out for money, honor, what you will, is a fool....*

*I realize that it means a great deal to you that I do not neglect my sketching, so I would rather say nothing at all about it except confess that I have not done much work...*

Here is the portrait of a man who doesn't wish to further his education (because he has all he needs inside himself), has no interest in working (because it's all pointless anyway), and lacks the discipline to engage in a creative endeavor for which he has some talent. These aspects of Werther's character are missed by many readers, who are swept away by his leaps of fancy, and (if they are young) probably relate to the pain of disappointed first love.

Goethe did not admire his creation. He shared his passion, but criticized his indolence. This reading is further reinforced by the shift in tone at the novel's conclusion. Up until the final pages, Werther is a pure epistolary novel. It consists of letters that Werther has written mostly to his friend Wilhelm. But after he has killed himself, the nar-



rator picks up the thread. He does not glorify Werther's rash decision, or use his lush style. In flat prose, he simply reports his death:

*When the doctor arrived, he found the unfortunate man on the floor. There was no hope of saving him. His pulse could still be felt but all his limbs were paralyzed. He had shot himself in the head above the right eye, driving his brains out . . . At twelve noon, Werther died. The presence of the judge and the arrangements he made silenced the crowd. That night, at about eleven, he had the body buried in the spot Werther had chosen. The old man and his sons walked behind the bier; Albert found himself incapable of doing so. They feared for Lotte's life. Workmen carried the body. There was no priest in attendance.*

The narrator stresses that Werther did not die immediately in a flash of romantic glory, but lingered a while in a pathetic twilight. He references the pain the suicide causes both Albert and Lotte, who see nothing noble in the deed. Strangers bury him without ceremony or religious rites.

### III

Following the success of Werther, Goethe abandoned the novel and focused his literary career on poetry and the theatre. The book's reception - the fact that most readers admired Werther for his passion, but failed to notice the subtle criticism of his character - must have irked him. The reemergence of that style of literature around 1800, however, compelled him to revisit the matter. Goethe observed Romantic writers such as Wackenroder, Novalis and Kleist overindulge in emotion and fantasy,

and burn themselves out as young men. This may have been the impetus for the best novel he ever wrote.

*Elective Affinities*, published in 1809, is the work of an older, mature man. Whereas Werther consisted of the outpourings of a single individual, *Elective Affinities* is told by an omniscient third-person narrator, has four principal characters (all of whom are developed), and a series of secondary characters essential to the drama. Academics have spilled much ink trying to link the book to Goethe's interest in chemistry, but for our purposes it is best seen as a reworking of the Werther themes, this time making explicit the dangers inherent in a lack of self-control.

The novel revolves around a married couple, Eduard and Charlotte. They had fallen in love when young, but circumstance required both of them to marry other people. Following the death of both of their spouses, however, they come back together, marry and live happily on Eduard's country estate. Things go awry when they invite a military friend of Eduard's (the Captain) to come stay with them, and Charlotte invites her niece Ottilie, who isn't getting on well at her boarding school. Eduard and Ottilie fall in love, and Charlotte and the Captain develop mutual feelings. This leads to tragedy. By the novel's conclusion, both Eduard and Ottilie are dead, and Charlotte is left alone to mourn the loss of her son with Eduard, who had drowned while in Ottilie's care.

The critical distinction is how Eduard and Charlotte respond to events. Eduard is very much like Werther. He refuses to accept the constraints of society, and he demands a divorce. But Goethe does not allow the reader to develop admiration for him. He describes Edu-

ard as “impatient” and “uncontrolled,” and his emotional state as “deranged.” When he is unable to get what he wants, Eduard goes off to war with the determination of seeking death:

*Eduard longed for danger from without to counterbalance the danger from within. He longed for destruction because existence was threatening to become unendurable: he even found consolation in the thought he was going to cease to exist and that by doing this he could make happy his friends and those he loved.*

He leaves knowing that Charlotte is pregnant with his child, and when he returns, he encourages her to marry the Captain (now promoted to Major), partly to relieve him of the burden of raising his son:

*But what Eduard seemed to build on most of all, and to expect the greatest advantage from, was this: since the child was to stay with his mother, the Major would be able to bring him up, guide him according to his own outlook, and develop his capacities.*

No one likes a man who abandons his children.

Charlotte is Eduard’s polar opposite, a model of decorum and self-control. While she has feelings for the Captain, she is prepared to resist them, content with her life with Eduard:

*In this confusion of contradictory feelings her sound character, disciplined and tested in a hundred ways through life’s experiences, came to her aid. She was always accustomed to know herself, to exercise self-control, and even now she did not find it difficult, by giving serious thought to the matter, to come close to the equanimity she*

*desired...And then she was suddenly seized by a strange presentiment, a joyful anxious shuddering went through her, and deeply affected she knelt down and repeated the vow she had made to Eduard at the altar. Friendship, affection, renunciation passed as vivid images before her mind. She felt inwardly restored.*

It is interesting that Goethe recycles the name Charlotte from *Werther*, but never shortens it to Lotte. This use of the full name reflects maturity, for unlike Lotte, Charlotte here is decisive, prepared to renounce her feelings, to remove the Captain from her life entirely, for the sake of stability and happiness of all.

None of this works out. Eduard’s impulsive behavior leads to the death and/or misery of the entire group. Unbridled emotion leads directly to tragedy, whereas renunciation (*Entsagung* - a recurrent theme in Goethe’s later work) could have maintained the balance.

#### IV

This is a short essay, and I have concentrated on these two novels because they are accessible and the English translations are sound. Goethe’s best work, however, is his lyric poetry and his reworking of the Faust legend in his epic poem, which he worked on his entire life and only completed shortly before his death. It is an encyclopedic work, in which Goethe adopts virtually every form of poetry known to him, and which thematizes everything from Ancient Greek philosophy (Thales makes an appearance) to the problem of inflation brought on by the introduction of paper currency (the assignat of the French Revolution). But it should be

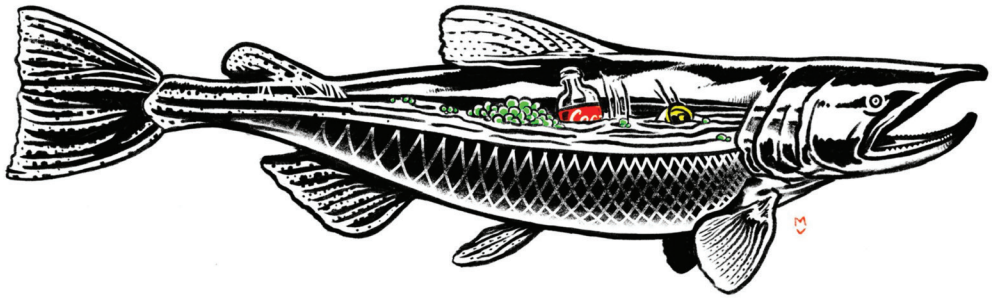
read in the original German, as poetry in translation is at best an approximation.

That said, it feels wrong to say nothing about Goethe's most important work, so here are a few concluding remarks. In the original Faust legend, which circulated throughout Germany as a series of narrative episodes collected in a chapbook published in 1587, Faust sells his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge and sensual pleasure. When the time is up, he goes straight to hell. Goethe adopts much from the chapbook, but his major alteration is that he allows Faust redemption in the final act.

Critics argue about whether this was a mistake, dulling the work's dramatic impact, but it's typical of Goethe and his anti-romantic impulses discussed above. In Goethe's retelling, Faust has assisted the Holy Roman Emperor in defeating a rival claimant to the throne. As a reward, the Emperor grants Faust a strip of land, which is almost entirely under water. Faust then undertakes a major reclamation project, creating habitable, arable land that benefits humanity at large. In focusing on this project, Faust resists the efforts of Mephistopheles (the devil to whom he's sold his soul) to direct his attention toward earthly delights. He aims higher, engages in productive activity, and when he dies, angels come and save him from damnation, uttering the famous line: *Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, den können wir erlösen*, which loosely translates to "we can redeem those who work hard."

So while Faust has engaged in the ultimate act of self-destruction - selling his soul - and has indulged in earthly pleasures (even having Helen of Troy raised from the dead to ensure he's experienced history's most beautiful wom-

an), ultimately he redirects his energy toward productive ends. The same man who early in the play says "feeling is everything" has traded youthful vigor for a mature vitality. And so Goethe deserves a place among that pantheon of authors who so energize the young. 🐦



M.V.  
*Fish (2021)*  
Charcoal and Digital





Francisco Jose de Goya y Lucientes  
*Yard with Lunatics* (1794)  
Oil on Tinplate  
12.9 x 17.2

# THE BARBARISM OF REASON

## APEX

### PART ZERO: Introducing Goya (1746-1828)

Perhaps no artist more fully expressed the conflict and confusion of the Post-Enlightenment age as Goya. Once triumphant, Goya's later work would be his claim to fame, reflecting the tormented soul of a man desperately searching for goodness in the world and finding little of it anywhere. For the late Goya, there was no Light and Dark, no clear Good and Evil. Simple, triumphant narratives were displaced by an awareness of the grotesque and barbaric aspects of human nature. Reason could not conquer it; in fact, it could only fuel it further.

To properly understand the Late Goya, which I will define as the Goya after his mental and physical illness in 1792-3, we must begin much earlier. The Early Goya is an entirely different artist and man, but this period is critical for his later disillusionment at the horrors of ideology and human barbarity. From counting some of the finest nobility of the continent among his patrons and friends, to living a reclusive lifestyle and turning his lens towards the common people (the *pueblo*) of Spain, Goya was shaped by the political and social turmoil of his age as well as his own psychological struggles. One can only fully grasp the Late Goya's pessimism by understanding Early Goya's triumphalism.

### PART ONE: The Early Goya

Prior to 1789, Goya was most well-known for being a talented court portraitist and religious painter. His work was innovative, although it was clearly inspired by the titan of Spanish Baroque painting, Velazquez. Goya's inclusion of himself in a number of portraits and paintings of this period, as well as his "embrace of spatial and compositional ambiguity, and most of all his psychological incisiveness" are all echoes of Velazquez, as Stephen Eisenman has put it quite clearly. In 1786, Goya was promoted to the post of Pintor del Rey (Painter to the King). In 1788 he painted *The Family of the Duque de Osuna*.



The portrait is an excellent example of Goya's exceptional skills as a portrait artist. He picks up on minute details in each individual member's facial expression and body language. The first note in that vein is the relaxed expressions of the various members of the family. All six appear wholly comfortable, even as a portrait was a lengthy ordeal. What makes that doubly interesting is that family portraits like this were rare at the time in Spain. The Duke, although in uniform, is not standing at attention, nor is he presenting any grim air of seriousness; instead, he looks like a loving father enjoying an afternoon with his family.

As a whole, the family is organized in a pyramid formation, with the Duke at the peak. Interestingly, the Duke and Duchess may have been raising their own children, rather than hiring someone else to do so, a peculiarity for the time period. The Duchess is even depicted with a book in her hand, perhaps an indication of her intellect. She was actually a member of the Royal Economic Society of Madrid, of which her husband was president. The parents and children appear to be closely connected and affectionate with each other. When we also note that the two sons are at play in the bottom left with their own toys, it is possible that the Duke and Duchess had embraced new French and Swiss pedagogical ideas around the special importance of childhood and the important role of parents in their children's education.

Goya's skills were in demand across the country and elsewhere, and by the late 1780s he was receiving more commissions than he could fulfill. In April 1789, Goya was promoted to Pintor de Càmera (Court Painter) to Charles

IV. In 1790, Goya was elected to the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos (Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Carlos), one of the most progressive art academies in Europe. Goya's rise seemed unstoppable. Two self-portraits reflect Goya's triumphant self-appraisal.



The simpler of the two self-portraits, *Self-Portrait in a Cocked Hat*, depicts a Goya of staunch resolve. While Goya was firmly into middle age at this point, his face does not depict this. Under the tricorne hat, the artist looks upon the observer with an expression that nears condescension, or perhaps scorn. Goya of this period is confident in his own abilities, as he should be. His rise was borderline meteoric during the late 1770s and through the 1780s.

In the second self-portrait, simply titled *Self-Portrait*, Goya deliberately takes steps to position himself as an intellectual, a member of the upper class, and an enlightened artist. First, Goya's high society style of dress connects him to the upper class. It would be very unlikely that a painter would wear such clothes during their work, and Goya



is clearly in a staged pose. The tension between his work as a painter and his upper-class dress doesn't appear to cause any issue for the young artist, as he presents an aura of confidence (perhaps emphasized by the light illuminating Goya from behind, adding further to his self-image as an enlightened artist). In fact, if we look closely, the paint on the palette Goya is holding looks to be the same colors as the painting: Goya appears to be painting himself...painting...the painting. This self-portrait represents a fairly radical departure from his predecessors in the north, notably Rembrandt.

Rembrandt's 1629 self-portrait, *The Artist in his Studio*, emphasizes the easel and canvas that takes up the majority of the right side of the painting. The artist, presumably Rembrandt himself, is dressed as one would typically imagine an artist would. The artist's face is partially hidden in shadow, and it's difficult to make out much about the art-



ist as he occupies a relatively small part of the painting. On the other hand, Goya himself is the focus of his self-portrait. The artist, not the art, occupies the foreground. Goya's stance, with legs slightly apart in a clearly triangular structure, seems to whisper about connections to the classical Greco-Roman works. The subjectivity of the Artist, the importance of his Will and creativity, takes the foreground with the Enlightenment in a way that would be unthinkable even to the greats of just a century prior.

### The End of the Beginning

The Spanish Enlightenment had made serious inroads in Spain by the early 1790s, but the nobility and clergy were hardly going to support modernizing themselves out of existence. However, this natural limit to change would not be the deciding factor in the collapse of the Spanish Enlightenment: each new horror from the French Revolution and its subsequent debacles only caused the Spanish elites to recoil. Now, the revolutionary fervor that had spread from France into its southern neighbor had to be eliminated. The afrancesados (Francophiles) would no longer be tolerated, and the ilustrados/luces (enlightened/"lights") would have to be extin-



guished.

This would only intensify as France and Spain declared war on one another in 1793, as part of the War of the First Coalition against the French First Republic. The afrancesados were torn between loyalty to their nation and allegiance to the international project of Enlightenment. The ilustrados who had once received royal support for their reformist ideas shrank from the public eye or switched sides. The Spanish people, the pueblo, largely opposed the reforms of the ilustrados, perceiving their reforms as an unwanted intrusion that would threaten the traditions and culture that had developed over centuries. The pueblo allied themselves with the traditional conservative forces of crown and clergy, and the ilustrados sought to reform the state, economy, and educational system in the name of the very pueblo who rejected them. The conservative union was unstable (and it spawned crises and violence that extended into the late 20th century), but the late 1780s, 1790s, and early 19th century would see a revival of Spanish popular culture, with even the hereditary nobility attempting to imitate the “proletarian aristocrats”, the majas and majos, for their presumably pure Castilian blood and spirit. The bourgeois character of these new aristocrats would eventually be a root for much of the social upheaval as the aristocracy edged closer and closer to the abyss.

Goya himself took this upheaval particularly badly: he suffered a grave illness from 1792-1793. His confidence was shattered, his mental stability was shaken, and his hearing was gone (he would be deaf for the rest of his life). During the next three decades, Goya would witness Spain in the throes of revolution and

counterrevolution, war and insurgency, and brutal quests to find some kind of national *essence* that could give meaning to the suffering that pervaded the peninsula. These titanic struggles would shape Goya, and his artwork would shift considerably. In fact, one can reasonably say that it was this illness and the virulent political environment inaugurated Goya's second career.

## PART TWO: The Late Goya (1792-1823)

### After the Illness

*“In order to distract my mind, mortified by reflection on my misfortunes, and in order to recoup some of the expenses they have occasioned, I executed a series of cabinet pictures in which I have managed to make observations that commissioned works ordinarily do not allow, and in which fantasy and invention have no place”*

- Goya to his friend, Bernado de Iriarte

Upon recovering from his illness during his self-imposed exile in Cadiz, Goya created a set of eleven small pictures painted on tin. These eleven pictures represent a profound shift in Goya's vision: dark, dramatic, and sometimes terrifying, they represent a stark contrast to the confident (perhaps even arrogant) younger Goya.

Some have argued that this represents Goya's plunge deeper into his own internal depths. Malraux stated that for Goya, “it was the discovery...of the peculiar strength of painting, of the power of a broken line or the bringing together of a red and a black over and above the demands of the object represented.” This move beyond a mere representation of the world and into a transfiguration of the world through



the artist's subjectivity is a key element of the philosophy of romanticism (and of modernity) as Charles Taylor has famously discussed in his *Sources of the Self*.

In particular, *Courtyard with Lunatics* is a terrifying example of Goya's dark turn (see page 33). The courtyard itself appears claustrophobic, boxed in by thick walls, with the only light emanating in from above. The "lunatics" within the courtyard take on a variety of expressions, with a pair fighting in the middle, one looking towards the sky (perhaps for forgiveness) as he appears poised to whip the two combatants, and a pair (one on the left and one on the right) staring at the audience, inspiring foreboding and despair in the viewer. Some have argued that Goya intended this painting as an indictment of the punitive treatment of insanity in highly inhumane asylums. Perhaps inspired by his own illness and self-imposed exile, Goya depicts a vision of the horrible alienation and fear caused by mental illness (and society's shunning of those who suffered it).

### The Middle Enlightenment and Los Caprichos

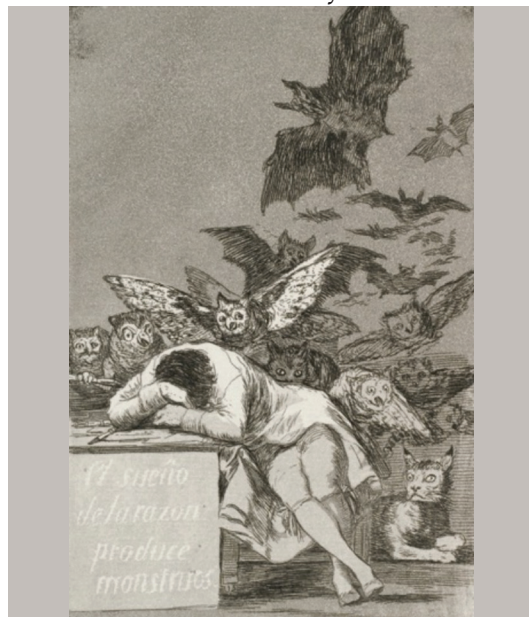
In 1799, Goya released a series of prints that Robert Flynn Johnson called "the greatest single work of art created in Spain since the writings of Cervantes and the paintings of Velazquez". This series of prints was called *Los Caprichos*.

*Caprichos* 1, another self-portrait, doesn't appear to be anything special. Goya's facial expression is somewhat ambiguous, as it could either represent a tired old man, or a self-satisfied enlightened artist looking at the viewer with disdain. The ambiguity only deepens, as



the remainder of the *Caprichos* satirize and lampoon various attitudes, both Enlightened and conservative Spanish.

*Caprichos* 43 is perhaps the most famous of his works: *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*. On the margin of a sheet containing a study for *Caprichos* 43, Goya had this to say: "The author's...intention is to banish harmful beliefs commonly held, and with this work of *Caprichos* to perpetuate the solid testimony of truth." On



the one hand, the influence of the Enlightenment clearly pervades his writing and work, but the tensions of Enlightenment are present. The sleeping figure may reflect Reason itself, but it may also be a symbol of Goya himself, who suffered the breakdown of his own Reason during his illness. The monsters occupy the painting as the subject, representing Reason, is sleeping. However, Goya is not making an endorsement of Enlightenment, arguing that once reason awakens the monsters will be banished. Instead, it seems more likely Goya is reflecting upon the distressing tensions within his own mind and the janus-faced nature of Enlightenment itself. It is as much a criticism of the ilustrados as it is an endorsement of their ideology. Another interesting note here is the shift to the focus on tapping the well-spring of the artist's internal imaginative depths. Goya acknowledges the heavy psychic price of the violence and eroticism that can emerge like a flood from one's own psychic wellsprings (and perhaps hints that this same price may

be paid by an "Enlightened" society at large). For Goya, imagination and nightmare, science and ignorance: these are inextricably linked. Reason itself generates Monsters it cannot slay.

### The Horrors of War

Goya made no prints for a decade after the publication of the *Caprichos*. The *Caprichos* would cement Goya's focus on the people, the Spanish pueblo, which he would continue to focus on for the last two decades of his life. Goya became reclusive following the publication of the *Caprichos*, but prior to his encounter with the horrors of the War of Spanish Independence. After 1808, Goya became a participant in, and a victim of, the tectonic shifts brought about by revolution and war. Public artist and private man could no longer be separated.

In 1807-08, Napoleon's French armies invaded the peninsula, and the Spanish people revolted. After the plebeians revolted, France engaged in major reprisals the next day. That day was





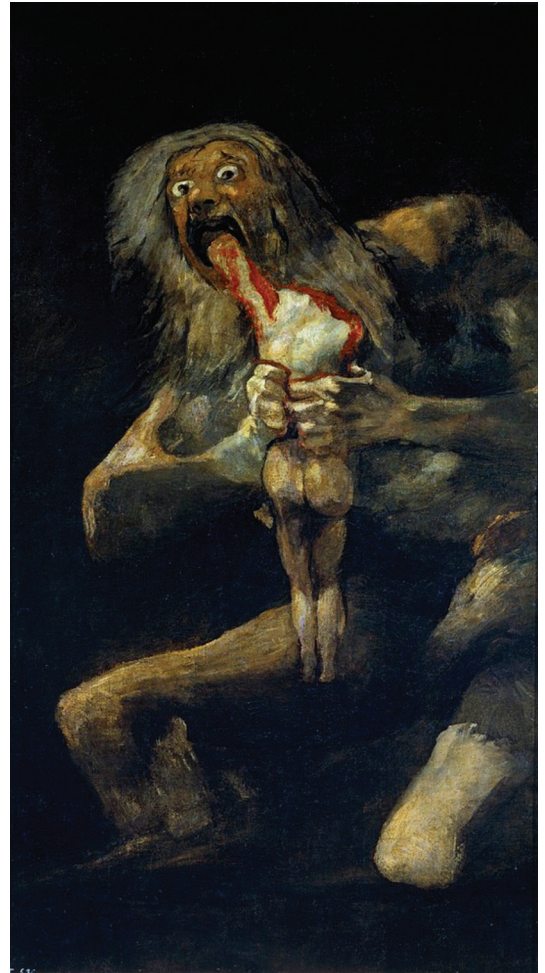
May 3rd.

Painted by Goya in 1814, his public and righteously indignant response to French imperialism was meant to immortalize the immense courage and suffering of the Spanish people. Goya painted it after the restoration of Ferdinand VII and the expulsion of Spanish liberals. Goya depicted a brave pueblo aligned with Church and Crown against the Godless invaders. The actual Spanish uprisings were notoriously messy (guerrilla bands and juntas of “Right” and “Left” fought invaders and each other), but Goya provided a mythic integrity to the Spanish resistance by exalting the heroism and sacrifice of the people.

But while some of his most famous works exalted Spanish bravery, Goya published 82 prints between 1810-1820 which seem to present a more honest response. The series of prints exhibit such emotional intensity and embrace, such moral & political ambiguity in the depictions of the fighting, that they could not be published in Goya’s lifetime. They only appeared in 1863, 35 years after Goya’s death. The actual name for the series of prints was “The Terrible results of the bloody war in Spain against Bonaparte. And other emphatic caprichos.” Today, they are simply called the Disasters of War.

Goya’s revulsion at the horror and brutality of war, and the savagery of the pueblo alongside the French, is a condemnation of all parties involved, not a celebration of heroic resolve. The Disasters can be split into three general groups: the victims and horrors of war (prints 2-47), victims of famine, death, and burial (prints 48-64), and “caprichos enfaticos” (prints 65-80), which depicted corruption in nightmarish form. While most of the prints were likely finished

prior to 1814, the final group was probably conceived after the restoration of Ferdinand VII and before the Liberal coup in 1820, during the nadir of liberal power in the peninsula.



In his final decade of life, Goya’s works were not uniformly bleak, with portraits, religious paintings, and experimental work all being explored; however, the most noteworthy of Goya’s works during this period are the so-called “Black Paintings” he created to decorate the walls of two rooms of his own residence in Madrid. Once a firm believer in the Enlightenment and his own talent, these works painted between 1820 and 1823 cannot be considered celebrations of a revival in truth and reason. These works are primarily grotesque, and in-



clude the famous Saturn Devouring His Children and The Witches Sabbath, among others. Nightmarish at best, they seem to allude to the violence and superstition of the Inquisition, but this time with little hope for a better future. The paintings were not meant for a public audience: only Goya, his family, and the few friends willing to visit an old ilustrado saw them. Goya painted them during an epoch when human reason slept; but that does not mean logic had been abandoned. Historian Gwyn Willians wrote “That these monsters are human is, indeed, the point.” Echoing his northern predecessor Bruegel, Goya saw the grotesque and popular as a world opposed to order, rationality, aristocracy, and the ideal. But unlike Bruegel, Goya’s paintings are not picturesque: they are brutal and offer little comfort.

Goya’s life, and the evolution of his artistry, reflects the tensions of the development of Enlightenment. At first self-assured and inspired by confidence

in his own artistic subjectivity and vision, Goya’s experiences in the tumultuous aftermath of the French Revolution would shake these foundations of his own belief. Goya was prescient in imagining the union of Enlightenment and barbarism. As Man becomes the measure and source of All, the artists were the first who felt, and sometimes drowned under, the weight of the vast psychic oceans they were forced to plunge into in order to make sense of a world transformed. And perhaps Goya understood before many others that this transformation, so magnificent in its promises, could not overcome the terrors lying deep within human nature.

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*Special thanks to the Wikimedia Foundation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Arthur Digital Museum, The Museum of Fine Arts, Giovanni Garcia-Fenech and Artstor, and Stephen Eisenman for preserving these pieces of art and having written many wonderful pieces that played roles in my research for this essay.* 🐾



**Unknown**  
*Untitled*  
on Wood Panel



# MANUAL FOR MONARCHY

## CURTIS YARVIN

As Antonio Gramsci wrote a hundred years ago, “the old world is dying; the new world is struggling to be born.” Gramsci’s new world was indeed born; it grew up; it turned old; and the *Asylum* reader can sense yet another world struggling to be born.

The central aspect of this struggle is not the defeat of the old world. The new world will defeat it easily—once that new world is born. Those of us struggling to midwife it are not, and should not, struggle against the old world. Instead we struggle against the abortions, the monsters and teratogens which are neither new nor old.

The most dangerous of these monsters is the unquestioned belief in the restoration of democracy. It is not only this word that has a sacred character; it is the reality behind the word. The natural impulse on learning that this holy temple has been desecrated is to restore it. This understandable desire is the only life support of the old world.

Most *Asylum* readers now understand that our elected politicians, the “leaders of the free world,” have negligible power over the permanent civil service which they nominally command, and *zero* power over the media-educational-nonprofit complex which decides what is right and wrong. They have turned into the late Merovingian kings of which a chronicler wrote 1200 years ago:

*There was nothing left for the King to do but to be content with his name of King, his flowing hair, and long beard, to sit on his throne and play the ruler, to give ear to the ambassadors that came from all quarters, and to dismiss them, as if on his own responsibility, in words that were, in fact, suggested to him, or even imposed upon him.*

We can almost see the Dark Age teleprompter. One might as well cite the Queen of England today—except that the Merovingians were displaced not by a bureaucratic oligarchy, but by the rising Carolingian monarchy. Even Trump is famed for his hair!

Democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy are the rock, paper, scissors of political science. That paper has folded rock is a fact. When we think in democratic terms, we are trying to cut paper with rock. When we insult rock by calling rock scissors, we are only reinforcing our idea that scissors are bad. No other idea can keep paper alive.

### The Democratic Fallacy

The democratic fallacy is to “sit on the throne and play the ruler.” Anyone who thinks about government in terms of *issues* or *policies* or *causes* is doing exactly that.

If you had actual power, thinking about what to do with it would be very important. But since your power is



**Matthew the Stoat**  
*Study of William Pomeroy - Perseus (2022)*  
Compressed Charcoal, and Chalk

an illusion, thinking about what to do with this illusion can only be a trap. You should *not* be thinking about what to do with power you don't have. You should be thinking only about how to get that power into the hands of (a) yourself; or (b) someone else who deserves it.

Consider the latest “populist” cause—the “groomer” issue, aka transgender education in elementary schools. If you are sitting on the throne and playing the ruler, and like most Asylum readers you think “trans kids” are an abomination (by the way, someone familiar with the other team explained to me the *real* issue behind child sex changes: intervening before puberty gives a *much* more sexually convincing result), you know exactly what to do: pass a law!

If you have power, this will work. If you have power, the solution is to participate in government—to make it do the right thing. After all, this is America—where we believe in the democratic rule of law, not the arbitrary rule of men.

If you have *no* power, however—if you realize that all regimes are the arbitrary rule of men, and you are not one of those men—your response must be quite different. If you see the men who rule doing something you feel is abominable, your only recourse is to change the men who rule. The abomination is an *indictment* of power, not an *invitation* to power. Every crime of the regime is evidence that the regime must change. It is not evidence that you must participate in the regime—which actually means supporting it.

The right response to any abomination of power *has nothing to do with the abomination*. The right response is to *capture as much power as possible*—normally, *all* the power. Each abomina-

tion is just one more count on the endless rap sheet of the old regime.

### Fundamentals of Regime Change

To review: any problem you have with the regime is not evidence of a bug in the regime that needs to be fixed. It is evidence that the regime needs to be replaced.

Replacing regimes is both difficult and dangerous. A good analogy is a rocket launch. Everything has to work perfectly. If your rocket does not fire at all, and just sits there, this is the best form of failure. Any other form of failure is progressively worse. *Until the rocket reaches orbit, the better it works, the worse the outcome*. A rocket that gets 99% of the way to orbit falls with a very large boom.

Therefore, the goal of a political machine is the goal of any amplifier: to *maximize gain*. *Gain* is the amount of output produced by a given input. The ideal political machine needs as little energy as possible from its supporters, and generates as much energy as possible from their actions.

### The Fundamental Equation of Politics

The fundamental equation of politics is, perhaps unsurprisingly,  $E=mc^2$

That is: output energy equals *mass* times *commitment* times *cohesion*.

*Mass* is the mere quantity of human meat. *Commitment* is what the humans are able and willing to do. *Cohesion* is their capacity for coherent collective action.

For obvious reasons, most people who think about politics think about mass (attracting more followers) and commitment (getting them to do more

stuff). But the secret of political success in the 21st century is systems that couple *low commitment* with *high cohesion*.

Commitment is an especially tempting target because present levels of commitment are so low by historical standards. Apathy is the most important factor in the modern election. Emotional engagement in any election besides national leadership elections is almost zero—lawn signs, name recognition, and other completely irrational factors driven only by budget do most of the work.

Consider commitment on a logarithmic scale of 0 to 10, where 0 does nothing, 1 votes, 2 is a write-in vote or political contribution, and 10 is a suicide bomber. 2 is generally felt to be unachievable; 10 is out of the question.

For example, a civil war is impossible in a civilized 21st-century country, because of low commitment. No one cares enough to fight—and the people who care the most are the worst. The best, most sensible people just want to grill.

### The Power of Cohesion

One way to understand the power of cohesion is to imagine a voting system designed to make high cohesion easy.

Suppose voters could delegate their votes *permanently* to a politician or organization. 75 million Americans voted for Trump—but this was a low-cohesion vote. They asked Trump to represent them, once, in one election.

In this new system, any American will be able to click *one* button, *once*—a low-commitment operation, which does not interfere in any way with grilling—and delegate *all* their political power to

Trump (or some party, think-tank, etc). Until they click another button and change their minds, Trump, or at least Trump's staff, will vote on their behalf in *every* election for which they are eligible—from President to dogcatcher. In fact, they will never have to think about politics again.

Their commitment is much *lower*—this “perma-vote” is much less work than traipsing to the polls every time some school board is up for election. Because of this super-low commitment, we would expect many low-engagement voters who can't be bothered to get it up for any one election to perma-vote once, and leave that vote alone.

Suppose all 75 million Trump voters support Trump enough to give him a perma-vote. The result of this will be that Trumpist candidates win *every* Republican primary—since primary turnout is much smaller than general turnout—and also win landslide victories in all midterm elections—since midterm turnout is smaller.

And these candidates will not merely be Trumpists. They will be Trump's *pets*. Trump has no need to select experienced politicians with their own opinions and supporters, who will make up their own minds—why should he?

To maximize his power (and therefore the power of his supporters), he should elect nobodies who are completely beholden to him, and who have every incentive to follow his remote-control directions to the letter. Like the Merovingian kings, they will be “content with the name of senator.” Why shouldn't they be? If they are discontented, and act on it, they will simply lose their jobs in the next election.

The result is a Presidency with

the nation-changing power of FDR, whose almost monarchical authority stemmed from the same mechanism: a rubber-stamp Congress. The most legally correct way to ratify a revision in the theory of the Constitution is to simply pack the Supreme Court with ten pliant new justices. While the House can be replaced in a single election, it takes six years to turn over the Senate—but it does not take six years for existing senators to see the writing on the wall. The legalities are less important than the sense of unlimited and confident power—which inherently creates its own support. The public is a woman. Women love confidence.

Yet there is nothing anti-democratic about this reform. It does nothing at all to limit the power of the voters. To the contrary—it makes voting easier. A voter who tires of Trump can redirect his perma-vote to Hillary Clinton. If Hillary has 80 million perma-votes, she gains the same monarchical power. All this from an electoral convenience.

### The Power of Irony

Because the perma-vote is so powerful that it makes a mockery of democracy, it is hard to imagine anyone who believes in democracy supporting this “reform.” Is this design an idle thought-experiment? Or could it actually happen?

With a little more commitment, we can imagine perma-voting happening without any kind of official support. Instead of a convenient button that the voter can press to transfer his vote permanently, the voter... installs an app. When there’s an election he is entitled to vote in, he goes to the polls and patiently copies the app’s official ballot onto the

paper in front of him, swearing silently at the obsolete data-entry task that these antiquated systems require him to perform. Why can’t the local election board just talk to his party’s server and upload his vote directly? And eventually, it will.

Why would anyone do this? At an emotional level, perma-voting is a fundamentally different experience from the conventional experience of democracy.

Democratic voting is emotionally compelling because the voter *sincerely* feels the experience of participating in power; he feels he is important, a kind of micro-king, decreeing that “we” (ie, the government) should do this, that, or the other thing. A felon who loses his right to vote feels almost castrated; he is no longer part of “we”; ultimately, he has ceased to *matter* as man and citizen. Women need the right to vote not because they need pro-woman policies (abortion, easy divorce, outlawing saloons, etc), but because without it, women do not *matter*.

Perma-voting is emotionally compelling because of its fundamentally *ludic* and *ironic* quality. The perma-voter is a player in a live-action *game*. The results of the game do matter; in fact, when the game is played well enough to win, they matter much more than the Merovingian results of democratic voting; but while this is thrilling, so is the mere sense of playing the game—the sense of collectively *hacking* the system. Rather than participating sincerely, like a *chump*, in a rigged game that is not what it appears.

Nothing could be more ironic than voting against democracy. As Bronze Age Pervert has said: “Learn that I don’t understand the gay idea of ‘irony.’” Obviously there is nothing ironic



about this line! To increase the power of your vote by giving it away—by abjuring the trap of caring about “issues”—to take power refusing the lie that you are already participating in power—is a profoundly ironic gesture.

### The Supply of Irony

And because mass is part of the  $E=mc^2$  formula, nothing in this high-cohesion, low-commitment strategy can work without a *massively ironic population*. Fortunately, this is exactly what we have.

Most political strategies used today are dependent for their efficacy on 20th-century or even 19th-century levels of sincerity and commitment. In the face of 21st-century apathy, they are useless. Apathetic but sincere people can care about a few things, for a little while. They cannot generate any significant amount of power. And apathy is constantly increasing.

Irony is also constantly increasing. As recently as the 1980s, irony was the exclusive possession of the over-class. Today all media aimed at American consumers under 50 is drenched in irony. Generation X was in many ways the first ironic generation. Not everyone 50 and under prefers to be ironic all the time—but everyone knows how to. At least if they watch TV, all young and middle-aged voters are fluent in irony.

At a certain point, the balance of mass has moved far enough away from sincerity and toward irony that ironic politics starts to be able to outcompete sincere politics. Trump in a way was a prototype. He ran with ironic messaging, but without using any other ironic political techniques; he tried to govern sincerely, and failed. One day, the iron-

ic politics of the future will stop making these mistakes. 🐉



Don Jelly  
*Mishima* (2022)  
Digital

ON THE DEFENSE OF CULTURE  
YUKIO MISHIMA  
(TRANSLATED BY MASAKI)

The Three Characteristics of  
National Culture

The Japanese national culture possesses three characteristics. That is: reflexivity, totality, and subjectivity.

The ruins remaining in Greece, in which there are no *true* Greeks, are for the modern Greeks complete aesthetic objects, in which there is nothing that returns to their subject, and the ability to feel the continuity of the life of culture from the ruins of Greece has conversely become the privilege of Europeans. However, Japanese culture for the Japanese, just as the Tale of Genji has repeatedly been able to return to our contemporary subjects, affirm their continuity, and become the womb of new creations, transcending its aesthetic valuation as an object, and stimulating its continuity and reflexivity. It is this that people call tradition, and in this sense, I hold serious doubts about the view of literary history that isolates modern literary history from the Meiji period onward from classical literary history. The reflexivity of culture is none other than the consciousness that culture is not just a thing “seen,” but also a “seeing” thing that looks back.

Further, the wholesale acceptance of “the chrysanthemum and the sword,” not to judge aesthetics ethically, but to judge ethics aesthetically and accept culture wholesale, is indispens-

able for a consciousness of the totality of culture, and this opposes all culturalism and the cultural policy ideology of all forms of government. Culture must be wholesale recognized and wholesale maintained. Improvement and progress are impossible in culture, and in the first place, revision is impossible in culture. The delusion that these are possible has obstinately ruled Japan for some time after the war.

Further, culture in its extreme form manifests only in a subjectivity similar to the trinity of the three gods Brahman, Vishnu, and Shiva, who create, maintain, and destroy. Concerning this, there is much that should be thoroughly reconsidered, contained within the seemingly extreme ideas of Hasuda Zenmei, who once criticized Fumio Niwa’s Naval Engagement during the war by saying that, rather than continuing to write notes in the middle of a naval battle in order to record it, the attitude that the true man of letters should take would have been to help carry ammunition. As proof of that, Niwa, who immediately after the war wrote the novelistic exposé of the navy Bamboo Grass, at the time had the nature of an exquisite camera, because he himself demonstrated that he was reliant on a subjectless objectivity. Because the subjectivity of literature, on the extension line of the freedom of the cultural creative subject, should offer itself up to the greatest fruits at each

moment resulting from works and of modes of action. And because Japanese culture has kept all cultural possibilities [that exist] for that purpose.

The foregoing definition of the concept of culture using reflexivity, totality, and subjectivity of itself surely encourages consideration of how one must be in order to defend culture and what the real enemy of culture is.

### Against What Do We Defend Culture?

The concept of culture of the Japanese, in which through the body one learns a mode of action, and there for the first time grasps one's original form of thought, that unifies culture and action is, under all political forms, viewed as containing a certain degree of danger. An extreme example of control by a political system is wartime controls, but the thought of Confucians, who regarded *Genji* as a book that teaches licentiousness, persisted continuously from the Edo bakufu. That was always a policy of severing the totality and continuity of culture somewhere and refashioning it. However, if one thinks of culture itself as the corpus of the modes of action of the Japanese, then it would be a problem to sever it somewhere and say that one may go no further. On the contrary, one's efforts should continually be directed at the regeneration of culture through the total acceptance and restoration of its totality and continuity, but in our time, as a result of the severance of the "sword" in "the chrysanthemum and the sword," the endless emotional slovenliness that is one characteristic of Japanese culture has emerged, whereas during the war, as a result of the severance of the "chrysanthemum," deceit and hypocrisy arose in a different direction. That the side of

the oppressor habitually plays the role of hysterical hypocrisy has not changed between wartime and the present.

The preservation of culture as an object, excluding extreme examples like that of the Chinese Communist Great Cultural Revolution, can be entrusted without worry to the culturalism of any political form. Culturalism permits all hypocrisies, because Iwanami Library reissues *Hagakure*. However, in defending the freedom of the creative subject and the continuity of its life, one must choose a system of government. Here begins the problems of action, that is, what to defend and how to defend it.

What does it mean to defend? Culture cannot defend culture, and attempts to defend speech with speech necessarily only either fails, or merely has others overlook it. "To defend" is always the principle of the sword.

The act of defending is thus necessarily accompanied by danger, and self-renunciation is essential for defending oneself. Defending peace always requires preparation for violence, and an eternal paradox exists between the object being defended and the act of defense. One may say that culturalism is something that evades this paradox and covers its own eyes.

That is, culturalism places emphasis on the object being defended, determines the act of defense in accordance with the characteristics of the object being defended, and there seeks a basis of legality. Because they find legality in stipulating that one can only defend peace peacefully, culture culturally, speech with speech, and violence with violence, they conceptually limit the effectiveness of violence, and they ultimately come to assert the ineffectiveness of violence. That, when force is

ethically rejected, one is carried away by the necessity of demonstrating the ineffectiveness of force itself. It is, in fact, none but a single chain of psychological processes that fear plays. That culturalism falls from the rejection of violence to the ultimate rejection of the state (Enzensberger, in his *Politics and Crime*, defines state power as a monopoly on violence and views criminals as competitors who threaten that monopoly) is through this route, and there, “culture” and “self-preservation” operate within the same psychological mechanism. That is, culture and humanistic welfare values become synonyms.

Thus, the fundamental psychological structure of fear and egoism that lurks beneath culturalism results in a hysterical fantasy that attempts to ignore the power of others in order to defend its own powerlessness.

The cold reality is that, in defending culture, force is required just as it is to defend all other things, and that it is the creators and maintainers of culture themselves to whom that force must belong. At the same time, the idea that the actions and methods of “defending peace” must all be peaceful is a general delusion of culturalism and one form of the feminine illogic that is dominating postwar Japan.

Nevertheless, the essence and present state of the object being defended are not necessarily in concord. As the posing of objects based on the ideal images of each respective worldview from both sides, like “defend the peace,” “defend the parliamentary system,” and “defend the people,” mutually uses the same words, one cannot but relativize “defend culture” from the essence of the actions in which friends and enemies exist, and at the same time, the achieve-

ment of the absolutization of relative values through death is but the essence of action. Either way what they hold in common is that the value of the act of defense does not lie in the preservation of the status quo.

When the values of the object to be defended are threatened, it consequently includes within it the spontaneity of the transformation of the status quo, and to exercise the act of defense in the direction of this transformation must be the general mode. If the present state of the object to be defended is perfect, if, like a diamond of several hundred carats in a museum, it is a passive being to be only defended, that is, if there exists in the object to be defended, neither the possibility nor the subject of the development of its life, then the act of defending such a thing will surely, just like the surrender of Paris, ultimately end either in defeatism or the destruction of the thing being defended. Consequently, the act of “defending” must further, like culture, have reflexivity. That is, there must be an opportunity for the identification of the ideal image of the defender and the true form of the defended. Going one step further, there must be the possibility of the ultimate realization of the identification of the defender with respect to the defended. Between the diamond in the museum and the guard this sort of identification is impossible, and I think that it is in just this sort of possibility that the basis of the glory of the act of defense lies. The basis of the glory that the state can grant is also based on this psychological structure. Thus, in the act of “defending culture,” the identification of the freedom of the creative subject within the defender with the reflexivity, totality, and subjectivity of culture itself is expected,



and here appears the essential character of culture. That is, culture by its essence demands “the act of defense” from the subject of culture (or rather the creative individual that draws on the original subject), and the object that we defend amounts to neither thought nor a political system, but ultimately “culture” in such a sense. By culture itself demanding self-renunciation, it is this site that becomes the transcendental moment of the self.

Consequently, culture necessarily hints at extrication from the egoism that it will defend its own safety. At present, the defense of the peace constitution on one hand becomes the banner of the class struggle, while the fact that it is broadly supported by a base of self-preservationists, such as emotional pacifists, opportunists, the home, and family oriented who dream of self-preservation through the renunciation of all battle, a stratum of women who insist on their visceral repugnance for war, and others who have no connection to the struggle, makes the contradiction that the ideological self-renunciationists are supported by emotional self-preservationists. And these sorts of self-preservationists at times applaud the actions of the Tri-Faction National Federation of Students’ Self-Government Associations out of a kind of pang of conscience. The tendency of the middle stratum of the indifferent, which grows increasingly with urbanization, to direct their more or less faint political interest to dreams of a pleasant pacifism or social revolution in an attempt to preserve the balance of their conscience will surely become ever more clear.

### The Unity of Creation and Defense

In contrast to this, the self-consciousness of life in culture, in accordance with the laws of life, spurs men toward the impulse of self-renunciation for the sake of protecting the continuity of life. From the isolation of ego-analysis and embedding in the ego, when culture falls into sterility, only extrication from this is thought to achieve the revival of culture, and revival simultaneously demands the destruction of the self. The sterile self-sufficiency of a culture that does not contain such self-sacrificial moments was what was called “modernity.” And if the fact that the basis of the glory of ego extinction lies not in the dead splendor of the defended, but must lie in the living original power (the power to look back) is sought within the continuity of the life of culture, it is self-evidently clear what it is that we must defend. Thus, it is surely natural for the union of the subject and the object that are creation and defense. The dual path of the pen and the sword is such an idea. Not approval and maintenance of the status quo, but to defend was itself to reform, and simultaneously to “birth” and “become.”

Now, because defense is action, one must possess a certain physical ability by training. I have heard that many of the key figures of the Taiwanese government are versed in Shaolin kung fu, but the lack of physical training of Japan’s modern literati, and their tendency to take interest in the body solely through illness and medicine, has impoverished Japanese literature and limited its themes and horizons. I feel it strange that in so-called belles-lettres since Meiji there appears not a single scene of creation. Innumerable protagonists with sallow and unhealthy bodies run rampant in modern literature, as if

it were a storybook of famished devils. Protagonists with tuberculosis have decreased, but it is, as before, a paradise swarming with insomniacs, neurotics, impotents, unsightly bodies sedimented with subcutaneous fat, cancer patients, dyspeptic constitutions, sentimentalists, and the half-mad. Men who can fight are extremely rare. The old fixed idea that endowed illness and bodily ill-health with transcendental significance from Romanticism to the fin de siècle is not only entirely uncured, but this Western European notion at times panders to the trend of the times and appears in folklorist disguise. This has even become the visceral reason of the weak, causing them to unduly despise, regard as dangerous, or undervalue, action. 🐾

## THE ART OF HISTORY NO. 1 EDWARD LUTTWAK

*This interview was conducted by Giles Hoffmann and has been edited for brevity and clarity.*

My harassment campaign lasted several months, over which time I sent nearly fifty emails. On the first occasion that Edward Luttwak suggested a speaking time, I had scarcely read any of his work. I therefore ordered Luttwak's subversive instruction manual, *Coup d'État: A Practical Handbook* (1968), and proposed an alternative date for our interview. When I later felt sufficiently ready (having not read the book, but many of his *LRB* essays), Luttwak was on Tetamanu Island in French Polynesia, snorkeling among the corral and fish. We agreed on a day in the coming weeks.

But fate conspired against us once again. Our interview was this time eclipsed by the Ottawa trucker's convoy, in which I helped "organize," an admittedly boomer event destined to fail, but one that also served as tonic, especially for Canadians who are by default depressingly catatonic.

Finally, Luttwak and I spoke, the fruits of which are here. It turns out that I should have taken the first opportunity to talk, because Luttwak doesn't so much answer questions, but instead he anticipates them, challenging you on the direction he assumes you would have taken. Alas my very researched questions will have to sleep forever in their files.

Annoying? Yes.

Even so, everything that Luttwak has to say is valuable; he is an ancient spirit dripping with an erudition that he cannot contain. Indeed if he wasn't so charming, speaking in a slow cadence and grave accent, in a way that undeniably conveys a man with experienced eyes, or if he wasn't so brutal and bare in perspective, dismissing at once all the sinkholes of contemporary suffocation, without getting lost in the confused web of modern political "theories," then Luttwak would be very dislikeable – would be!

But, as an archetypal of man of adventure and war, Luttwak is ineluctably seductive, and so: I forgive him!

We must too acknowledge the elephant in the frog pond: between Luttwak and many us, there is currently a stanch disagreement over the Russian-Ukraine war. But that does not mean that Luttwak is by default a supporter of the globohomo reign. Conversely, he foresees a victorious Ukraine as the soon-to-be birthed son, who will grow-up to attack both mother and father – the life-denying influence of the European Union and America, as well as the authoritative Russian. Time remains the judge of Luttwak's optimism.

This difference and other opinions aside, it made me sad to speak with Luttwak. It's hard to imagine anyone





**Runeseeker**  
*Torso 2 (2022)*  
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living so freely today, tasting war and open possibilities, who is then later recognized for their genuine, exceptional insight. Luttwak seems like an anachronism, a vintage piece who has no spiritual heir, condemned to memory and mere nostalgia.

The obviously brilliant, now, have scurry into the subterranean depths, precisely because the risk of telling the truth, or having genuine eccentricities, is invariably met with the asphyxiating fire-blanket of botched biology who are in positions of decision. Their time will come. Until then, remain frothing at the teeth until the chaos they flame melts away the leash that restrains us.

And in fact, in Luttwak, we find a kindred soul who provides a vision of hope for the future. It is the same vision that will require tremendous sacrifice and risk for its sunrise to appear on the horizon, but will in turn whisper to our blood that history is not yet over.

EDWARD

We have to do it quickly.

INTERVIEWER

Before we begin, I want mention that it is an honour –

EDWARD

– That’s very kind. Let’s just get to the questions.

INTERVIEWER

Everything you learned was in Palermo? [From a previous correspondence, Edward had mentioned that he had lived in “Palermo from age 5 till 10. Have not learned a thing since then.”]

EDWARD

My parents were living in the center of Palermo, in nice apartments, facing the Opera, with a concert hall next door. There was a nice park with ancient trees. The only people who lived in the area were either aristocrats, the Mafia, or business associates of the Mafia. The aristocrats had sent their children to boarding schools in Tuscany, so that they wouldn’t speak with the Sicilian accent.

My parents had only just arrived in Italy. My father had been extraordinarily successful and wanted me to mingle. I went to the local school and I spoke the Sicilian dialect. Because of the Mafia’s presence at the school, we as boys were the only boys who didn’t fight each other. If we fought, then the winner would have to face the elder brother, and then eventually the parents...and then it would begin. So, we were the only children who knew about “arms control” – meaning you could push, but you couldn’t punch and you couldn’t kick. We had vigorous soccer games instead. We had a soccer team that fiercely played against the neighbouring streets’ soccer teams. It was a gang organization, and eventually at the age of ten I became the leader of my school football team. My guys liked war.

Arms control and war by the age of ten.

INTERVIEWER

You had your lesson in men by the age of ten, but when did you receive your lesson in women?

EDWARD

I used to play poker with the professional skippers, who maintained the boats while the owners were away. I was there

on holiday throughout the summer, and during the week I was free, until the weekend, when the people would come from Milano to use their yacht.

I was in Santo Margarito, which is one kilometer away from Portofino. The boats were there, and there were nice women running around. It was a very good place for a fifteen-year-old to learn about life.

INTERVIEWER

Were you, at this time, or earlier in your life, ever practicing Judaism?

EDWARD

No, no, no!

My family and I were never religious. We were just terrifically into reading the Torah in Hebrew, and my father was interesting in reading the Talmud in Aramaic. I know all the prayers and songs, and I read all the texts, but I was never pious. In Palermo, there was no synagogue. When we got to Milano we attended all the local festivals.

We broke all the rules: we never kept the Sabbath. We did, however, read the text: the book, the chapter, and the verse.

It's a textual religion.

INTERVIEWER

If not the pious, then at least the profane? Was it at this age when you had your...amorous escapades?

EDWARD

Not amorous escapes. I was just a teenage boy entering manhood in a normal way.

INTERVIEWER

You have described strategy as having two orientations: one that is concerned with analysis and bureaucracy – the domain of plans and dates and common-sense, and systematic organization, where a straight-line narrative is possible. Here there are rules and guides and obvious applications. The second orientation is very different, and concerns itself with the logic of strategy. This logic is not linear, but contradictory, even paradoxical. Here there are no steadfast rules, and no instruction manual. It is rather the place for generalizations and instincts. It would seem to me, by this very definition, that there is a feminine essence, like Nature herself, in this latter distinction.

Is Grand Strategy like a woman?

EDWARD

No. A woman you said? Absolutely not. I do not see any such parallels at all. Personal relations and the logic of conflict are completely different. I do not see the parallel. I do not accept it. It doesn't make sense. The logic of strategy is inherent to conflict and collective actions, and not individual actions. They are not governed by the same dynamic at all.

INTERVIEWER

I've found mostly people who study war, but do not have a passion for it. They don't seem fascinated and allured by conflict, especially battle. What happens when those who study war, do not also love war?

EDWARD

You cannot study war seriously unless you have engaged in it. But it's not only a question of the experience of warfare; it's your emotional attitude to warfare.

People react to war, emotionally, in a very different way. Most people have no experience of war, they only have cinematic depictions of war. And to me they mean absolutely nothing. I have had my experiences of actual war – these experiences were characterized by a discernable emotional dimension, in the sense that some people were afraid – who had to control their fear – while there were others who were not afraid – and therefore did not have to control their fear.

People who were afraid and could not control their fear...Well, I couldn't see them because they were not on the battlefield. They had avoided it or escaped.

So, there are only two types of people: those who are afraid and who can control it, and then there are people who are fearless. Rightly or wrongly, they have a sense of invulnerability. I belong to the second category. I was never afraid.

#### INTERVIEWER

If the possibility of war is an essential premise for anything political, then for Grand Strategy –

#### EDWARD

– Grand Strategy is dominated by politics. Internal politics and external politics dominate. If you start a war ill-prepared but you have a cohesive mission and strong allies, you are more likely to win than if you have an advanced military, but you lack a cohesive mission and good allies.

#### INTERVIEWER

But with innovations in destruction, from World War I to –

#### EDWARD

– The First World War scared nobody, and indeed we had the second one. It only caused a few protagonists to absorb it. What interrupted the cycle was nuclear weapons, because nuclear weapons exceeded the culminating point of useful destruction.

#### INTERVIEWER

And what do you think happens to men – as *biological substance* – without war?

#### EDWARD

There are men around the universe, many of whom do not grow up with war or warring cultures. I just got back from Polynesia, and the Polynesians have not had any experience of war for centuries. It has changed them. It is one of the reasons why it is rather nice to be in Polynesia, because people are extremely unaggressive. The French were very good colonial masters, so there is zero resentment...no chips on shoulders...none of this angry stuff that you get in the Bahamas when they should be very polite, but they are not.

So, the Polynesians are very nice...

But the European Man, the one who discovered everything and explored everything and visited all those countries that never visited him...the European Man, he was absolutely forged by war. His constitution is the Iliad, and all those who diverge from that are, in different forms, dead-end people. The cuckoo clock story is a very accurate one.

It is that European civilization was powered by war, and indeed, it all started with the Greeks. Remember Heraclitus's phrase, "War is the Father of all things." And the mode and the rise of

Europe and its domination, of which persists today despite Chinese attempts – very weak Chinese attempts, I should say – was due to the sequence of wars, destruction, and then the powerful energies of reconstruction. Man loves war; women love warriors. After the war they make children.

The destruction of the war, is replaced by much more construction, and this is how Europe advanced, and the cities that were most often besieged and attacked were the ones that grew the most. London is an exception, and so the British had to go and find the wars elsewhere, which they did, in every content, being European.

War and Europe were symbiotic.

As a mechanism – any economist should agree – that the strongest years in Europe and in America, were the post-War years, when men came back from war with a great desire to find women, make child, build houses, create companies, etc. War is the dynamic that propelled Europe.

America, like the British have to go very far find wars, and they have to come up with fanciful explanations. When the Americans fought in Vietnam, they gave very elaborate explanations to travel 4000 miles. But they really went because they are European.

INTERVIEWER

“Men love war; woman love warriors.”  
So, what do you think about women in political –

EDWARD

– So far women Prime Ministers are more ferocious than their male counterparts. Women in positions of power, pursue power.

But the most important issue is the European mechanism, which powered European creativity. This machine worked on a program – a program written in Greece. *There is no other program.* The moment you deviate, you will find absolutely nothing. Literally nothing. For example: Spain is the most feminist and the most pacifist nation in Europe. The Spanish troops in Iraq were embarrassing, they just wouldn't fight, even when attacked. And Spain has the lowest birthrate in Europe. These people are going to disappear.

They may have opinions about invented new lifestyles, sexual and non-sexual – all these “wonderful” things, but nature is not interested. They are actually disappearing.

The old European formula, which caused enormous amounts of human suffering, and enormous amounts of creation, was: man loved war; women loved warriors – building more than what was there before, including breeding more children for a larger population. Europe, in fact, was full of people. When I was born – and I'm very old – in November 1942, the population of Italy was greater than the population of the whole of north Africa, from Morocco to the Swiss Canal. Today Egypt alone has more people than Italy, Spain, and half of France or something.

There are too many examples to give, including creations we take for granted. The world suffers today from diabetes



because Napoleon proclaimed that he did not want to import Caribbean sugar from the British, and so he gave a prize to whomever would come up with a domestic source. And somebody did in France, and they won the prize. Sugar beets, which were once known as just beets, and this is only one of a thousand things that happened along the way. War is the father of all things.

Without the dynamic of war, the European populations are shrinking, birth rates are shrinking, and you have physiological decline. There is crisis of demographics because more of the population is old, and old people are cynics – they don't invent things; they don't fight.

INTERVIEWER

The antidote is, then, to return?

EDWARD

Yes, it is an ideological antidote, which is the recovery the original formula, because there is no other solution.

The point is this...it is very annoying – extremely annoying – that European Civilization utterly dominates the world, so much so, that other civilizational activities are either ignorant or pathetic. It is very annoying that all of it should have derived from a couple hundred thousand people who lived in Greece, 2000-2500 years ago or more.

...Aeschylus.

The point is that it is very annoying that this is so – *but it is so* – and attempts to deviate from it, to come up with alternatives, whereby men don't love war and women don't love warriors, have failed, and they have failed demographically.

The Italians are disappearing; the Spanish are disappearing. The highest birth rates in Europe are in places where people are still engaging in manly activities, such as Finland and Sweden. There is no doubt that in the Ukraine there will be lots of children.

Ukrainians are cursed by this war and blessed by it, because it's a great thing for nations so ill-formed and never independent, with no history of self-government to talk about since the 9<sup>th</sup> century, for them to fight such a war, and to win it. It will launch them and propel them. And that was the basic mechanism – it is the Battle of Salamis. Aeschylus. Have you read *The Persians*?

INTERVIEWER

I have not.

EDWARD

Aeschylus, the first of the great playwrights. He fought at Salamis, and he won the literary competition to write the play after the war. It was performed in front of audience of people who had just fought in the war, in which the immense Persian navy enters Greece in Salamis, and the hugely outnumbered Greek ships defeat the Persians.

There are two important passages. One is how the Greeks rallied themselves before the war, about how they were fighting for their freedom, for Greece, for their parents and children, and so on.

Contained in the second passage is the question that Xerxes asks about these strange people, who are defeating this vast army. Who is set above this Greek enemy? Who rules them? Who is their shepherd and their master? And the an-

swer is that the Greeks have no master above them. Each is his own master. Read the play.

Aeschylus is the first of the great Greeks. Think of the fact that the very early playwright he has to depict the Battle of Salamis and he didn't have props or film or simulation, so his play is set in the Persian courts, where they are receiving messages. Aeschylus triumphantly celebrates the Greek victory, while at the same, he has regard for the other side. Atusa is a Persian Queen. At the end of the play when news turns very bad from the battle, she worries about her son's life, and then she becomes a Mother. And do to this in the first play practically ever written tells you about what I mentioned. We must be tributary to that history, because the moment you deviate from this culture, you decline biologically. So that's all there is to it.

INTERVIEWER

In America, the particular fight against those –

EDWARD

– But these are all deviations. The people who uphold those values don't count. You see: you have two sets of people in this country: there are the people who maintain those ancient and thoroughly obsolete values – “men love war and women love warriors” – and then are many other people who have other ideologies. The thing about those people with other ideologies is they are exemplified by the Clintons – they have one daughter. That's it. Okay? That means they are dying out.

INTERVIEWER

To practically revive –

EDWARD

– Europe provides the data on the macro-sense: the more liberal the society, the more “advanced” it becomes, adopting different concepts of life and so on, the lower the birthrate. It's very annoying, I accept that, to be tributary to people died 2500 years ago, who were white male slave owners, to be clear. Very annoying, however there is no competition.

INTERVIEWER

The alternative –

EDWARD

– When a Chinese person wants to see a good play, he has to see *Uncle Vanya*. Some people accept that without any problems, and others don't. And then there are the Muslims, of course, whose ideal was shown by the Taliban, who are the Muslim in a pure form – and we see what that leads to: zero creativity. The entirety of the Muslim world, 1.9 billion people, generates less science and technology than the 9 million people in Israel. The Greeks were outnumbered by the Persians – remember? The Persians produced nothing. Or very little. A couple of monuments. And so, one of the fundamental problems is the necessity – the *false* necessity – of making civilizations equivalent. You cannot walk into a classroom and say, “Let's talk about the important civilisations, then, if we have time, we'll mention the others. With modern ideologically, you cannot do that. And therefore, you begin with a lie. The basis of contemporary generic education is a lie, in which all civilizations are equal.

INTERVIEWER

In your piece, the “Future of Fascism,”

you –

EDWARD

– That was about the financialization of industrial corporations, and national degradation because of it. It was about the transfer of responsibility from humans to computers, to create a bigger class of lumpenproletariat, who will discover that the elites will turn their backs on the white working class. That's what I predicted. The white working class will then look for advocates who will support them. And that's why fascism has a future. The abandonment of the white working class by the democratic party was the subject of that piece.

INTERVIEWER

But fascism, or whatever you want to call the European formula, requires more than economic analysis.

EDWARD

Yes. Those were only practical observations. My thought didn't contain much else for that piece. What you're asking for is the return to ideological truth, as opposed to the posing of untruth.

Look what is happening right now. There is a media which is dominated by hearings for a person becoming a judge (Ketanji Brown Jackson). I'm not saying that this person is less qualified than the people who have become judges in that court. I'm just saying...everyone is making a gigantic attempt to portray a very ordinary person into somebody who is one of the seven. [Laughs]

There is an official lie over everything. All societies generate official lies that people pretend to believe, but the question is whether the lies overwhelm the

truth.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have recommendations for the young men, who show a wide-eyed lust for truth.

EDWARD

Absolutely. That is how European civilization has always advanced. The re-discovery of the great classics in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, lead to the massive effort to preserve them. Then there was early Renaissance of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Then the Renaissance, then the Enlightenment, and so on.

If people went back to simply reading those books, that would be a good start. The reason is not because these texts are necessarily transcendental. It is just that European civilization is based on it. As I say: read Aeschylus. It was the enormous confidence generated by this victory that propelled the rise of Greek civilization that followed the Battle of Salamis. Victories are empowering. In 1948, 650 000 Israelis survived the attack by multiple Arab armies, along with the American plan to extinguish their state, which tagged along with the British plan, for strategic reasons. The Secretary of State George Marshall, refused to meet the Israeli envoy, because he was very busy and he thought Israel wouldn't last more than a few weeks. The Greeks were given the same chances of survival when the Persian empire invaded. Having survived that, it generated so much energy that it empowered the state. If other countries had grown at the Israeli rate from 650 000 to 9 million in that time frame, the world population would be bigger.

I expect great things in Ukraine. Great things. Once the Russian tide recedes, Ukraine will be empowered by its victory.

INTERVIEWER

But those same forces that support Ukraine are the same forces that share the alternative vision to the European formula. You seem to think that Ukraine will not fall into the hands of their current American and EU puppeteers?

EDWARD

[Laughs]. No way. It will take 90 years for the energy generated to dissipate. They will be unleashed. Alright I have to run. Read that stuff.

INTERVIEWER

But –

EDWARD

– [Hangs UP] 





GILES HOFFMANN

ANAX

PAULOS OF MYTH PILOT

NOSTROMO

FISCHERKING

APEX

CURTIS YARVIN

YUKIO MISHIMA (MASAKI)

EDWARD LUTTWAK