UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Enduring Nature of Pre-Modern Thought

by

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A THESIS

SUMBITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

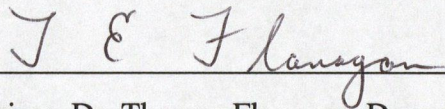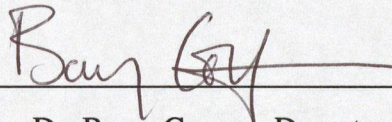DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

CALGARY, ALBERTA

APRIL, 2011

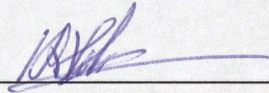UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled 'The Enduring Nature of Pre-Modern Thought' submitted by Timothy Anderson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Herein, I explore pre-modern political thought; this philosophy emerges from sixteenth century philosophers who lived through intense crises. It began a philosophical shift towards secularity, while stopping short of modernity's excesses. I show that Carl Schmitt's state theory and sovereignty represent a continuation of pre-modernity. He criticizes liberalism with a pre-modern understanding of men, reason and government. Additionally, third generation American neoconservatives employ pre-modern ideas during the War on Terror and the aftermath of 11 September 2001. Their arguments also implicitly embrace Schmitt's concepts of politics and exceptionalism. This work draws a line from pre-modern theorists living just prior the Enlightenment, through the instability of the Weimar, to the decision makers of twenty-first century America. Each generation modifies pre-modernity to suit their concrete realities, but the same arguments emerge. I demonstrate that pre-modernity influences the philosophy of these writers in different centuries, and it has been valuable for them.

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INTRODUCTION

For some contemporary political thinkers, the notion of tradition carries little weight. In fact, one might assert that tradition represents the dominance of past injustices and prejudices that writers press against today. One dominant stream of twenty-first century political philosophy is post-modernism; in its current manifestation, it inveighs against classic and modern theorists of the state, the soul, and man. For post-modernists, 'tradition' represents the writers who want to maintain a discredited way of understanding humans and politics. Post-modernists reject the western tradition of truth, since both it and the concepts employed within traditional theory represent a socially constructed and privileged world view.[1]

This position, while popular, appears to miss the whole point. Tradition *is* valuable, and not just for political philosophy but also for all forms of the arts. It becomes a context in which one can gauge the relevance and quality of work. It becomes a framework within which one can value, appreciate and even criticize political thought. I want to use this concept of 'tradition' as a metric, something objective, rather than dismissing the relation of one theorist to another as an exercise in prejudice.

Few writers have depicted the importance and inevitable influence of tradition better than T.S. Eliot. He argues that if a writer is to gain anything from past works, he is obliged to see tradition as someone that must be learned by 'great labour.'[2] Writers derive value from tradition; a good one moves beyond 'his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of his own country has a simultaneous

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[1] For a full and complete discussion of 'postmodern' political thought, see Gary Aylesworth, 'Postmodernism.' In The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Avaliable online: < http://plato.stanford.edu/ archives/win2010/entries/postmodernism/ >. Accessed 17 February 2011.

[2] T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent.' In The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Edited by Stephen Greenblatt (London & New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), p. 2320.

existence and composes a simultaneous order.'[3] The writer must integrate the ideas of the present with the concepts of the past he learned in order to produce good work.

To determine whether one's work is good, it cannot be evaluated in isolation; tradition acts as context for this valuation. Quality work comes from the artist who knows *who he is* and *where he came from* intellectually.[4] Eliot writes of the contemporary artist,

> You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it.[5]

Work worth valuating both critically and in terms of beauty or mastery is judged along the lines of tradition. Moreover, works of the past are re-evaluated at the same time a new piece is created, and in abiding by tradition, work can be judged amongst those that came before. Thus, there is a modifying relationship between 'really new' and the past. Because the canon was complete before the new addition, to accommodate the new work, the relationship of past works to one another and to the new piece becomes changed.[6] As such, the responsibility that falls on new writers is great, for they are able to alter the perception of past works while being 'judged by the standards of the past.'[7]

For literature, the argument seems plausible. When one studies the epic poems of Alexander Pope, it is manifest that the poet heavily researched the history of the tradition. Despite his satirical intentions, his <u>Rape of the Lock</u> invokes the muse, asks the epic question, and deifies his subjects just as Homer and John Milton did.[8] When one reads Pope's poetry, one

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., pp. 2320-2321.
[7] Ibid., p. 2321.
[8] Alexander Pope, <u>The Rape of the Lock</u> (I.3-6).

cannot judge its value or greatness alone, but rather, must compare it to past epic poetry in order to determine how good it is. Also, Pope elicits from the reader a sense of disdain for his characters; of Belinda when she loses her lock of hair he writes:

> Not youthful Kings in Battel seiz'd alive,
> Not scornful Virgins who their Charms survive,
> Not ardent Lovers robb'd of all their Bliss,
> Not ancient Ladies when refus'd a Kiss,
> Not Tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
> Not *Cynthia* when her *Manteau*'s—pinn'd awry,
> E'er felt such Rage, Resentment and Despair,
> As Thou, sad Virgin! for thy ravish'd Hair.[9]

In showing Belinda's dramatic sadness at the loss of her hair, Pope demonstrated just how overindulgent epic poetry can be. Not only is Belinda's situation outlandish, the implication is that concerns of past epic heroes might too have been overstated. As a consequence of Pope's mockery, the epic tradition fell into disuse; no one has since written a seminal epic poem. Thus, Pope was able to 'alter the perception' of past work through both research and his own creativity; he offered a persuasive new way to analyze epic poetry that heretofore did not exist.

I want to investigate the sustainability of Eliot's theory in terms of political philosophy. Is it possible that the work of contemporary theorists can both demonstrate a clear connection between themselves and the 'canon' of tradition *and* that this newer work alters our perception of past philosophy? This question requires a long answer. This paper will show that there exists a clear connection between Carl Schmitt, American neoconservatives and pre-modernity. This will suggest that pre-modern theory has intrinsic value; it was not merely a stage en route to modernity but in and of itself a theoretically sound way to approach recurring political challenges. Meditating on these apparent connections, I assert that, indeed, T.S. Eliot's theory can and does apply to political philosophy.

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[9] Ibid., (IV. 3-10).

Indeed, I feel it is appropriate to investigate pre-modernity in the current climate of political theory. Recently, the discipline has become infatuated with post-modern thought. For example, writers praise Jacques Derrida's idea that ethics 'follow from the assumption that the limitless call on me made by the other, by every other, incommensurably, comes, in each case, from someone who is wholly other ... and therefore never directly accessible.'[10] Essentially, ethics are a duty imposed upon me by a being *totally unlike* myself which I can never know; this contrasts with Aristotelian or Kantian ethics that presume that ethics binds men together, all of whom share a similar construction, to upright action.

Also, theorists have popularized Michel Foucault's radical conception of knowledge. For him, knowledge is an 'assemblage' of 'mechanisms and visibilities' that lack anything beyond it; he reduces epistemology to the 'stacking-up' of different thresholds of learning, for there 'are only practices or positivities (*sic*) which are constitutive of knowledge.'[11] In this, Foucault denies that gaining knowledge is a process of learning the truth about the *good*, as Plato does, or the holy and Trinitarian nature of God, as Aquinas does. Against them, 'knowledge' becomes merely an aggregation of one's observations, void of any moral or eternal content; knowledge is not a science, but rather, an exercise bound by historicity.[12]

Out of this context, where thinkers deny the value of the traditional tenets of political philosophy, an investigation of *pre*-modernity seems appropriate. I want to suggest that despite the nihilism and historicism of post-modernity, certain philosophical ideas have endured throughout the generations; moreover, they endure because they are valuable. Instead of a deconstruction, I want to propose a reconstruction of pre-modern thought and trace it throughout

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[10] J. Hillis Miller, 'Derrida Enisled.' In Critical Inquiry. Volume 33, number 2 (Winter 2007): 268. Miller calls Derrida's insights both 'brilliant' and 'eloquent.'

[11] Gilles Deleuze, Foucault. Translated and edited by Seàn Hand (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 51.

[12] Ibid., pp. 51-52. The negation here suggests that science is something that endures beyond the historical moment.

different eras. That the modern understanding of freedom or human nature contains a contradiction or two should not propel us to disregard these ideas as fictions. Rather, by looking to pre-modernity, one can examine the liberal origins of these ideas; through this lens, it becomes clear that certain traditional notions arise consistently to meet the challenges of politics in moments of crisis. As such, I wish to show that pre-modern theorists can provide a consistent political philosophy that can endure and be of actual value. If some thinkers can use post-modernity to deny the value of traditional ideas, then only the opposite approach—a discussion of pre-modernity—can demonstrate that certain concepts contain intrinsic worth.

In this thesis, I draw upon five principal theorists to flesh out pre-modernity: Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch de Spinoza, Carl Schmitt, and third-generation American neoconservatives. One can connect them all in terms of societal strife. Their observation of political violence colored their political thought, and in part justifies why I suggest they ought to be read together. The element of social upheaval for Carl Schmitt and the neoconservatives is evident. Schmitt wrote in a war-torn Germany, where different parties—most notably the Communists and National Socialists—sought to gain control of the state by killing their opposition and intimidating the German people. The third generation of American neoconservatives lived in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, with the perpetual risk that further Islamofascist attacks could take place at any time. For both Schmitt and the neoconservatives, political intimidation and social unrest contextualize their philosophy.

And in this, these more contemporary theorists can be compared to the inaugurators of pre-modern thought: Machiavelli, Hobbes and Spinoza, each of whom wrote in times of coequal peril to Schmitt or the neoconservatives. Machiavelli rose to political prominence in Florence during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century after the expulsion of the powerful Medici

family; the Medici mishandled the 1494 invasion of Charles VIII of France and this provided a

space where citizens unhappy with the Medici autocracy could replace them.[13] Piero Soderini led

Florence as its elected head of state, and Machiavelli worked for his government in the

chancery.[14] During this republican period, the Medici and their sympathizers actively opposed

the government in the hopes of regaining their lost power; in 1497, they went so far as to attempt

a coup against the government, which failed.[15] In Rome, it angered Pope Julius that Florence

seemed to embrace the French invaders, or at least, failed to repel them.[16] By 1512 however, the

influence of the French began to wane, and the Pope decided to exact 'vengeance' on the

republic.[17] The Holy League sent a group of Spanish soldiers to sack Florence; the peace terms

enforced by Julius included the restoration of the Medici to power; this led to Soderini's exile,

and a purging of republican government officials.[18] Like Soderini, Machiavelli too faced exile

from public life.[19]

One year later, Machiavelli was wrongly accused of conspiracy against the Medici

family, which resulted in his imprisonment and torture for several weeks.[20] Prior to his arrest,

Machiavelli was subject to baseless accusations that he misspent public money or acted with

malfeasance as a secretary in the Florentine republic; unable to impugn him with these

accusations, his enemies arrested him for conspiracy and sought a confession from him of a

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[13] Cary Nederman, 'Niccolò Machiavelli.' In The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Available online: < http://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=machiavelli >. Accessed 14 March 2011; Roslyn Pesman, 'Machiavelli, Piero Soderini, and the Republic of 1494-1512.' In A Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli. Edited by John N. Najemy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), p. 48.
[14] Pesman, 'The Republic of 1494-1512,' p. 48.
[15] Ibid., p. 52.
[16] Ibid., pp. 58-59.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., p. 59. The Medici and Rome had a friendly relationship—in fact, a Medici would be elected Pope Leo X, the predecessor of Julius.
[19] Ibid., pp. 59-60.
[20] Nederman, 'Machiavelli.'

capital crime.[21] Machiavelli withstood the torture, and was released during an amnesty celebrating one of the Medici's ascension to the papacy.[22] Consequentially, Machiavelli was forced into retirement and never regained his clout in Florence; his most famous works such as The Prince, while written in this exile, were not even published until after his death.[23] According to Leo Strauss, in the Discourses, Machiavelli tempered his critiques of religion and the soul because he lacked sufficient freedom to enunciate them clearly; in his society, a philosopher learned how to 'present [his] thoughts in an oblique way.'[24] Clearly, Machiavelli wrote in tumultuous times, where anything written by or said by a former republican be used against him by his political foes. While one cannot determine whether he psychologically feared reprisal from his foes, it is manifest that Machiavelli lived in a violent society and this backdrop almost certainly would contribute to one's views on the state and the exercise of political power.

Hobbes too wrote in dangerous times. He was born in 1588, and during his life, he saw the beheading of Charles I, the English Civil War, the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, and the restoration of the Stuart monarchy.[25] Prior to the Lord Protector's rule, his political thought was interpreted as a defense of obedience to the English monarchy; in 1640, once Hobbes realized that parliament would defy the king—whom the revolutionaries would later execute—he feared for his life and exiled himself to Paris.[26] Once his Leviathan was published in 1651, Hobbes angered both English royalists in London and French Catholics for his critiques of the papacy;

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[21] Maurizio Viroli, 'Introduction.' In Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince. Translated and Edited by Peter Bondanella (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. xii.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Nederman, 'Machiavelli.'; Viroli argues that The Prince was intentionally written not to flatter the Medici rulers, but rather, would likely have irritated them in terms of Machiavelli's particular condemnations of their approaches to statecraft. In fact, Viroli calls Machiavelli's writings 'subversive' and suggests that he intended to show the world that he knew the art of the state better than the Medici. See 'Introduction,' pp. xv et seq.

[24] Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 33.

[25] C.B. Macpherson, 'Introduction.' In Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan. Edited by C.B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 13.

[26] Ibid., pp. 13-14.; Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne, 'Introduction.' In Thomas Hobbes On The Citizen. Edited by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. x.

this forced him to flee Paris for England where he submitted to the 'Council of the State' and attempted to live in quiet.[27] Nevertheless, Hobbes published a first edition of <u>On the Citizen</u> which drew fierce criticism from his political enemies; they extrapolated from his work that Hobbes intended to claim for himself some sort of royal sovereignty.[28] Due to the already 'edgy' relationship that Hobbes had with the court, he did not dare publish any further editions of his work for a decade.[29] Even when Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, despite the favourable disposition of the king to Hobbes, many accused him of being a 'turncoat' and he was furthermore forced to fear their possible repercussions.[30] Certainly, the surroundings of Hobbes's professional life included murder and intimidation; politically, there was a battle over whether the king or the parliament ought to rule, and personally, enemies of Hobbes and his ideas were likely to kill him as they had Charles I. As with Machiavelli, it is reasonable to suggest that the harsh political realities that Hobbes witnessed influenced his thought.

The theme of violent societal upheaval flows over into Spinoza as well. Living in Amsterdam, Spinoza was proud of his homeland's liberalism and of its republican political culture.[31] However, he lived during 'an age of war, revolution, and social unrest.'[32] Throughout Europe, crises arose from the Levellers, the Quakers, and the Catholic Inquisition in Spain.[33] At home, the Dutch Republic was threatened by France. Louis XIV felt that Holland could not be trusted; France helped the Dutch win independence in 1635, but Holland concluded a private peace agreement with rival Spain in 1648, and allied with Sweden and England to prevent

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[27] Macpherson, 'Introduction,' p. 14.
[28] Tuck and Silverthorne, 'Introduction,' pp. xiv-xv.
[29] Ibid., p. xv.
[30] Cf. Macpherson, 'Introduction,' p. 14.
[31] Lewis Samuel Feuer, <u>Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism</u> (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. ix.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

French expansion in Europe after 1667.[34] As such, 'Louis XIV was so offended that he determined to punish the Republic.'[35] With assistance from England, Münster and Cologne, the French advanced on Holland in June of 1672.[36] Consequentially, the Dutch political leaders lost their control over the state. Merchants fled, there was a run on the banks, and the value of state loans dropped thirty percent.[37]

The Dutch people accused the republican leadership of treason against the nation for precipitating the invasion.[38] There arose a disagreement between Johan and Cornelius De Witt—two leaders of the republic—and Prince William III; the former men opposed negotiating any peace agreements with France, while the latter seemed more inclined to do so.[39] In August 1672, the De Witt brothers were wrongfully accused of planning to kill the Prince, and on 20 August, they were both murdered; they were scapegoats of the mob who panicked over French aggression.[40] This is the political context within which Spinoza wrote. A defender of liberal republicanism in Holland, he saw its very existence threatened by antidemocratic institutions. He observed the public defenders of the Republic being grimly assassinated, and 'brooded upon the incapacity of the masses to sustain a liberal government' through the citizenry's panic and scapegoating.[41] Although one cannot determine to what extent Spinoza *himself* was fearful for his own life during the invasion of Holland, clearly his political reality was rife with executions, vengeance, mob violence and unreason. As with Machiavelli and Hobbes, it is reasonable to conclude that these powerful conditions impacted how Spinoza approached political philosophy.

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[34] Wout Troost, William III, the Stadtholder-King: A Political Biography. Translated by J.C. Grayson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), p. 71.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., pp. 71 et seq.

[37] Ibid., p. 74.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid, p. 78, *passim*.

[40] Ibid., p. 86. Whether William III was *directly* involved in the murder of his political opponents appears undetermined.

[41] Feuer, The Rise of Liberalism, p. ix.

Beyond the clear philosophical connections I will draw amongst these writers, they each lived in times of intense political struggle. Pre-modern political thought consists of coarser ideas than modern theory because its composers were influenced by their own concrete realities. It is one thing for Immanuel Kant or Adam Smith to draw up a patient, ethical and completely rational political roadmap in the quiet of Prussia or Scotland. Pre-moderns, however, stared peril in the face; they saw the innate wickedness of men, and the turmoil that animates political life.

In what follows, I trace out the tradition of pre-modernity which emerged in the sixteenth century. Then, I present the political theory of Carl Schmitt, a German jurist and political philosopher from the early twentieth century. A close reading of Schmitt's work shows that he embraced the fundamental tenets of pre-modernity. Next, I sketch out the political thought of American neoconservatives from the beginning of the twenty-first century. I demonstrate that their work compares favourably with Schmitt's, particularly regarding Schmitt's pre-modern positions. I conclude by discussing the relevance of the connection between the neoconservatives, Schmitt and pre-modernity. In brief, the pre-modern tradition clearly influences theorists in different time periods; it has been valuable approach for philosophers who write in moments of crisis.

CHAPTER I: Pre-Modernism and Modernity

For the multitude is ignorant, lacks judgment, and is easily deceived; it is helpless without leaders who persuade or force it to act prudently. — *Leo Strauss.*[42]

It can be said that modernity emerges like a warrior to slay feudalism and monarchism; successfully it brought a better material life to the masses than ever before. It places responsibility for one's life squarely in his own hands—men's birth no longer fated them to a particular life. Essentially, it expresses Cassius's insight that it is in ourselves and not in our stars that we are failures.

In this chapter, I review the theories of both modernists and those I call 'pre-moderns.' For pre-modernism, I knit this idea together through a meditation on important political philosophers who lived and wrote in the period between feudalism and the liberal revolution. Before I do so, I investigate the intellectual history of these philosophers, based on Leo Strauss's work, to justify why I employ them in particular. Next, I refer to expert analysis and original theorists of the ideologies in thoroughly fleshing out modern political thought. Having compared the ideologies, I conclude that pre-modernism is more than an evolutionary stage that paves the way for modernity.[43]

Pre-Modernity: Building Off the Waves of Modernity

This concept of 'pre-modernity' that I propose builds off of previous literature surrounding modern and classical thought. Structurally, I attempt to modify Leo Strauss's first wave of

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[42] Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli, p. 260.

[43] In this paper, I connect the idea of modernity with the political ideology of classical liberalism. I do this because the political manifestation of modernity *qua* modernity at its earliest moment is liberalism. It cannot be denied that over time modernity heavily influenced both Marxist and fascist approaches to politics, but this is outside the scope of what I intend to argue. I often interchange words such as 'modernism' and 'liberalism'; while the former is more of a general term that indicates the advancement of political thought chronologically, liberalism, as its initial expression, seems to be an appropriate synonym to use within the context of this paper.

modernity;[44] I believe that it represents something sufficiently different from the other branches of modern thought that one should treat it as its own special sub-grouping. In Strauss's view, the important distinction within the study of political thought exists between classical and modern theory.[45] However, modernity is not a single project; it is animated by 'immense variety' and 'frequent radical change.'[46] Among the writers in the first of three waves, he enumerates both Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes.[47]

According to Strauss, in part, the 'characteristic of the first wave of modernity [was] the reduction of the moral and political problem to a technical problem....'[48] Instead of focusing on virtue or justice in politics, the first wave dealt with the problems of social life with solutions based on observation and secular reason. The subsequent waves of modernity openly critiqued the first. The second wave fought for 'nonutilitarian' virtue and against 'the more or less cynical commercialism' of republics wrought by the first.[49] The third wave, following Nietzsche, suggested that 'the human problem is indeed insoluble as a social problem,' and that there is 'no possibility of genuine happiness' in human affairs.[50] While the first wave offered solutions to the human problem in politics through strong sovereign leadership and empirical evidence, the third wave insists this approach is thoroughly flawed.

As such, it seems that there is, in fact, something particular about Strauss's first wave of modernity. These thinkers initiated the movement of political philosophy away from classical thought, yet their insights were rejected by subsequent generations of modern theorists. If in fact

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[44] Leo Strauss, 'The Three Waves of Modernity.' In Political Philosophy: Six Essays by Leo Strauss. Edited by Hilail Gildin (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1975), pp. 81 et seq.

[45] Cf. ibid., p. 83. Interestingly, Strauss will use the word 'premodern' to describe the philosophy that precedes Machiavelli. This further underscores that important distinction for him is between modern and ancient thought. For clarity's sake, Strauss and I are using the term pre-modern differently—mine compares with his first wave.

[46] Ibid., p. 83.

[47] Ibid., pp. 83-84, 88-89.

[48] Ibid., p. 89.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., p. 94-95.

the second and third waves of modernists build their arguments on a dismissal of the first, then I am inclined to believe that the earliest moderns—those stemming from Machiavelli—belong in a different category. I accept that they have reoriented political theory away from the ancients in a modern direction, but I suspect that they do not wholly belong in the *modern* world. Building on Strauss's concept of the groundbreaking first wave, I want to call this tradition 'pre-modernity,' in that it precedes the full blossoming of modernity, but does not deserve the designation of classic or medieval. Indeed, it is a unique tradition.

Strauss and others show that a theoretical connection exists among Machiavelli, Hobbes and Benedict de Spinoza. There is a relationship among these thinkers, in that Machiavelli begets Hobbes, who then begets Spinoza. Analyses of their work suggest that each embodies a fundamental movement *from* traditional political philosophy, but do so in remarkably similar ways that allow us to consider their thought together as I intend to do as the basis for pre-modernism. Strauss makes slightly different distinctions between where to end and begin waves of thinkers—for example, he begins the second wave with Rousseau. In modifying his theory, I am defining pre-modernism through Machiavelli, Hobbes and Spinoza because I believe the literature supports it. Consequentially, my break between pre-modernity and modernity begins with the liberal that come after Spinoza. Inasmuch as the thinkers that follow Spinoza approach reason, government and human nature in significantly different ways than the pre-moderns, I feel I can justify the distinction. A close reading of these modern texts and a comparison between them and the pre-moderns further suggests that that distinction appears valid.

An Intellectual History of Pre-Modern Philosophers

Machiavelli is the first philosopher who openly espouses a politics guided by expediency, whereby the ends justify the means.[51] In dismissing a philosophy of faith, Machiavelli represents the decline of Greek influence within political thought, and in so doing, becomes the first to orient towards modernity.[52] As such, 'Machiavelli appears to have broken with all preceding political philosophers [and t]here is weighty evidence in support of this view.'[53] Moreover, Strauss notes that the philosopher presents himself as a new Columbus vis-à-vis exploring the new world of politics; he will be 'the discoverer of a hitherto unexpected moral continent, as a man who has found new modes and orders.'[54] In his analysis of modernity, Strauss writes that Machiavelli is the first wave thereof—the place where the movement from antiquity begins.[55] Machiavelli doubted the value of ancient political thought and asserted 'that the true political philosophy began with him.'[56] Machiavelli embodies a new start.

But the analysis of Machiavelli is subtler than this. While Strauss argues that Machiavelli represents the first real advancement in modern thought, one errs in identifying him as a strictly modern political philosopher. That which Machiavelli wishes to explore is something old rather than new. In his <u>Discourses</u>, he wants to recreate a Roman-style republic; 'far from being a radical innovator, Machiavelli is a restorer of something old and forgotten.'[57] While he prides himself on using a new approach—which he does through his scepticism and rejection of traditional morals—his new mode of a republic is actually quite old.[58]

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[51] Leo Strauss, 'Niccolo Machiavelli.' In <u>The History of Political Thought</u>. 2nd Edition. Edited by Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), p. 272.
[52] Ibid. Or least what will *become* modernity.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Leo Strauss, <u>Thoughts on Machiavelli</u>, p. 85.
[55] Leo Strauss, 'The Three Waves of Modernity.' p. 84.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Strauss, 'Machiavelli,' p. 272.
[58] Strauss, <u>Thoughts on Machiavelli</u>, p. 86.

While this could be a logical trap, Machiavelli finds a way to meld together his desire to revamp political philosophy and to promote older political ideas. Strauss writes:

> The ancient modes and orders are new because they have been forgotten, or buried like ancient statues. Machiavelli must then disinter them: no trace of ancient virtue, the origin and progeny of the ancient modes and orders, remains. But he does not claim that he is the first or the only modern man to become aware of the ancient modes and orders. Everyone knows of them and many admire them. But everyone thinks that they cannot be imitated by modern man. The purpose of the <u>Discourses</u> is not simply to bring light to the ancient modes and orders but above all to prove that they can be imitated by modern man. Machiavelli's enterprise therefore requires knowledge of things modern as well as things ancient; it cannot be the work of a mere antiquarian.[59]

Machiavelli combines antiquity and what will be modernity by digging up old systems of government and showing that they are just as usable at that moment they were for the Romans. Strauss's understanding of Machiavelli within the history of political thought is this: he represents the first movement towards modern thought but uses the instruments of pre-modern politics at the same time; he reintroduces past approaches to politics from a new perspective. He modernizes without fully being modern.

Hobbes's too saw himself as a new beginning of political science that cast aside virtues and principles of antiquity.[60] He considered Socrates' philosophy to be a 'dream' rather than real political science because of its anarchism; there ought to be no appeal against the law of the land in favour of a higher law since this 'fostered a disorder utterly incompatible with civil society.'[61] Hobbes does not reject the idea of a natural law, but argues that this law is actually expressed in obedience to a sovereign power; natural law is 'derived' from the natural right of self-preservation to which obedience responds.[62]

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Strauss, 'Machiavelli,' p. 272.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., pp. 272-273.

However, the central focus of Hobbes's political thought is not the modern concept of reason, but rather, an older notion: men's passion.[63] For Hobbes, rational political philosophy must be premised upon the passionate fear men have of 'violent death.'[64] Following Strauss, Laurence Berns writes that Hobbes sought to 'deduce the natural law from what is most powerful in most men most of the time: not reason, but passion.'[65] Moreover, Hobbes's addition to political science, the state of nature, is 'deduced from' men's passions rather than pure reason.[66] This is key, because in proposing a political theory that depends on human nature, he aligns himself with an ancient and medieval tradition that does exactly this; this tradition contains thinkers such as Socrates and Thomas Aquinas.[67] As such, Hobbes fails to be a genuinely *new* political theorist since he employs the same approach to ordering political society as the ancient thinkers he dismisses as unimportant.

Nevertheless, Hobbes avoids falling into mere contradiction by following Machiavelli's path. He interprets the nature of man differently that the ancients did by disavowing the Aristotelian belief that men are social and political animals.[68] The state of nature he proposes and the form of civil government he advocates are premised on this new understanding of human nature.[69] Men's main passions are vanity and fear and they override the power of reason which is weak.[70] Strauss sums up to importance of these passions for Hobbes as this: 'vanity is the force that makes men blind, fear is the force that makes men see.'[71] By applying this formulation of

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[63] Plato's <u>Republic</u> and Aristotle's <u>Politics</u> contain discussion of men's passions and how the polis should respond.

[64] Ibid., p. 273.

[65] Laurence Berns, 'Thomas Hobbes.' In <u>The History of Political Thought</u>. Edited by Leo Strauss and and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), p. 371.

[66] Ibid., p. 373.

[67] Ibid., p. 372.

[68] Ibid., pp. 372 et seq.

[69] Ibid., p. 373.

[70] Leo Strauss, <u>The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis</u>. Translated by Elsa M. Sinclair (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 130.

[71] Ibid.

men's passions and considering that the basic form of human life is solitary, he operates within the *traditional* horizons of what constitutes the best form of the state; however, in highlighting the importance of fear and vanity, he begins to move 'beyond' the old horizon.[72] Hobbes takes his 'bearings' from the traditional approach,[73] but as Machiavelli used ancient modes of life but sought to implement them differently, Hobbes founds political society on human nature as the ancients did but reinterprets what that nature is.

Strauss suggests that the connection between Machiavelli and Hobbes is clear. He writes that Hobbes's revolutionary theory—the creation of a new political science—'was decisively prepared by Machiavelli.'[74] While Hobbes is often considered to be the first philosopher to reject previous political thought as 'fundamentally insufficient and even unsound,' Strauss argues that 'Hobbes's radical break' continues with 'what had been done in the first place by Machiavelli.'[75] One can infer that the reason Hobbes's thought both employs and alters ancient political philosophy as Machiavelli did because the former treads in Machiavelli's footsteps.

Spinoza too criticizes previous philosophers. They treat men's passions as vices, and in condemning these passions, they see men as 'not as they are but as they would wish them to be.'[76] Stanley Rosen asserts that Spinoza broke from traditional political thought in being the first to systematically defend democracy.[77] His thought is a rejection of ancient theory that he saw as 'imaginary and useless' and attempts to base politics on more scientific and realistic bases.[78] Spinoza intends to strip away the myths about man incumbent in ancient and medieval

[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Strauss, 'Machiavelli,' p. 273.
[75] Strauss, 'Three Waves of Modernity,' p. 84.
[76] Strauss, Machiavelli,' p. 274.
[77] Stanley Rosen, 'Benedict Spinoza.' In The History of Political Thought. Edited by Leo Strauss and and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), p. 431.
[78] Ibid.

philosophy that placed man's capabilities too high.[79] Consequentially, he attempts to premise

human life on men's passions.[80] Moreover, for the political system he advocates, reason must

regulate passion, and such regulation is based on the acceptance of those about to be regulated.[81]

His scientific or realistic belief that men have an observable and immutable human nature leads

to 'a rejection of classical aristocracy in favour of democracy.'[82]

Like Machiavelli and Hobbes, Spinoza also operates within traditional horizons. He

promotes the Stoic notion that there is a need for 'improvement in the human order in light of our

vision of the eternal order.'[83] In other words, in advocating for democracy, Spinoza appears to

tap into the Stoic tenet that we must create an enduring and better world based on the immutable

characteristics of human nature.[84] As such, Spinoza appears to justify a democratic polity on the

basis of the sort of traditional philosophy he condemns to be useless. Like Hobbes, he navigates

around this problem insofar as he proposes a new conception of human nature, one founded on

scientific analysis that the Stoics did not invoke.[85] Spinoza's thought also focuses on common

men, those that ancient philosophers would have dismissed as 'the base.'[86] While there are

elements of traditional political thought working within Spinoza, his thoughts on human nature

and usage of science indicate that he wants to move political theory towards modernity.

The connections between Spinoza and Machiavelli and Hobbes are evident. In that

Spinoza focuses on modernizing our conception of politics and men, his work matches with

Machiavelli.[87] Like Machiavelli, Spinoza attacks traditional political philosophy and, Strauss

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[79] Ibid., p. 433.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., p. 432.
[84] See ibid: 'Serenity depends on the successful reconstitution of the social and political, or human order.'
[85] Cf. ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., p. 431.

argues, his introduction to the <u>Theological-Political Treatise</u> is 'obviously modeled' after the fifteenth chapter of Machiavelli's <u>The Prince</u>.[88] Like Hobbes, we note that Spinoza premises his understanding of men on the idea of their passions. Moreover, both thinkers consider men in scientific ways where old 'utopias' are replaced by realistic and regulated power structures that center on individuals.[89]

Ultimately, Strauss's analysis suggests that these three theorists can indeed be considered together as philosophers that embody the first step away from antiquity. Strauss asserts that Machiavelli represents the first clear break from ancient political thought. His work prepares the way for Hobbes's critique of traditional political science, and Hobbes then acts as a 'teacher' of Spinoza.[90] As such, all three thinkers share a similar heritage as those who sought to reject ancient political thought in favour of founding a new theory. Additionally, we note that each thinker fails to rid himself completely of older forms of political philosophy and each address the logical problem this implies in a similar way. As such, they are modernizers who are not completely modern.

The intellectual history presented above from Leo Strauss and others suggests that the political theorists who represent the first movement towards modernity are Machiavelli, Hobbes and Spinoza. Moreover, these three thinkers contain clear linkages that justify their combination in an analysis of what I want to call 'pre-modern' thought. They all seek to modernize, but one cannot assert they are purely modern thinkers; elements of traditional political philosophy still colours their work. Working from this, I seek to contribute to the intellectual history of modernity and pre-modernity by sketching out in greater detail what pre-modern political theory consists of and how it differs significantly from modernity.

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[88] Strauss, 'Machiavelli,' p. 274.
[89] Rosen, 'Spinoza,' p. 433.
[90] Strauss, 'Machiavelli,' pp. 272-273.

Pre-Modernism

Alexis de Tocqueville, a French aristocrat, wrote that the new world of democracy and equality

he saw in the United States required a new political science.[91] While he is correct, his insight

comes too late. Before this moment, political theorists already had begun to critique and rethink

whether the ancient polis or the Christian polity were the best form of government. The move

from aristocracy and *towards* a free republic that de Tocqueville saw had already been

anticipated, in some form, by philosophers like Machiavelli, Hobbes and Spinoza centuries

before the English or American revolutions.

Ancient political thought centers on the *good*. For Plato, justice is a political form of the

good and it is right for the polis to seek it.[92] For him, the just city is preferable because the health

of its citizens' souls depends upon its existence; men living in injustice suffer from spiritual

harm from tyrants.[93] The purpose of men's lives is to contemplate the good and seek it, for

without the capacity to distinguish it from the array of choices that exist in the world, men risk

choosing badly.[94] The *good* is eternal and cannot be quantified by empirical observations or the

'realpolitik' of one's surroundings.[95] In fact, knowledge of justice and good cannot be the

property of the laws or the people; it must be held and preserved by a small group of wise men

that are fit to contemplate it.[96] Plato considers lives led for material or immediate comforts to be

inconsequential: '[man] does not live without the ordinary pleasures because he is an ascetic, but

because the intensity of his joy in philosophy makes him indifferent to them.'[97] Plato advises the

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[91] Alexis de Tocqueville, <u>Democracy in America</u>. Translated by Gerald E. Bevan (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 16.

[92] Allan Bloom, 'Interpretive Essay.' In Plato <u>The Republic</u>. Translated by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 326.

[93] Ibid., cf. p. 336.

[94] Plato, <u>The Republic</u>. Translated by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 301.

[95] Bloom, 'Essay,' p. 326.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., p. 347.

polis and the citizen is to consider the *good* and act, in justice, towards that end. His government is monarchical and undemocratic out of necessity.

Cicero too displays the ancient fixation on goodness. Men are morally bound to *duty*; their obligations spring from the intellectual development of truth, conserving society at large, the expression of an unyielding spirit and the drive for moderation and temperance in one's affairs.[98] Goodness or justice is founded upon the ability for one to honour his compacts that he freely makes from rationality.[99] For him, men are born with reason and this distinguishes us from beasts; he intimates that this is a positive difference.[100] In society, Cicero suggests, men of real virtue stand the best chance of success; his logic suggests that the more fair-dealing and honourable one is, the more deserving he is of success in the polity.[101] He contends that the good citizen is he that deals equally and honestly with individuals in private affairs and strives for the state's honour and peace in public affairs.[102] Honesty is so paramount that if one makes a promise to one's enemies even under duress, it is his moral duty to fulfill his word to be virtuous.[103] Succinctly, ancient political theorists propose a state that focuses on the good; men relate to it by acting with deference and virtue.

I contend that pre-modern political thought emerges in the moment just before the Enlightenment. These writers saw the dawn of science and the origins of the decline of Christendom in Europe but still wrote their radical works in fear of social, religious and political retribution. In reading these theorists, three dominant concepts emerge, expressing the

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[98] Cicero, <u>De Officiis</u>. Translated by Walter Miller (London: William Heinemann, 1943), p. 17.
[99] Ibid., cf. p. 25.
[100] Ibid., p. 13.
[101] Ibid., p. 51.
[102] Ibid., p. 127.
[103] Ibid., p. 43.

fundamental elements of pre-modernism: practical reason, human nature, and the interplay between freedom and government.

Whereas the ancients focused on the *good*, pre-moderns elevate men's reason. This faculty exists through public practice; individuals reckon the benefits and losses in a particular situation and act in accordance to their self-interest.[104] However, men can reason falsely, or misjudge their situation; as such, true reason 'draws conclusions from true principles correctly stated.'[105] Natural law is offended 'when men fail to see what duties towards other men are necessary to their own preservation.'[106] That men are capable of reason does not guarantee the correctness of their thinking. When reason is counselled with truth, correct reasoning is possible. This is because natural law—the law that exists prior to government—is determined and governed by right reason.[107] Reason teaches that the primary law of nature is to desire peace, yet this law conflicts with one's natural freedom to act without impediment.[108] Consequently men of true reason understand that the above liberty must be forgone in order to preserve peace; if men were free to act according to their own humour, some would attack, others be forced to perpetually defend themselves, and peace would not exist.[109] Essentially, reason provides men with the ability to determine natural law and weigh it against the values of complete freedom. And, because sound reason stems from true principles, rationality compels men towards peace.

Pre-modern reason also takes the form of cunning and savvy. The smart ruler perceives the deficiencies in men and tailors his actions accordingly.[110] Against Cicero, Machiavelli argues

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[104] Thomas Hobbes, On the Citizen. Edited by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 33.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., pp. 33-34.
[107] Ibid., p. 33.
[108] Ibid., p. 34.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince. Translated by Peter Bondanella (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), *passim*.

that wise rulers must be familiar with the way of men and beasts; in other words, persuasion through words and coercion through force.[111] Since good political leadership is premised on what *is* rather than on what *ought to be*, reason is the capacity to anticipate and decide between possible courses of action at the present moment.[112] While reason is critical, it alone does not determine success. For writers like Machiavelli, fate equally determines the fortunes of an actor.[113] Fortune acts like a river: it flows in particular directions and has the capacity during a flood to ruin everything in its path.[114] While at times the actions of men are powerless against this force, men can also create dykes, dams and locks to influence and constrain the water advantageously.[115] Therefore, one aspect of pre-modern reason consists in the savoir faire of an agent to diagnose a situation and apply the best possible solution he can based on the facts.

Reason stands in opposition to superstition and emotion. Certainly in feudal times and before, men hoped and feared based on religious beliefs rather than empirical reality.[116] As such, men appear to be ruled by base emotions, which cause them to act imprudently.[117] Pre-moderns suggest that men must overcome this impulse, and reason is the proper instrument. Superstitions, like miracles, need to be approached with scepticism; reason dictates that natural law acts consistently and no 'sound reasoning convinces us that we should attribute only a limited power and virtue to nature or believe its laws are suited to certain things only and not to all.'[118] In other words, reason in pre-modernism is a candle that burns away the darkness of ignorance and replaces it with truth and reality.

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[111] Ibid., p. 60.
[112] Ibid., cf. pp. 53, 60.
[113] Ibid., p. 84.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Benedict de Spinoza, Theological-Political Treatise. Edited by Jonathan Israel and translated by Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 3.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., p. 83.

In addition to reason, pre-moderns understand human nature as conflict. By nature, men quarrel because we are equally capable of desiring particular ends, equally able to fight for them, but unable to all attain them.[119] Before government, men have reason to fear one another; while one might plant a crop, he should anticipate that others, armed, may come by and deprive him of the yield and even perhaps his life.[120] Innate to human nature is the desire for glory, constant competition, and diffidence of one another; without an overarching power to check these violent impulses, men are condemned to perpetual warfare.[121] Men fear others, they vie with each other for the fruits for the Earth and only government can prevent them from killing one another.

Men are not born with a desire for justice but rather are inclined towards power.[122] We begin with complete ignorance and are impelled by our appetites and the right of nature to act however we want.[123] Man 'is permitted to take [his desire] for himself by any means—by force, by fraud, by pleading—whatever will most easily enable him to obtain it, and thus he is permitted to regard as an enemy anyone who tries to prevent his getting his way.'[124] It is natural for one to be anxious with the threat of hostility, and one is destined to live miserably without government.[125]

For pre-moderns government is synthetic. Relations between men are querulous and primordial. Our natural state is one of war wherein 'every man is Enemy to every man.'[126] In this state men obsess over self-protection, and thus the industries of agriculture, fishing, construction, the arts and sciences are ignored.[127] When one has to worry about the constant threat of being

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[119] Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan. Edited by C.B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 184.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., p. 185.
[122] Spinoza, Treatise, p. 196.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid., pp. 196-7.
[125] Ibid., p. 197.
[126] Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 186.
[127] Ibid.

robbed or murdered, his interest in husbandry becomes minor. Political society before government contains intense fear where 'the life of a man [is] solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.'[128] Moreover, without government, the political and moral ideas of justice, right and wrong evaporate—without a common power, there is no law, and thus both force and fraud become essential to public action.[129] This can be explained in that without operating with deception and violence, one disarms himself of weapons that others would use on him. Politics are naturally combative because men are naturally brutal.

The cruelty of human nature compels pre-moderns to stress the importance of good government. Machiavelli writes that a state without laws aimed at justice is doomed and it cannot direct society towards a good and perfect destiny.[130] To that end, he argues that there are six forms of government: principalities, aristocracies, democracies, tyrannies, oligarchies and anarchies—the first three being virtuous forms of rule, and the latter three being wicked.[131] The exact form of government depends on many factors for a particular country, based on fortune and location.[132] However, men are covetous and just action is unnatural; this leads good forms of government to become corrupt and political society to be in flux.[133] To curb our natural tendencies, a republic that balances aristocracy, monarchy and democracy is offered as the best form of government.[134] Alone, each of these governments is good but weak; their admixture allows for balances of power between kings, nobles and the people that foster stability.[135] Rome, for example, found a way to prevent men's nature from causing chaos through a republic, benefiting from the 'friction between the plebs and the Senate' that yielded the 'perfect

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[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., p. 188.
[130] Niccolò Machiavelli, The Discourses. Introduced by Bernard Crick (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 105.
[131] Ibid., p. 106. It is clear that Machiavelli builds on Aristotle's distinction of different regimes in The Politics.
[132] Ibid., pp. 102, 106.
[133] Ibid., pp. 97, 106 et seq.
[134] Ibid., p. 109.
[135] Ibid.

commonwealth.'[136] Succinctly, pre-moderns argue that men are naturally wild and vicious; their interest in government arises as a way to constrain men's evil in order to prevent constant war.

Another element of pre-modernism is the relation of freedom to government. Spinoza notes that everyone is born with the freedom to think and judge on their own.[137] It is impossible for a government to constrain a man's ability to think independently, and any attempt to do so is oppressive and harmful.[138] Regardless of how cunning governors are, they 'have never yet succeeded in altogether suppressing men's awareness that they have a good deal of sense of their own and that their minds differ no less than do their palates.'[139] States that allow men to speak freely, even if they should stay quiet, are moderate and lack the violent qualities of oppressive states.[140] Moreover, enabling free expression strengthens the purpose of government: reducing fear and providing security; men cannot feel safe if they are prohibited to speak their mind.[141] At the same time, freedom of expression can be limited when and if a man's words are treasonous and could imperil the lives or safety of the polity.[142]

Freedom consists of more than the ability to speak. Hobbes understands liberty in a mechanical sense, or the ability to move around without restriction. He writes:

> Liberty, or Freedome, signifieth (properly) the absence of Opposition; (by Opposition I mean externall Impediments of motion;) and may be applyed no lesse to Irrationall, and Inanimate creatures, than to Rationall. For whatsoever is so tyed, or environed, as it cannot move, but within a certain space is determined by opposition of some externall body, we say it hath not Liberty to go further.[143]

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[136] Ibid., p. 111.
[137] Spinoza, Treatise, p. 250.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., pp. 250-1.
[140] Ibid., p. 251.
[141] Ibid., p. 252.
[142] Ibid., p. 253. Spinoza writes that men who speak simply to discredit magistrates or 'make a seditious attempt to abolish law under the magistrate's will, then they are nothing more than agitators and rebels.'
[143] Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 261.

Connectedly, a free man is he who has in his power the ability to do what he will without interference.[144] Just as water will find its own level, so men's free actions are spurred on by necessity; a man acts because of his will and his will is formed as it is because of a particular cause which has, at its logical root, *necessity* that begins with God.[145] While every action is not directly prescribed by God, He gave men liberty to act according to His will and they can have no appetite or desire that He did not design.[146] A man's will is necessary because of God, and free actions come from causes that are spurred by necessity, and thus, freedom is a necessary exercise of his will without fear of impediment; this is the tight logical train that Hobbes presents.

Freedom is intense. Completely free individuals are capable of harming, killing and robbing one another. As such, pre-moderns propose government as the surest way to provide necessary and unavoidable freedom while preventing war. Free men should surrender their *complete* freedom and hand over political authority to one overriding sovereign.[147] They can assume civil law as 'Artificial Chains' that they have chosen to create and attach them to sovereign authority to preserve peace;[148] men forfeit complete freedom in return for security. The sovereign is premised on consensus because its authority consists in individual citizens rationally empowering him to rule in their interest, and men must submit themselves to his power or risk destroying the entire enterprise.[149] However, if the sovereign's actions threaten peace and the rationale for his creation, men are compelled to speak out against it.[150]

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[144] Ibid., p. 262.
[145] Ibid., p. 263.
[146] Ibid., p. 263.
[147] Ibid., p. 240; Spinoza, Treatise, p. 252.
[148] Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 263-4.
[149] Ibid.; Spinoza, Treatise, p. 252.
[150] Ibid., p. 252; cf. Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 269, 272.

That governmental power exists does not mean that freedom is jeopardized. Each concept is important, but sometimes government must take precedence over freedom. Men must always be capable of free thought,[151] but each individual cannot expect to influence political decisions for which the sovereign authority exists. Spinoza writes that

> The key is to leave decisions about any kind of action to the sovereign powers and do nothing contrary to their decision, even if this requires someone acting in a way contrary to what he himself judges best and publicly expresses. This he can do without prejudice to either justice or piety, and this is what he should do, if he wants to show himself a just and good man.[152]

One is free to think as he pleases, but is bound to obey sovereign authorities. Men are also free to engage in commerce, the arts, or any other activity that political leadership has not placed laws against.[153] This authority, a consensual agreement of rational men, requires obedience in order to restrain the violent natures of men, but at the same time, guarantees that men can still exercise their freedom. The relationship between freedom and government is this: some of the former must be sacrificed for the latter but such action does not eliminate the former.

What I have sketched out above are the fundamentals of what I understand to be pre-modern political theory. In contradistinction to classical theory, the importance of the *good* and the virtuous is replaced with concern for reason, human nature, freedom and government. Pre-moderns perceive reason as the capacity to determine one's self-interest and rise above superstition in favour of truth. Human nature is understood to be violent and evil, but government can partially guard against those tendencies. Freedom is understood as the capacity to move and think without restriction; government may restrict *pure* freedom, but men rationally choose this course in order to prevent a state of nature or unstable governance. Reason and

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[151] Spinoza, Treatise, *passim.*
[152] Ibid., p. 253.
[153] Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 270-1.

freedom are natural to men; government is their artificial creation to temper the excesses of freedom because human nature is essentially brutal and ruthless.

Modernism

Before one can fully appreciate pre-modern theory, it is essential to understand *modern* thought and how the political philosophies differ. In order to compare pre-modernism, I focus on reason, human nature and freedom vis-à-vis government in the modern tradition. Each concept develops differently, and we shall take each in turn.

Reason is fundamental for modernists. Liberals argue that men are born equal, and what makes them equal is their capacity to reason.[154] Reason gives a man the ability to determine his interests and influences his decisions. English liberals couch reason within the parameters of valuable free choices that do not affect another's ability to decide.[155] Similarly, F.A. Hayek asserts that reason 'can neither predict nor deliberately shape its own future. Its advances consist in finding out where it has been wrong.'[156] Reason is an instrument that men use to distinguish fact from fiction; like a compass, its value consists in orienting individuals in the right direction. In general, modernists suggest that reason is a human quality that allows for the justification and recommendation of human conduct within society.[157]

The modern approach to reason is evident in its most influential advocate, John Locke. He argues that reason is both a law of nature and a teacher that instructs men not to harm one another's lives, liberties, health or properties.[158] Since men are all the creations of God, we are

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[154] Michael Freeden, Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

[155] Ibid., p. 168.

[156] F.A. Hayek, quoted in Freeden, Ideologies, p. 306.

[157] Ibid., p. 307. Hayek's libertarian approach to liberalism differs somewhat from that, but this aspect falls beyond the scope of his paper.

[158] John Locke, The Second Treatise. In Two Treatises of Government. Edited by Peter Laslett (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 271.

all equally endowed with similar faculties, and were not made to subordinate one another; Locke understands reason, in part, as the measure that He gave us to live by.[159] Living according to one's reason is important, since those who fail to do so are degenerates.[160] Moreover, reason provides the ability to determine proper punishments of criminal offenders who cause harm to property or lives; Locke writes that reason is easily understood; it provides for retribution that will make the criminal unhappy and terrify those who see the punishment.[161] Reason is from God, is particular to all, and instructs individuals how to operate in society.

The liberal-rationalist Immanuel Kant considers reason to be the quality that makes people *most* human. He writes that man began in Eden with nothing to influence him but his animal instincts, but soon reason awoke him by comparing different flavours of food and developing a preference for luxury over labour.[162] Man develops an affinity for reason, since he 'discovered in himself a capacity to choose a way of life for himself and not, as other animals, be bound to a single one.'[163] That which set man apart from other creatures is his ability to pick his own path rather than be subject to a natural fate like beasts. Although man becomes anxious at his discovery of reason—for he does not yet know how to choose—its sway over him is insatiable; 'once he had a taste of this state of freedom it was impossible for him to return to the state of solitude.'[164]

As reason develops, man begins to consider his future, which is an exclusively human motivation. It is the faculty that allows him to plan for storing supplies for his family and himself

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[159] Ibid, pp. 271-2.

[160] Ibid., p. 273.

[161] Ibid., p. 275.

[162] Immanuel Kant, 'Conjectural Beginning of Human History.' In Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History. Edited by Pauline Kleingeld and translated by David L. Colclasure (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 26.

[163] Ibid., pp. 26-7.

[164] Ibid., p. 27.

for the future, but also makes him aware that he will die one day.[165] Moreover, reason is an

essential concept because it informs man that *he* is the end of nature. Kant writes:

> The first time that he said to the sheep, 'that coat that you wear was given to you by
> nature not for you, but for me,' and stripped it of its coat and put it on himself, he became
> aware of a privilege that he, by virtue of his nature, had over all animals. He now no
> longer viewed them as his fellows in creation but rather as a means at his will's disposal
> and as tools for attaining any chosen ends.[166]

Reason shows man that he is the superior creation, but it compels him to appreciate his fellow

men as equals. Because the world was created for rational beings, no rational creature may

enslave another; thus reason forces man to treat other people with sufficient kindness and love in

creating society.[167] Taking together these understandings of reason, I can assert that modernism

elevates reason as an essential human characteristic. It directs men to act in pursuit of justice and

it reveals that the natural world exists exclusively *for* human beings. Thus, it teaches that all men

are equal because they are all rational, all ends-in-themselves as created by God.

This view of reason contrasts with pre-modernism. Modernists see reason to be divine

inspiration that teaches men how to live according to justice and their natural ends. Pre-moderns

approach reason as a faculty that shows how men should govern for their own glory and avoid

the shackles of superstition and faith. Rationality appears as a *pure* value for modernists, a sacred

good endowed to everyone that alerts us of our equality; for pre-moderns it is an instrument of

advancement that lacks any real *moral* qualities. To that end, reason is not ultimate for pre-

moderns, who favour peace and freedom of religion at times over strict rationality, and concede

that concepts like fortune or passion equal—or even outmatch—reason's power. Conversely,

moderns see reason as *the* most powerful and essential force in humanity; it appears as a deity,

the voice of God or a tool of God that men cannot resist. However, both modernists and pre-

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[165] Ibid., p. 27.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.

moderns understand reason as a power for self-interest that distinguishes humans from animals, and believe that its discovery and use improves men's lives. In brief, both pre-moderns and modernists see reason as important, but pre-moderns are more measured and prudent in their embrace of it.

Human nature is central to modernity. The liberal constitutionalist James Madison proposes government amongst men because people cannot live together peaceably without constraint.[168] These constraints need to be woven into government itself, because men cannot be trusted to hold exclusive power without any safeguards. Madison writes:

> Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary ... but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.[169]

Human nature is devious and imperfect. It would be mistaken to assume men to be naturally good, and prudent to create institutions that assume men's inherent dangers.

Locke's vision of human nature anticipates Madison's theory. Without government, each man judges offenses against natural law and his own person.[170] This is a problem, because a man cannot be objective in situations that concern his self-love and his friends; he will be biased towards them.[171] Thus, government exists to regulate men's impartiality and their violence in acting as their own judges.[172] Human nature is self-interested and querulous, and needs 'civil government' as 'the proper remedy for' its inconvenicies.[173] An inference of Madison and Locke

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[168] Alexander Hamilton et al., The Federalist Papers. Nos. 51 & 55. Edited by Lawrence Goldman (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 257, 277.
[169] Ibid., p. 257.
[170] Locke, Second Treatise, p. 275.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid., p. 276.
[173] Ibid.

shows that modernists see human nature as selfish, particular, and in need of governmental bonds for societal benefit. While they do not approach human nature from the pre-modern extreme that men are naturally inclined to kill one another and are mere liars, they do assert than men can be prone to unpleasant traits and prejudices that make social interaction difficult without some form of control. It is a softer and less explicit understanding of the darker aspects of human nature.

It would be false to claim that all moderns have an even somewhat pessimistic view of man. Thomas Jefferson asserts in his presidential Inaugural Address of 1801 that a strong government is unneeded because men of patriotism and valour would not attempt to undo it because they can be trusted.[174] Logically, he asks that if man cannot be trusted to abide a weak government '[c]an he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him?'[175] Essentially, Jefferson asserts that men are naturally prone to love their country and are worth trusting; he wishes to reconsider Madison's comparison of men and angels with the conclusion that men might actually be less devilish than thought.

This is however only one aspect of human nature within modernity. Adam Smith asserts that an element of human nature arises in one man's ability to contract with another for their mutual benefit.[176] This comes from our natural incapacity to be self-reliant; unlike wild animals that are independent once they become adults, human beings need persistent help from others.[177] Man needs aid, but men are by their nature self-interested; he must negotiate terms with others

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[174] Thomas Jefferson, 'First Inaugural Address, 4 March 1801.' Available online: <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pre s16.html >. Accessed 20 October 2010.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Adam Smith, 'Of the Principle the Gives Occasion to the Division of Labour.' In An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, para. 2. Available online: < http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3300/3300-h/3300-h.htm >. Accessed 16 October 2010.

[177] Ibid.

for their assistance while offering something in return to satisfy the other's selfishness.[178] Smith

expresses this in a famous formulation: 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher the brewer,

or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address

ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love....'[179] Men are economical, and act out of

rationally-determined advantages—it is our nature to be generous to ourselves rather than to

others. One man brews beer and gives it to another because he has been paid a fee for it rather

than wishing to see a fellow man just enjoy his creation. Alternatively, it is natural for a man to

contemplate how to get the beer he wishes from the brewer—what must he do to get the object

he needs and desires.[180]

Yet men are more complex than that for classical liberals like Smith. He writes that

regardless of a man's selfishness, he takes some measure of happiness in seeing other people

succeed and becomes saddened in the misfortunes of others.[181] When a person sees someone

suffer pain, it is natural for him to imagine what that experience is like, and through this

imaginary process, begin to 'tremble' with the fear and excitement that comes from another's

suffering.[182] While a person is bound by his body and senses, his nature allows him to envision

another's sorrow and feel with them as he himself imagines they are.[183] By nature, men are

sympathetic to the sufferings of fellow men because everyone fears death.[184] Our collective fear

of death is immutable and useful, since it is 'the great restraint upon the injustice of mankind,

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[178] Ibid.; cf. Steven Horowitz, 'From Smith to Menger to Hayek: Liberalism in the Spontaneous-Order Tradition.' In The Challenge of Liberty: Classical Liberalism Today. Edited by Robert Higgs and Carl P. Chase (Oakland, CA: Independent Institute, 2006), p. 25.

[179] Smith, 'Principle,' para. 2.

[180] Horowitz, 'From Smith to Henger to Hayek,' p. 26.

[181] Adam Smith, 'Of the Propriety of Action.' In A Theory of Moral Sentiments. I.I.1. Available online: < http://www.econ lib.org/library/Smith/smMS1.html >. Accessed 16 October 2010.

[182] Ibid., I.I.2.

[183] Ibid.

[184] Ibid., I.I.13.

which, while it afflicts and mortifies the individual, guards and protects the society.'[185] Smith argues that human nature is multifaceted; we are prone to economic self-interest but have an inbred sympathy for the plight of other people stemming from our collective fear of dying.

Others come to similar conclusions regarding modern human nature. Writers like Michael Freeden argue that liberals see human nature as ends-oriented action, autonomy, following law lain down by God and calculated self-interest.[186] Terence Ball et alii argue that liberals see humans as fundamentally competitive, rational creatures that were born free to seek out their own interests.[187] James Buchanan states that man is an economic actor but also has a moral desire to belong to a community outside of self-centered calculations.[188] What arises from classical liberal theory is the idea that men by their nature are self-interested and biased. They are innately inclined towards economic negotiations and act in their self-interest. Nevertheless, men are born with emotions and can be moved to sympathy or justice.

We can compare and contrast human nature in pre-modernism and modernity in a couple ways. Pre-moderns tend to see men as violent, ignorant creatures that allow their basest passions to consume them. While they are capable of some reason, men are simplistic and crude. Modernists, however, have a nuanced view. Men are moved by their appetites for self-interest, but are not cast as savages. They are moved with sympathy for others and usually endeavour to gain their ends through negotiation and discussion. There is, however, a similarity in both perspectives on human nature. Men are not naturally the most pleasant of creatures and require institutions like government to constrain them. Men are also in need of socializing, without

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[185] Ibid.

[186] Freeden, Ideologies, p. 149.

[187] Terence Ball et al., Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal. 2nd Canadian Edition (Toronto: Pearson Canada, 2010), pp. 37-8.

[188] James M. Buchanan, 'The Soul of Classic Liberalism.' In The Challenge of Liberty. Edited by Robert Higgs and Carl P. Chase. (Oakland, CA: Independent Institute, 2006), p. 5.

which they are doomed to short and unfulfilling lives otherwise. It can be asserted that pre-moderns approach men as fundamentally wicked in need of subduing, whereas modernists see men as selfish yet sociable creatures that come into government for the better life. While it is, in some ways, a difference of degree, the difference matters.

An additional important concept is the modern approach to freedom and government. For modernists, freedom is negative; men must be guaranteed liberty with minimal interference.[189] Isaiah Berlin avers that you 'lack political liberty or freedom only if you are prevented from attaining your goal by human beings[; m]ere incapacity to attain your goal is not a lack of political freedom.'[190] Men exercise liberty within areas where there are no controls over them—the larger the area of free action, the more freedom a man has.[191] Ultimate freedom is anarchy where no coercive powers can curb men's actions; however, because of our nature that sort of 'chaos' harms individuals and society to the extent that some ceding of freedom is necessary.[192] Berlin understands classical liberalism, and therefore modernity, thus:

> there ought to exist a certain minimum area of personal freedom which must on no account be violated, for if it is overstepped, the individual will find himself in an area too narrow for even that minimum development of his natural faculties which alone makes it possible to pursue, and even to conceive, the various ends which men hold good or right or sacred.[193]

Freedom and governance are opposing ideas, to be sure, but classical liberals suggest that government provides individuals with particular areas of life where they may act freely and unobstructed towards their own ends. While complete freedom is impossible, men are born for freedom; the fewer obstacles in one's way, the freer one is.

[189] Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty,' p. 5. Available online: < http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=77888213 >. Accessed 16 October 2010.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid., p. 8.
[192] Ibid., pp. 8-9.
[193] Ibid., p. 9.

This too is Jefferson's desire. Regarding the ideal government, he writes:

> a wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government, and this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities.[194]

The people expect certain things from the government. They expect to be left alone to make a living and to have the fruits of their work left to their own personal enjoyment. Furthermore, they desire the government to ensure that others leave them alone to live their own lives without threat. Jefferson's assertion wonderfully expresses negative freedom in modern political thought.

Locke approaches freedom similarly, but advances the discussion in an interesting way. He argues that men are naturally born into a condition of 'perfect Freedom to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the Will of any other Man.'[195] The creator has endowed men with liberty to act as they desire without restriction. However, this freedom comes with particular obligations from nature. A man does not have full possession of his body—it is God's—and therefore is not at liberty to sell himself into slavery.[196]

However, the ability to enjoy one's freedom or property is compromised without government because of the threat of invasion and theft.[197] This insecure moment 'makes him willing to quit this Condition, which however free, is full of fears and continual dangers....'[198] In order to preserve their freedom, security and peace, men may surrender absolute freedom to a government created by equal individuals who 'joyn and unite into a Community'; this creation

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[194] Jefferson, 'Inaugural Address,' *loc. cit.*
[195] Locke, 'Second Treatise,' p. 269. Emphasis removed.
[196] Ibid., p. 284.
[197] Ibid., p. 350.
[198] Ibid.

becomes a body politic and acts on the basis of majority rule for the sake of convenience.[199] This

coming together of freemen in common cause for protection through government is the only

form of legitimate government; consent alone sparks lawful government.[200] The government

structure proposed for this commonwealth divides power among different branches: the

legislative, executive and federative.[201] The legislative branch is charged with making laws, but

Locke warns against allowing this same entity to have the power to execute them since 'it may

be too great a temptation to humane frailty apt to grasp at Power'; he fears a legislator who

doubles as an executive might immune himself from laws and create an unfair 'private

advantage' for himself.[202] Thus, the branches of government require separation[203] in order to

preserve justice and institute a government that curbs the self-interestedness of human nature.

The early modern James Harrington also suggests that good government springs from

divided powers. He suggests that a senate and the people act as the legislative branch of a polity,

but that the laws must be executed by different branch. He writes that 'the commonwealth

consists of the senate proposing, the people resolving, and the magistracy executing [; w]hereby,

partaking of the aristocracy as in the senate, of the democracy as in the people, and of monarchy

as in the magistracy, [the polity] is complete.'[204] Harrington seems to argue that a government is

lacking if it does not divide its powers amongst different branches.

While divided power is important, modernists also allow for moments of crisis whereby

action must be taken by one branch of government. When crises arise, the job of the executive is

to act with discretion in situations where the law has not anticipated the situation. Locke provides

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[199] Ibid., pp. 330-332.
[200] Ibid., p. 333, 347.
[201] Ibid., cf. p.364.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid., p. 365.
[204] James Harrington, 'The Commonwealth of Oceana.' In The Political Writings of James Harrington. Edited by Charles Blitzer (Westport, CO: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 61.

this prerogative to the executive until the legislative branch can assemble to respond to the crisis: it is 'fit that the Laws themselves should in some Cases give way to the Executive Power, or rather to this Fundamental Law of Nature and Government, *viz.* That as much as may be, *all* the Members of the Society are to be *preserved.*'[205] The Federalists argue similarly that in extreme cases, the executive must have sufficient energy to respond to the moment. They write regarding the executive's prerogative:

> Energy in the executive is a leading character in the definition of good government. It is essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks; it is not less essential to the steady administration of the laws; to the protection of property against those irregular and high-handed combinations which sometimes interrupt the ordinary course of justice; to the security of liberty against the enterprises and assaults of ambition, of faction and of anarchy.[206]

If the purposes of government are under threat—security of life or property—then it is advisable that the government's power, which usually resides in different hands, becomes concentrated in the executive in order to preserve the commonwealth. This further suggests the importance of government; it is the institution that offers protection from threats and is worth the sacrifice of absolute freedom.

There is a connection between freedom and government. Men are born free but pure freedom is dangerous. Government comes into being through the consent of individuals for their mutual protection. Power must be divided amongst different parties. The concentration of power in one place is dangerous because of human nature, and should be distributed among different branches. However, if the ends of government are in peril, power can collect in an energetic executive in order to resolve a crisis for which laws have no remedy.

The best way to understand the difference between pre-moderns and modernists on this subject is through sovereignty. Modernists make a concerted effort to divide the powers of

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[205] Locke, The Second Treatise, pp. 374-5. Emphasis in the original.
[206] Hamilton et al., The Federalist Papers, 70, p. 344.

government in different hands in order to avoid the corruptions and temptations innate to men. Pre-moderns focus more on people obeying government power, whether that be the leviathan or a democratic republic that preserves free speech. Both approaches to sovereignty are interested in maintaining a degree of freedom, but pre-moderns restrict their understanding of freedom to that which will not harm the power of the state. Modernists, in contrast, seek out areas wherein the government has no authority, and individuals can pursue their own ends without interference. The pre-modern sovereign can always respond to crisis because power is more squarely vested in one place;[207] the modern executive only expresses unilateral sovereignty in rare instances of crisis. Accordingly, the modern theory of government is less prepared for crises than pre-modernists.

All this is logical insofar as both sides see freedom differently. Pre-moderns accept its existence and its value, but fear the dangers it can cause. Modernists too accept it but believe that under the right, rational and consensual government, freedom can flourish without the chaos. Pre-modern sovereignty prioritizes a strong government with marginal room for liberty; modern sovereignty treats government power with care, dividing it up, and ensuring that maximum freedom can exist with minimum interference.

Having fleshed out pre-modernism, modernism and noted their interplay, I want to briefly reflect on the importance of this. To be sure, modernism grows out of the philosophies of Machiavelli, Hobbes and Spinoza. These pre-moderns are the first to rebel against classical thought, replacing the *good* with the expedient and the real. Indeed, central elements of

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[207] Of course, as shown, pre-moderns do adhere to an early idea of separated powers, but it is weak and based more on different forms of government—democracy, aristocracy, monarchy—all working together rather than sovereignty being anchored in different branches. Harrington, it seems, steps away from the pre-modern approach with his view of different functions for each 'branch' that follows closer to Locke and Publius than Machiavelli.

modernism are refinements of pre-modern concepts—they dull its more violent edge, radicalize its embrace of reason and freedom, and soften the concept of government through consent.

Yet, I suggest one errs in seeing pre-modernism as *merely* a step on a progressive road towards modernism that, once experienced, dissolves into the ether. Pre-modern philosophy is unlike alchemy or phrenology which served as place-holders in science until the emergence of modern chemistry and psychology. Pre-modernism is founded on certain enduring principles— freedom, reason, government for the people, human nature—that other political theorists express still today; phrenology, for example, was grounded in pseudo-science rather than empirical truths. Moreover, the pre-moderns were some of the earliest philosophers to notice these concepts and uproot them from antiquity. Just as Aristotle's analysis of tragedy and Newton's laws of motion remain true despite their age, so pre-modernism appears, on the surface, to possess the qualities of an enduring tradition. The case studies of Carl Schmitt and American neo-conservatives will test this hypothesis, particularly in terms of Eliot's theory.

CHAPTER II: Carl Schmitt

Nothing can escape this logical conclusion of the political. — Carl Schmitt.[208]

The word 'controversial' is synonymous with Carl Schmitt, a German political theorist and jurist. I want to suggest that a thoroughgoing study of his political thought shows that Schmitt is a pre-modern philosopher. While there is a debate as to whether Schmitt as an inaugurator of fascist thought, coming to a definite answer on this question is beyond the scope of my argument. In brief, I propose that Schmitt's views on reason, human nature and government reflect a return to the philosophy that preceded the Enlightenment.

An Historical Context

In order to grasp the full relevance of Schmitt's work, it is useful to understand the context in which he wrote some of his most important political theory. He was born in 1888 into a Catholic family in Germany, and studied law at Berlin and Strasbourg, earning his doctorate in 1910.[209] Before the First World War, he was essentially a Kantian, and sought to integrate his political ideas with Catholic teaching.[210]

However, the First World War shaped Schmitt's perspective on politics and international relations.[211] The war began because of hardened alliances premised on the maintenance of economic and colonial power in Europe. France, England and Russia, known as the Triple Entente, waged war against Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire because the Russians were treaty-bound to defend Serbia from the belligerence of the Austro-Hungarians that

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[208] The Concept of the Political. Translated by George Schwab (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 36.
[209] George Schwab, 'Introduction.' In Carl Schmitt, Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty. Translated by George Schawb (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. xxxvii-iii.
[210] Ibid., p. xxxviii.
[211] Ibid.

arose from the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in 1914.[212] While no major European power *really* wished to fight, each country entered into the war as if it were irresistible.[213] On the day the war began, 1 August 1914, the German Kaiser decided to stop any advance against the French in favour of an attack against Russia only.[214] The German commander of the Armed Forces, who stated that once the order to mobilize the troops against the Western Front had been given, it could not be rescinded, denied this request.[215] Research shows that the commander, Helmuth von Moltke, lied to the Kaiser about this, and that he refused to stop the advance on France and Belgium because this was *his day*.[216] Because of the vanity and deception of Moltke, an illegitimate will trumped the intention of the legitimate ruler of the state.

Once the Central Powers were defeated, the Entente sought to punish Germany for the war by reducing the German military to almost nothing, therefore preventing it from re-emerging as a threat.[217] This was particularly the concern of France.[218] Then-prime minister Georges Clemenceau had feared the Germans well before the onset of the war, arguing that Prussia was 'hatched from a cannon ball,' and exerting all his efforts against a German force whose primary objective was 'the extermination of France.'[219] After the war, Clemenceau still feared the Germans because of their larger population, their developing industry, their virtually undamaged land, and their shared border with France.[220] By destroying Germany's ability to develop into a powerful and modernized nation, France could be safe; the Treaty of Versailles ensured the Germans could have no more than 100,000 members of the armed forces and required them to

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[212] Barbara W. Tuchman, The Guns of August (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004).

[213] Ibid., pp. 87-115.

[214] Ibid., p. 93

[215] Ibid., p. 94

[216] Ibid., p. 95 et seq.

[217] Margaret MacMillan, Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World (New York: Random House, 2003).

[218] Tuchman, Guns of August, pp. 8-9, *passim.*

[219] Ibid., p. 9

[220] MacMillan, Paris 1919, p. 28 et seq.

pay immense reparations for all the damage from the war on Allied lands because their aggression had initiated the war.[221] It became apparent to witnesses that France completely abhorred Germany, and this hatred influenced much of the treaty's terms, with the intention to disable and embarrass.[222]

It was in this moment that Schmitt abandoned Kantianism in favour of a 'starker political realism.'[223] He now began to see the state as the focal point of politics, and he became convinced that the state was 'governed by the ever-present possibility of conflict.'[224] Considering the context of what he had witnessed in the war, this is logical. He began to espouse the Hobbesian dictum 'autoritas, non veritas facit legem.'[225] Schmitt wrote to show people that he who held power could command obedience from others, and nothing prohibits illegitimate sovereigns from using this power.[226]

That Schmitt's political theory would develop a more realist character appears logical. He witnessed a war premised on imperial jealousy and internalized fears regarding each nation's strength. Within the peace agreement itself, the French saw Germany as a physical threat which could only be dealt with through massive financial penalties and forced reductions in military capabilities. In brief, Schmitt saw that politics operated on the axes of fear and force; a state must worry about its existential enemies, and should it gain an advantage on them, it will use all means at its disposal to weaken the enemy. Moreover, force is more powerful than a legitimate source of power, and under the right circumstances, an illegitimate force can carry the day,

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[221] The Treaty of Versailles, Sections 163, 261.
[222] MacMillan, Paris 1919, p. 464.
[223] Schwab, 'Introduction,' p. xxxviii.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid., p. xxxix. Translation: 'Authority, not truth, maketh the law.'
[226] Ibid.

provided it is stronger. Rather than a Kantian kingdom of ends, Schmitt saw that the world functioned by one state attempting to *end* another by force.

After the war, Germany declared itself a democracy known as the Weimar Republic.[227] The Republic was fashioned from English, French and American principles of government; as a result, its constitution was confusing and ambiguous on particular questions.[228] While the first article declared that Germany was democratic and that legitimate power arises from the people, 'the debate on parliamentarism turned on the question of how this principle might be made workable in Weimar.'[229] Although Germans sought a democratic polity, it was unclear just how that would work in Germany. The weakness of the republic showed itself in the criticisms of traditionalists who sought a return to monarchy, nationalists who wanted dictatorship and radical change, and the far-left who wanted to model Germany after the USSR.[230] In brief, German political society was unclear on *how* a republic should operate and it experienced intense critique from various forms of political ideology regarding *whether* it should exist.

As parliamentary democracy struggled along in Germany, Schmitt noticed that the system had become a 'façade.'[231] The debates that took place within the parliament were intended for the masses outside the chambers rather than the deputies inside, since the political parties that populated it were a cadre of elites that represented 'particular social classes and corporate interests'; as such, the parties had essentially 'nothing to deliberate or discuss with each other.'[232] In brief, the Weimar parliamentary democracy was hollow—its liberal objectives

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[227] Ellen Kennedy, 'Introduction.' In Carl Schmitt, The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy. Translated by Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), p. xx.
[228] Ibid., pp. xxiv-xxv.
[229] Ibid., p. xxv.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid., p. xxvii.
[232] Ibid.

of open debate and discussion were a pretence for political parties to accumulate power and rule for special interests rather than the people.[233]

There was, however, something in the Weimar constitution that really interested Schmitt. The Reichpräsident had the ability to dissolve parliament, and call on a government to form, while the forty-eighth article allowed him to use any force necessary to keep public order.[234] Schmitt interpreted this power in 1924 as the ability of the president to act in defence of the constitution with 'unimpeachable' authority.[235] Initially, German politicians and academics dismissed this, but during the 'last crisis of the Republic,'[236] Schmitt's interpretation of the president's powers won support as a 'means to govern Germany without the check of parliament.'[237] In sum, Schmitt's thoughts on dictatorship, democracy and sovereignty emerged in a moment where parliamentarism was failing, the First World War had sharpened his political analysis, and a democratic Germany seemed as precarious as it did novel.

Schmitt did not remain a mere political observer. He joined the Nazi party in 1933, and before that counselled the conservatives in the Weimar Republic. A debate exists over whether Schmitt became a National Socialist out of self-preservation or because his philosophy was in fact compatible and sympathetic with the racist and totalitarian elements of Nazism. I do not wish to judge which side of this debate is correct; however, it is important to present the dispute in order to show a more complete portrait of literature on Schmitt. For the purposes of my analysis of pre-modern thought, it does not matter what drove him into the Nazi party.

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[233] Cf. ibid.

[234] Ibid., p. xxix.

[235] Ibid., p. xxx.

[236] Ibid. What Kennedy appears to be implying here is the crisis that arose after the Reichstag fire wherein the president's powers under the forty-eighth article were invoked. This crisis led to the end of the Weimar and the rise of a National Socialist dictatorship in Germany.

[237] Ibid.

Joseph Bendersky's research suggests that Schmitt's embrace of the Nazi party had much to do with his immediate safety and survival. He notes that in the early days of Hitler's government, it seemed unlikely that Schmitt would play any role in national politics because of his lack of connections and his previous opposition to the Nazis.[238] Schmitt agreed to present arguments and legal theories in favour of Hitler's use of the Enabling Act, which concentrated dictatorial powers into the chancellor's hands, but 'deluded himself into believing that he and his fellow conservatives could lay the foundations for a traditional authoritarian German state' by rationalizing the Nazis' ultimate authority.[239] In other words, Schmitt worked with the Nazis not so much because he supported their politics but because he thought he could assist in deadening their radical edge.

That Schmitt may have distrusted the Nazis arises from a journal entry three days before Hitler became chancellor: he declared himself to be depressed and was clearly despondent that President Hindenburg was to appoint Hitler: 'the old man has gone crazy....'[240] Before the Nazis even came to power, Schmitt passionately criticized the make-up of the Weimar constitution that allowed parties like the National Socialists or Communists to potentially form government because it was providing such parties the ability to destroy the constitution from the inside[241]—which is, of course, exactly what Hitler did. In the years preceding the Nazi government, Schmitt worked as an advisor to the conservative factions of German politics, and was known to espouse critical views towards the National Socialists.[242] Even after serving as a pseudo-advisor for the

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[238] Joseph W. Bendersky, <u>Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich</u> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 198.

[239] Ibid., p. 201.

[240] Quoted in Renato Cristi, <u>Carl Schmitt and Authoritarian Liberalism</u> (Cardiff, UK: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 36.

[241] Bendersky, <u>Theorist of the Reich</u>, cf. p. 149.

[242] Ibid., p. 129, 223, *passim.*

Nazis, Schmitt continued to be averse to the party and sought to keep his distance from them.[243] At one point soon after Hitler's ascension to the chancellorship, Schmitt declared himself simply 'a theorist' and 'a pure scholar and nothing but a scholar,'[244] the implication being that he was not a partisan.

According to Bendersky, Schmitt joined the Nazi party because his 'keen instincts for self-preservation took control' when he saw several fellow professors removed from their positions by the Nazis in April of 1933 because of their differences of views with the government.[245] There were also Nazi student groups who patrolled on campuses, and Schmitt, not being a popular figure for them because of his past criticisms of the party, had reason to fear their rebuke.[246] At the same moment, several university professors were lining up to support the Nazis openly, and *not* doing so would have left Schmitt in a precarious situation.[247] Thus, Schmitt was forced to choose: he could emigrate, which would have caused him hardships; he could stay 'uncommitted' to the party and risk punishment for his past writings and positions; or he could join the Nazi party, and he chose the latter, which Bendersky considers the 'safest option.'[248] Caught in a Hobson's choice, Schmitt acted to protect himself from abuse and isolation, and believed he could positively influence Nazi jurisprudence when he became member 2,098,860 to join the Nazis.[249]

That is, however, only half of the debate. On the other side, one critic of Schmitt as a veritable Nazi theoretician is Jürgen Habermas. In a discussion about the foundations of

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[243] Ibid., p. 201.
[244] Quoted in ibid.
[245] Ibid., p. 202.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Cf. ibid., p. 202-3.
[248] Ibid., p. 203-4.
[249] Ibid., p. 204.

democracy and peoples,[250] Habermas focuses on Schmitt's embrace of ethnic cohesion. Interpreting Schmitt, Habermas notes that 'national homogeneity is a necessary precondition for the democratic exercise of political authority.'[251] He goes on to state that for Schmitt, democracy must be in the form of a national democracy because the sovereign people are conceived as an 'ethnic nation' capable of deciding and acting.[252] When Schmitt argues that whatever the people want is good *because* the people want it, Habermas explains that Schmitt's efforts to 'sever' law from democracy—the 'guiding political will' of the nation—is presented as irrational and directed by the *volksgeist* (the spirit of the people) that requires neither public participation nor debate.[253]

Habermas continues his critique in citing Schmitt, who argues that democracy is based upon a particular *people*, not upon *humanity*, and neither could it be.[254] Because the people need to share an ethnicity, Habermas asserts, democratic self-realization lacks the modern principles of discussion and personal autonomy, but rather contains just 'the self-assertion, self-affirmation, and self-realization of a nation in its specificity' as a particular linguistic or kinship group.[255] According to Habermas's understanding of Schmitt, only those people who move beyond being an individual, towards embracing their membership in a 'politically self-conscious nation,' can possibly participate in politics.[256]

One final argument of Habermas I wish to flesh out is the nature of voluntariness in Schmitt's democratic nation. Whereas Kant and other social-contract theorists highlight the

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[250] Jürgen Habermas, 'On the Relation between the Nation, the Rule of Law, and Democracy.' In The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory. Edited by Ciaran Cronin and Pablo De Greiff (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999).
[251] Ibid., p. 134.
[252] Ibid., p. 135.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid., p. 136
[255] Ibid.
[256] Ibid.

importance of individual choice and recognition in society, Schmitt stands in contradistinction by highlighting a *collective* right.[257] Because democratic self-determination stems from self-assertion and self-realization, 'no single person can realize his fundamental right to enjoy equal citizens' rights outside the context of an ethnic nation that enjoys the organizational independence of a state.'[258] I cannot reject the dominant cultural ethos as a free individual and cannot even exercise my liberties as a citizen *outside* of that community. The logical result of this compulsion towards homogeneity is that it creates 'normatively undesirable consequences,' such as 'repressive policies' regarding alien assimilation, popular purification, or 'ethnic cleansing.'[259] Habermas notes that Schmitt suppresses and expels heterogeneous factions from the nation, to the extent of creating 'protectorates' and 'reservations.'[260] In sum, Schmitt both rejects individual liberty and compels those opposed to the ethnic nation to assimilate with the people or be separated from them, all in the name of his vision of democracy.

Taking Habermas's criticisms together, we can locate a firm—albeit somewhat implicit—characterization of Carl Schmitt as a fascist philosopher. He prioritizes an ethnic conception of the people over a liberal-democratic body of civil discussion and debate; in doing so, Schmitt seems to delegitimize the sovereignty of the individual to the benefit of the state, which is a tenet of fascist dogma. Schmitt also rejects the primacy of humanity in favour of particular peoples who share a common history and land, which is another bulwark of fascism. If we look closely at Habermas's commentary on Carl Schmitt, we are left thinking that the latter is a fascist theoretician against whom the former is struggling.

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[257] Ibid., p. 141. Whether Habermas's assertion here is correct regarding the political thought of Kant or Rousseau or even Montesquieu is contestable.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid., pp. 141-2.
[260] Ibid., p. 142.

Another critic of Schmitt's political thought is Friedrich Hayek, a staunch neo-liberal. Hayek's condemnation of Schmitt as a Nazi stems from his belief that the latter's work was thoroughly anti-liberal and totalitarian.[261] Hayek even condemns another theorist's work because it reflects the ideology of Carl Schmitt, 'the leading Nazi theoretician of totalitarianism.'[262] According to Hayek, Schmitt's tendencies towards totalitarianism existed well before the rise of Nazism; he used 'his formidable intellectual powers to fight against liberalism in all its forms.'[263] According to Renato Cristi, Hayek often rails against Schmitt's philosophy because it both 'contravenes' liberal politics and ushers in the basis for totalitarian thought.[264] Hayek christens Schmitt as the *crown jurist* of the Nazis, and claims that Schmitt used his personal connections to attain that post in Hitler's regime.[265]

Specifically, one of Schmitt's philosophical concepts that Hayek rejects was his illiberal jurisprudence. Hayek believed that Schmitt treated the rule of law as violable, and that he was willing to exempt the state from any restrictions.[266] As a legal positivist, Schmitt apparently dismissed natural law in favour of seeing law as 'exclusively [the] deliberate commands of a human will.'[267] On Hayek's reading of Schmitt,

> law is not to consist of abstract rules which make possible the formation of a spontaneous order by the free action of individuals through limiting the range of their actions, but is to be the instrument of arrangement or organization by which the individual is made to serve concrete purposes. This is the inevitable outcome of an intellectual development in which the self-ordering forces of society and the role of law in an ordering mechanism are no longer understood.[268]

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[261] Renato Cristi, <u>Carl Schmitt and Authoritarian Liberalism</u> (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 146.
[262] Friedrich Hayek, <u>The Road to Serfdom</u> (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 187.
[263] Quoted in Cristi, <u>Authoritarian Liberalism</u>, p. 146.
[264] Ibid., p. 147.
[265] Ibid., p. 146.
[266] Ibid., p. 156.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Quoted in ibid., p. 158. Crisit notes that while this is *Hayek's* view, it is a 'confused' argument.

Schmitt views *law* as a tool by which a leader can command others to act in specific ways—this drives against liberal notions, such as the primacy of the rule of law, by placing it at the service of the political leadership. In Hayek's mind, Schmitt also omits the role of men's reason in law, and the 'concrete order' quoted above could act as a 'vehicle for decisionism' or totalitarianism.[269] Thus, Hayek labels Schmitt's political philosophy as anti-liberal and decisionist; this places formal considerations of law in the foreground, while placing the liberty of men, rationality and liberal conceptions of law in the background.

To be sure, we come away from Hayek's writings with the sense that he sees Schmitt as a fascist. In prioritizing the state over individuals, in proffering a system of law that deposits authority in the highest-standing power—the state, and therefore the leadership of that state—and in disregarding ideals such as reason, Schmitt supports a fascist ideology. Moreover, by directly tying Schmitt to the National Socialists insofar as he was their crown jurist, we are compelled further to conclude that in Hayek's estimation, Carl Schmitt's political thought is reflective of Nazism.

One cannot deny the controversial character of Carl Schmitt's biography and political thought. He lived and worked in a society rampant with intimidation, political upheaval, and the takeover of German state by National Socialists. A debate rages as to whether Schmitt became a Nazi in order to save his life or if his Nazism represents a natural extension of his thought. For this thesis, I do not take a position on this debate, but I believe it is provide a full representation of the literature surrounding Schmitt. Taking a stance on the above debate would not complement my analysis—I am interested in determining simply whether Schmitt's philosophy expresses pre-modernity, irrespective of his connections with National Socialism, through a close reading of his seminal works.

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[269] Ibid., p. 165.

Schmitt's Political Thought

In order to show the pre-modernity within Schmitt's work, it is necessary to sketch out some of its major elements. Chief among them are his notions of the political, sovereignty, and the illogic of liberal democracy. Using these three concepts as a base, it becomes possible to diagnose if, and to what degree, Schmitt is pre-modern.

Quite famously, Schmitt offers something unique to political science: an actual definition of the political. For him, all independent domains of thought contain an essential binary that defines them; for aesthetics, it is a question of beauty or ugliness and for economics, it is a question of profit or loss.[270] The political too is an independent domain, and thus, becomes defined by its binary: the friend and the enemy.[271] While it is the basis of politics, the friend-enemy concept is not permanently fixed; their identities arise in particular situations depending on the people present.[272] Politics always contains the relation of friend and enemy, but the enemy's identity is contextual.

The enemy is no metaphor: he is not just a rival economic competitor or a more powerful debater.[273] Rather, the enemy is a physical threat to the survival of a collection of men; he 'denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation,' and admits the possibility for a physical clash.[274] The enemy is a public foe that any armed group can confront in a war.

Moreover, the notion of the state depends on the political.[275] 'In its entirety the state as an organized political entity decides for itself the friend-enemy distinction.'[276] According to Schmitt, without the political, the state loses its purpose. Once the political decision has been

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[270] Carl Schmitt, Concept of the Political, p. 26.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Ibid., pp. 26-27.
[273] Ibid., pp. 27-28.
[274] Ibid., pp. 26 et seq.
[275] Ibid., p. 19.
[276] Ibid., pp. 29-30.

taken, other decisions it makes derive from the political—education policies or social reforms might appear apolitical, but the language one uses regarding these policies reflects the friend-enemy binary.[277] The state's essence and its actions refer to the political distinction.

Schmitt does not *equate* the political with other areas of thought; he elevates it above all others. This is because the political, unlike anything else, concerns matters of life and death. For each 'religious, moral, economic, ethical or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy.'[278] Groups might begin as technically apolitical but they become political the moment a threat appears that forces the group to band together against it. Moreover, the 'friend-enemy grouping is existentially so strong and decisive that [a] non-political antithesis, at precisely the moment at which it becomes political, pushes aside and subordinates religious or economic qualities.'[279] The political grouping is the most 'decisive human group,' and when it appears, it becomes the primary form of association.[280] Inasmuch as the political is able to overshadow other forms of identification, Schmitt can assert that the political is the most critical of all forms of thought.

Schmitt defends his definition of the political through a meditation on human nature and an attack on the liberalism of modernity. He proposes the 'diagnosis that all genuine political theories presuppose man to be evil'; liberals who assume man to be naturally good seek to shift power of the state and politics to economics or ethics because these concepts, they believe, should serve society.[281] The idea that man is good, Schmitt writes, leads to the doctrine of checks-and-balances that limits the power of the state;[282] this implies that the state's capacity for

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[277] Ibid., p. 30.
[278] Ibid., p. 37.
[279] Ibid., p. 38.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Cf. ibid., pp. 60-61.
[282] Ibid, p. 61.

violence requires restraint because men are actually peaceful and agreeable, making unbridled

state power superfluous. Yet, this modern assumption of checking state power 'cannot be

characterized as either a theory of state or a basic political principle.'[283] Liberal state theory is

apolitical because it rejects the inevitable enmity among men, and therefore, rejects the political.

Logically, only those who understand human nature to be corrupted are capable of legitimate

political theory.

Modern liberals evade the political by mutating the friend-enemy distinction into a debate

between ethics and economics, or education and property.[284] Their primary concern is individual

freedom in these domains and in its name, they invent 'a series of methods for hindering and

controlling the state and government's power. [They] make of the state a compromise and of its

institutions a ventilating system....'[285] Indeed, they write that individual freedom becomes 'the

highest value,' and necessitates the neutrality of 'human knowledge' and science.[286] Moderns

use the state to secure liberty rather than abide by its central purpose of deciding on the

political.[287]

Liberals hollow out the state at their own peril, for there are times that require the state to

demand that men forfeit their lives in its defence; however, liberals cannot compel freemen to die

on the state's behalf for that would be an abuse against individual liberty.[288] As Schmitt notes, a

tenet of liberal individualism states that there cannot be a public enemy against whom a man is

compelled to fight unless by his own volition.[289] The ability to 'repel' the enemy of the state

becomes impossible because in proposing discussion in the place of decision-making, liberals

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[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid., p. 70.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Carl Schmitt, Political Theology II: The Myth of the Closure of Any Political Theology. Translated by Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward (Cambridge, UK & Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008), p. 129.
[287] Schmitt, Concept of the Political, p. 71
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid.

transform state into society.[290] This modern, depoliticized world might be interesting, 'but there would not be a meaningful antithesis whereby men could be required to sacrifice life and authorized to shed blood and kill other human beings.'[291] Without actually embracing the political, something substantial about a community of men is missing; the state becomes at risk.

Ultimately, the liberal move to undermine the political will fail, since neither state nor politics will be banished from the world.[292] Schmitt writes that

> The world will not become depoliticized with the aid of definitions and constructions, all of which circle the polarity of ethics and economics. Economic antagonisms can become political, but the fact that an economic power position could arise proves that the point of the political may be reached from an economic as well as from any other domain.[293]

Liberals attempt to subdue the political by prioritizing debate over ethics or economics, but they cannot eliminate the political wholly. When apolitical groups unite against a foe, *the political* is in the midst of them; we 'cannot escape the logic of the political.'[294] Politics is central to men's lives because it is destiny; it is inescapable and must be confronted honestly.[295]

A second pivotal element of Schmitt's political thought is sovereignty. For him, the 'sovereign is he who decides on the exception.'[296] By that, Schmitt means that one determines the sovereign's identity through noting who can suspend the law during moments of political crisis.[297] His interest centers on the concrete applications of sovereignty, rather than grand theoretical

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[290] Ibid., p. 72.
[291] Ibid., p. 35.
[292] Ibid., p. 78.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid., p. 79.
[295] Leo Strauss, 'Notes on the Concept of the Political.' In Carl Schmitt, The Concept of the Political. Translated by George Schwab (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 110.
[296] Carl Schmitt, Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty. Translated by George Schwab (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 5, *passim.*
[297] Ibid.

abstractions that just spark debate.[298] By understanding the exception, Schmitt suggests that one learns *who decides* during emergencies to protect the public.[299] The sovereign's capacity to decide unilaterally means that the exception exists outside of 'codified' laws, and 'cannot be circumscribed factually and made to conform to a preformed law.'[300] Because the sovereign's power to decide is absolute and law places restrictions on the use of power, law must logically be powerless to restrain him.

This theory of sovereignty clashes with modernity. Liberals wish to impede this sort of sovereign power by removing any actor's ability to operate outside the law; they seek to hamper the decider from acting, even in perilous moments.[301] They promote 'legality,' where governments act solely on legal bases; the sovereign 'does nothing other than what a valid norm permits jurisdictionally.'[302] For Schmitt, legality was essential in the French Revolution; it was 'a higher and more valid, more rational and new mode of legitimacy; it was a message from the goddess of Reason, from the new opposed to the old.'[303] Legality expresses reason without old prejudices, and represents the pinnacle of advancement for modern theorists of sovereignty. However, they jeopardize the ability of the state to exist as a state; its sovereign power disappears under this modern scheme.[304] In limiting the ability of the sovereign to declare an exception, liberals put the public at risk during an unresolved national emergency.

Schmitt writes that even *if* one could enumerate in a constitution the powers and conditions under which an exception could be declared, this would not eliminate the question of

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[298] Ibid., p. 6.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid., p. 7.
[302] Carl Schmitt, Legality and Legitmacy. Translated and edited by Jeffrey Seitzer (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 4.
[303] Carl Schmitt, Political Theology II, p. 119.
[304] Schmitt, Political Theology, pp. 11-12.

sovereignty.[305] Inherent in law is a focus on the normal, not the exceptional, and therefore law approaches an emergency 'disconnectedly' because it is unequipped to differentiate between an ordinary problem that police can handle and something that would require the exception.[306] Additionally, the exception relates directly to limitless power and 'the suspension of the entire existing order,' something that is beyond law's scope as law.[307] Yet, because the sovereign decides on the exception to protect the public and the state, Schmitt suggests that one cannot equate it with anarchy; rather 'order in the juristic sense still prevails even if it is not of the ordinary kind.'[308] Constitutional law cannot contain the sovereign decision; however, the practice of sovereignty *resembles* legality even though it is extra-legal.

Connectedly, one cannot state that law has no place within Schmitt's theory of the exception. He writes:

> All law is 'situational law.' The sovereign produces and guarantees the situation in its totality. He has the monopoly over this last decision. Therein resides the essence of the state's sovereignty, which must be juristically defined correctly, not as the monopoly to *coerce* or to *rule*, but as the monopoly to *decide*. The exception reveals most·clearly the essence of the state's authority. The decision parts here from the legal norm, and [...] authority proves that to produce law it need not be based on law.[309]

Schmitt argues that there is no pure law in the modern sense, but rather, law can and does arise in a unique form during exceptional action. The state cannot be based on its capacity to rule over men; it is founded on the ability of the sovereign to decide within a certain area in the best interest—according to the popular will—of the people.

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[305] Ibid., p. 12.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Cf. ibid.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Ibid., p. 13. My emphasis.

Liberals, Schmitt argues, believe that the law can recognize potential emergencies and provide a mechanism whereby the system can suspend itself.[310] Modernists want to 'regulate the exception' as carefully as possible, which consequentially means that the law must spell out all the scenarios where it may self-suspend.[311] Of course, this is impossible, and Schmitt alludes to this in asking 'from where does the law obtain this force?'[312] The law would have to be *physically* able to determine that a situation requires the suspension of the law and be capable of actually suspending it; this is simply poetic personification, and thus, unsustainable.

Schmitt did not originate the theory of exceptional sovereignty; it already existed in older Catholic thought. The French counterrevolutionary[313] Joseph de Maistre embraced the concept of sovereignty, which he understood as decision on the exception.[314] For de Maistre, the state matters inasmuch as it provides an area for the political decision, just as the Church provided an area for the Day of Reckoning—each offered a context where the ultimate decision can be made.[315] In brief, de Maistre promoted absolute sovereign decision since it is a secular equivalent to God's decision of a man's fate on Judgement Day.

Moreover, Schmitt presents Donoso Cortés as another Catholic theorist who promoted the decisionist conception of sovereignty. Cortés hated the liberal bourgeoisie because they would not take a position in the critical battle between Catholicity and 'atheist socialism.'[316] Cortés defined liberals as *they that avoid making decisions by moving the debate to the terrain of*

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[310] Ibid., p. 14.

[311] Ibid.

[312] Ibid.

[313] For discussion on de Maistre's counterrevolutionary and anti-Enlightenment stance, see Isaiah Berlin, 'Introduction.' In Joseph de Maistre, Considerations on France. Edited by Richard A. Lebrun (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. xi-xii, *passim.*

[314] Schmitt, Political Theology, p. 55.

[315] Ibid.

[316] Ibid., p. 59.

conversation rather than battle; for this, he referred to modernists as 'una clasa discutidora.'[317] In the French July Monarchy, Cortés witnessed liberal-bourgeois indecision vis-à-vis their constitution. They wanted a king, but they intended to deprive him of any substantive executive power; they sought freedom for all men, but restricted the vote to property owners so that the poor could not influence social policies and remain indentured to the aristocracy.[318] Unable to decide, these liberals created confusing contradictions within their constitution,[319] the implication being that strong sovereignty could resolve these problems. Due to modern indecision, Cortés averred that liberalism exists in the 'interim period in which it was possible to answer the question "Christ or Barabbas?" with a proposal to adjourn or appoint a commission of investigation.'[320] In sum, critical situations require the ability to decide on urgent questions; evading that decision is unacceptable and even heretical for Cortés.

A third major element of Schmitt's theory is his critique of parliamentary democracy. He argues that liberalism and democracy are opposites; this renders parliamentary democracy untenable. He notes that liberalism and democracy came together at the same time as providential politics began to ebb.[321] Not only did modernists enmesh themselves with democracy, but socialists and conservatives—each, of course, in their own way, offshoots of modernity—proposed visions of democracy.[322] Democracy, as such, appears to have no inherent *political* content, but rather, is a system of organization.[323]

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[317] Ibid. Translated, this means 'a discussing class.'
[318] Ibid., p. 59-60.
[319] Ibid., p. 60.
[320] Ibid., p. 62.
[321] Carl Schmitt, The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy.Translated by Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), p. 23.
[322] Ibid., p. 24.
[323] Ibid.

It is important that democracies can take different forms, depending on their ideological influence. It compels Schmitt to wonder what democracy consists of if it can be liberal, conservative, militaristic, pacifist, progressive and retrogressive.[324] He suggests that the question of identity—the identity of the people—begins to give democracy its concrete and substantial meaning.[325] Schmitt writes:

> It belongs to the essence of democracy that every and all decisions which are taken are only valid for those who themselves decide. That the outvoted minority must be ignored only causes theoretical and superficial difficulties. In reality, even this rests on the identity that constantly recurs in democratic logic and on the essential democratic logic... that the will of the outvoted minority is in truth identical with the will of the majority.[326]

Democracy requires a constituted people, and that body needs to be of one united will, irrespective of each man's personal opinions. Democratic theory arising from John Locke and J.J. Rousseau stipulates that the citizenry's freedom stems from men's obedience to a general will, even when that will drives against their individual wills.

A democracy requires the creation of multiple identities—the governors and the governed, the law and the state, parliamentarians and their constituents, et cetera—but they all spring from the primary identity of *the people*.[327] Concepts like universal suffrage or referenda are not intrinsically democratic, but 'are in consequence democratic' because the definitive identification of the people admits a popular will that might want these measures.[328]

Once 'the people' are established, determining their will becomes the next component of democracy. Schmitt notes that the people's will is constant; it is irrelevant whether it is expressed by millions or by a dictator who understands the will properly.[329] In fact, it may be that a

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[324] Ibid.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Ibid., p. 26.
[328] Cf. ibid., p. 27.
[329] Ibid.

minority of the citizenry actually possess the will of the people; propaganda easily misinforms the majority of people in a given context.[330]

Democracy requires a popular will, and it is the job of the elite to educate the people to understand the nature of that will. An 'educator' is necessary to instruct the people, since they 'can be brought to recognize and express their own will correctly through the right education.'[331] The educator determines the will of the people, matches his own will to theirs, and instructs the populace from above so that they can grasp their true will.[332] The educator does not impose *his* will onto the people, but rather, carefully examines the situation and objectively diagnoses the people's will within the given context. Without such education, the people may ignore democracy, and might use democratic tools—such as free votes—to undermine democracy itself.[333] Schmitt notes that because democracy requires a popular will and it likely requires education from above, dictatorship and democracy are not antitheses.[334] 'Even during a transitional period dominated by the dictator,' he writes, 'a democratic identity can exist and the will of the people can still be the exclusive criterion.'[335] If there is an identified people and if the government acts in accordance with their will, democracy and dictatorship can coexist.

Indeed, democracy always contains some element of its logical negation in modernity. Schmitt notes that democracy rests on the principle of majority rule—that fifty-one percent of the population ought to be able to craft policy.[336] However, all modern democracies have aspects of their constitution that require a supermajority of support in order to change; these are quantitative

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[330] Ibid.
[331] Ibid., p. 28.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Ibid.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Ibid.
[336] Cf. Schmitt, Legality and Legitmacy, p. 39 et seq.

obstacles designed to impede governance rather than an expression of concern for minorities.[337] They are introduced to make reform of core procedural and legal practices more difficult; however, Schmitt wonders why two-thirds support for a motion, *qualitatively*, is greater than a simple majority.[338] He speculates that if all democracies begin with the essential principle that the people are homogeneous, then a simple majority acts as the 'simple lawgiver' in a polity.[339] The simple lawgiver, in theory, *can* decide any question at hand, and the additional 'quantum' of a supermajority risks violating the philosophy of homogeneity that animates democracy.[340] To be sure, these supermajorities are antidemocratic and 'cannot be justified, therefore, by democratic principles and still less by the logic of justice, humanity and reason, but only by practical-technical considerations of the present situation.'[341] In brief, Schmitt notes that democracies knot themselves in antidemocratic conventions. As such, Schmitt shows that dictatorship and democracy can coexist just as supermajorities and democracies do; theoretical paradoxes are an element of democratic thought and pracitce.

Parliamentarism,[342] a liberal idea, differs from democracy. Schmitt premises democracy on the people's will, but understands parliamentarism as openness and a division of powers. The demand for openness fights against secretive and corrupt politics; because of its success,

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[337] Ibid., p. 41.

[338] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[339] Ibid., pp. 39-40. This concept of homogeneity comes up often in Schmitt's work. He asserts that in order to establish 'a people,' these people require similar characteristics and share a mutual will; this renders them homogenous. The possible—but not necessarily implicit—racial or ethnic elements of this argument are beyond the scope of this paper.

[340] Ibid., p. 40.

[341] Ibid., p. 41.

[342] The word 'parliamentarism' is Kennedy's English translation of Schmitt, whether it is a proper English word notwithstanding.

openness seemed intuitively *just*, and politics felt good when it was open.[343] Thus, openness

became a value unto itself, despite the fact that it emerged as a response to the abuse of power.[344]

In practice, openness is free discussion and a free press that investigates political abuse; it

strives to check the power of government.[345] This sort of freedom conflicts with democracy since

majorities can override and overwhelm minorities in public forums; Schmitt notes that the

potential to silence even one man's opinions clashes with the ideal of democracy because that

person might actually have the understanding of the popular will.[346] Openness leads to freedom

of thought—however, it is a private freedom for individuals.[347] If identifying a people without

concern to individual opinions characterizes democracy, the demand for openness places

parliamentarism and democracy in opposition insofar as openness yields a politics where men

prize their opinions over the popular will.

Additionally, parliamentarism creates a division of powers. Modernists assert that it is

'dangerous if the offices which make the laws were also to execute them,'[348] so political power

cannot be permitted to collect in one place. As such, a division of powers does not admit

dictatorship, and considers dictatorship and parliamentary democracy to be antithetical.[349] This

tenet of parliamentarism disables democracy from working; dictatorship may arise to help the

people recognize their will and can exist for a period if the people's will guides the dictator. One

can assert that democracy may depend on dictatorship, given Schmitt's definition of democracy.

Because of its dependence on openness and a division of powers, parliamentarism and

democracy are simply incompatible.

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[343] Schmitt, Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy, pp. 37-38.
[344] Ibid., p. 38.
[345] Ibid., pp. 38-39.
[346] Ibid., p. 39. Schmitt notes that J.S. Mill rendered similar conclusions on the issue of a 'majority' having the physical and mathematical capacity to overtake the 'minority' within a democracy.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid., p. 41.
[349] Ibid.

Schmitt's criticism of parliamentary democracy is an attack on modernity. Democracy and liberal parliamentarism cannot function together because they start from different principles. He condemns liberalism for making politics an individual habit rather than supporting the identification of the public will. Schmitt's language intimates an acceptance of dictatorship if it can benefit the people, in contrast to liberals who eschew the accumulation of power. Logically, Schmitt's willingness to permit dictatorship as a democratic instrument places him and modernity at odds.

The Pre-Modernity of Schmitt

Using the above research as a basis, I will show that one can properly describe Carl Schmitt's political thought as pre-modern. His conceptualization of reason, human nature, and the interplay of freedom and government help make that case. I will take each of these aspects in turn in order to affirm this.

Pre-moderns are sceptical of pure reason. Hobbes argues that reason is the reckoning of one's self-interest in a given situation; however, because men can easily misjudge their situation, they must complement reason with natural law. Natural law reveals that men desire peace, and when they use 'right reason'—reason augmented with true principles of nature—they understand they must surrender complete freedom in order to have peace. For Schmitt, it is rational for the people to collectively determine their existential enemy and unite against it. Clearly, such an action is in their interest, since failure to do so may lead to their destruction. Moreover, in a young polity, the people may not be sufficiently wise to properly determine their will, and need an educator to instruct them. Here, one must conflate the notions of 'interest' and 'will' because of their synonymous relationship—men's will is to live and be free of threats and it is in their

interest to band together in order to make this possible. Here the educator steps in to instruct the people that in order to attain the peace inherent in natural law, they must surrender the freedom of individual opinion. In other words, the educator provides the 'right reason' necessary to empower men to work together to repel an enemy in the cause of natural law.

Moreover, pre-moderns also interpret reason as cunning. The prince knows the weakness inherent in men and shapes his actions in accordance. Thus, good rule comes from both diplomacy and brute force when necessary. Similarly, Schmitt's conception of sovereign rule matches well with this concept of reason. The sovereign is the ultimate protector of the law, and implicitly, he does not act extra-legally in situations where the constitution can be upheld within the bounds of law. However, in extreme situations, he may suspend the law and act with complete discretion in its defence. Thus, he reflects pre-modern rationality inasmuch as he possesses the savoir-faire to know when to be passive and let law rule and when to become 'beastly' and intervene himself.

Additionally, pre-modern reason is that candle that chases away the darkness of myth with the light of reality.[350] Schmitt's criticisms of democracy and constitutional restraints on sovereign power do exactly this. He exposes the modern myth that law can anticipate all forms of crisis and therefore has no need for an extra-legal protector. Law is not human; it cannot analyze the facts of a concrete situation and apply ready-made solutions to a problem. Some moments are so unique that no one could predict them, and they require somebody to recognize the danger and act swiftly to quell it.

Similarly, Schmitt dispels the myth that democracy and dictatorship are antitheses. In order for a democracy to effectively function, it must subscribe to the people's will. There are moments, especially in a democracy's inception, where an educational dictatorship can assist

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[350] This, of course, is Spinoza's argument.

men to determine their will. Moreover, even a polity governed by a dictator remains democratic if the popular will, rather than his own, inspire his actions. Inasmuch as democracy's efficacy depends on the obedience of the governors to pursue the popular will, the modern belief that democracy and dictatorship are antithetical appears to be a superstition. Indeed, even the persistent use of supermajorities in democratic constitutions represents an element of *antidemocracy* conflicting with democracy in modern legal thought.

Schmitt's presentation of human nature also reflects pre-modernism. Hobbes claims that men naturally fight amongst themselves due to diffidence, the desire for glory, and the need to compete. In the state of nature, men are likely to steal from one another, kill each other if necessary, and live in a perpetual state of war where each man is every other's enemy. Indeed, human nature is so vicious that life in the *status naturalis* would be 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short.'[351] Spinoza argues that men are ignorant, and our base appetites move us to desire power at any cost. Men's natural right is to take what they want by force or by deception, and live in enmity with those that would impede this.

Machiavelli accepts that rulers may lie and mislead others because men are greedy, deceptive and untrustworthy. He writes that if 'men were all good, this precept would not be good [, b]ut since men are a wicked lot and will not keep their promises to you, you likewise need not keep yours to them.'[352] Because men are evil, one must abandon any pure form of polity—like democracy—since it will become corrupted and destabilize society. Only a republic that balances the differing interests of the people, the aristocracy and the royals could create enough healthy friction to dampen men's nature enough to prevent ruin.

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[351] Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 186.
[352] Machiavelli, The Prince, pp. 60-61.

Schmitt's definition of the political—the friend-enemy distinction—radiates this dim conception of human nature. He simply asserts that men live in a world where conflict is inevitable; there always exists the threat of enmity and it cannot be eliminated. As long as men live together, there will always be another group that wants to destroy them. As such, at the heart of the political distinction rests a conception of human nature that considers human nature to be violent. If men were capable of being good, then politics could not be equated to a battle between friends and enemies; we could also simply be friends if we tried hard enough. Indeed, liberal theory, in Schmitt's view, fails to be genuine political thought because it denies the corrupted nature of men in favour of the ability to compromise.

Schmitt's notion of sovereignty is shot through with a pessimistic view of human nature. Logically, the idea that exceptional crises may arise that would necessitate the unlimited use of the state's power, even to the point of force, presupposes that men act in a particular way. If men are violent and cruel, then they may attempt to subvert the state or overthrow its legitimate government in a grab for power. Such actions would constitute the sort of crisis Schmitt envisions. However, if men by nature are kind and peaceful, then the possibility that a significant crisis could happen that contravenes the norms of law becomes impossible. Rather than rebelling against the state by force, men would engage in peaceful protest or dissent in speech as available to them through the law. However, because men are corrupted and aggressive, Schmitt protects the idea of undivided sovereignty as a safeguard against the predictable violence of men.

Pre-modern philosophy also seems to animate Schmitt's philosophy regarding the interplay between government and freedom. Pre-moderns have an important place for freedom; they argue one cannot expunge it, and that men's hearts crave it. Spinoza writes that men must be capable of free thought and that any attempt by a government to repress it will fail. However,

men also require government in order to curb their most violent tendencies. Thus, a compromise must be struck between ensuring that freedom may flourish and that government can be maintained. For Spinoza, any question that corresponds to sovereign power must overrule the opinions of individuals; men are free to think as they please, but they must submit to authority in the execution of their government's sovereign power even if it drives against their opinion. They remain free in arts or economics, but sacrifice freedom in the above instance.

Hobbes too believes that freedom is essential for men. He asserts that the will to be free derives from God and that God Himself wills men to be free; thus freedom becomes a necessary element of the human condition, whether that be the freedom to move without impediment or the freedom to choose to harm another for personal gain. Accepting these parameters, Hobbes proposes a government where all authority rests in the hands of a sovereign. Men surrender unlimited freedom in order to establish laws that protect one another from harm. Moreover, all men equally surrender their complete liberty to this sovereign, and by consequence, no one person becomes *less* free than any other.[353] Men agree to the creation of this sovereign and pledge their complete obedience to his authority on all political matters.

It becomes clear how Schmitt's thought depicts pre-modernism. He distinguishes the political from all other areas of independent thought, such as morality or ethics. The sovereign who decides on the exception or the dictator who assists the people to form their own will exists only within the realm of politics. The exception itself relates only to matters that threaten the state; the people's will reflects only their desire to make the political distinction of who their friends are, who their enemy is, and how they ought to constitute a state for their collective benefit. Therefore, Schmitt's thought does not prevent individuals from acting freely within the

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[353] Hobbes, Leviathan. Here, Hobbes has in mind a sort of mathematical equation.

domains of morality or economics. Men, it appears, may retain their natural freedom in all areas of thought other than the political.

Like the pre-moderns, activity within the political space is the sole property of the sovereign. His ability to decide on the exception is absolute, for there are no mechanisms that can prevent him from suspending the law. Within his dictatorial democracy, outvoted minorities have no capacity to prevent the popular will from its execution since their interests are identical to the majority. While they may indeed have personal opinions, they are logically compelled to allow a sovereign decision to override them. Moreover, men are not even free to forgo politics since, he declares, they cannot 'escape the logic of the political.'[354] Within the domain of politics, men are bound to sovereign authority, just as free-thinking individuals are bound in Spinoza's formulations and citizens under the leviathan are in Hobbes's thought.

Moreover, Schmitt reflects pre-modernity in one other crucial respect. Like Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Spinoza, Schmitt entangles himself with modernity despite his antagonisms with it. As Strauss notes, his terminology in the Concept of the Political derives from the modern, *liberal* lexicon.[355] Ideas like 'independent domains of thought,' for example, come from a liberal vocabulary that describes the different tensions that constitute society.[356] As such, Schmitt appears unable to rid himself of the language of those he condemns. According to Strauss, Schmitt embodies 'a critic of liberalism caught within a liberal framework.'[357]

In Schmitt's discussions on sovereignty, Strauss's observation continues to reveal itself. He wrote that modern theory on sovereignty and decision is flawed because it attempts to harness that which cannot be. Should liberals attempt to codify situations where the law can be

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[354] Schmitt, Concept, p. 79.

[355] Leo Strauss, 'Notes on The Concept of the Political.' In Carl Schmitt, The Concept of the Political. Translated by George Schwab (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 110.

[356] Ibid.

[357] Ibid., p. 122.

suspended, they would simply fashion a disjointed document. Their desire to constrain sovereign power within law creates an absurdity whereby law must physically determine the degree of a crisis and then suspend itself, as if it were a person. Because they do not accept the absolute nature of sovereign power, liberals unsuccessfully seek to avoid decision altogether. However, Schmitt's theory of decisionism also contains modern elements. He differentiates the sovereign's move to act outside the legal norm from anarchy because it reflects a juridical practice. In other words, Schmitt's sovereign operates on the liberal terrain of 'the rule of law, just in a different way.'[358] He does not advocate lawlessness, but rather, an interpretation of sovereignty that subscribes to a legal order that is free of the practical contradictions of liberal rationalists. It appears that the words chosen and the parameters set by Schmitt are fundamentally modern.

At first glance, Strauss's observation of Schmitt does not seem to apply to his thoughts on democracy. However, in his preface to the second edition to <u>The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy</u>, Schmitt expresses modern sentiments. He believes that parliamentary democracy is a 'lesser evil' than Leninist bolshevism or fascist dictatorship; 'it is both "socially and technically" a very practical thing.'[359] He grants that parliamentarism works better than untried systems of government, and that a radical move away from it could create social disorder.[360] Nevertheless, these facts do not create a set of principles undergirding parliamentary democracy, and they cannot be used in lieu of such maxims.[361] Parliamentarism upholds openness and a division of powers as *its* principles; they clash with the logic of democracy, making them untenable. Additionally, 'modern mass democracy' renders openness and discussion a formality.

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[358] Indeed, perhaps it would be more instructive to write 'law' as 'something juridical *without being* actual law.'

[359] Carl Schmitt, 'Preface to the Second Edition (1926): On the Contradiction Between Parliamentarism and Democracy.' In <u>The Concept of the Political</u>. Translated by Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 2-3.

[360] Ibid., p. 3.

[361] Ibid.

Political parties are not engaged in reasoned debate in the quest for truth, and the public are not inspired by the dialectics of discussion.[362] Schmitt shows that parliamentary democracy rests on illogic and that the people have no faith in its tenets. He does not express a visceral hatred for modern politics; in fact, he compliments it, but cannot let it escape without a decent inspection. In his thoughts on the political, sovereignty, and democracy, Schmitt weds himself to certain principles of modernity; in so doing, he follows the pre-modern practice of both rejecting the excesses and illogic of liberalism, while at the same time, succumbing to some of its most attractive and persuasive tenets.

In this chapter, I investigated Carl Schmitt's political philosophy, and in juxtaposing it with pre-modern thought, I note an intimate connection. In view of his thoughts on reason, human nature, and government that arise from his theories on the political, sovereignty, and democracy, the case exists that Schmitt's work is profoundly pre-modern. As such, one can begin to speculate that pre-modern political philosophy can, and does, exist beyond its own historical moment.

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[362] Ibid., p. 6.

CHAPTER III: Neoconservative Political Thought

Who, except the erring, would deny that it is evil to approve of falsities as if they were true or to disapprove of truths as if they were false, or to hold uncertainties as if they were certain and certainties as if they were uncertain? – Augustine.[363]

Moments of crisis provoke important political philosophies. When Mark Antony and Octavian proposed a rejection of republicanism in favour of an Empire, Cicero showed that freedom cannot flourish under imperial rule. In the fifth century, as Romans blamed the influence of Christianity for the ebb of the Empire, Augustine responded that only through abandoning paganism could a full, rich society emerge. When empiricist thought threatened to delegitimize the use of philosophy in solving social problems, Kant proclaimed that only *more* theory rather than *less* will help redress our problems. As bourgeois Victorianism reduced the importance of manliness and strength in life, Nietzsche posited that man's redemption must come from a rejection of pure reason and an acceptance of might and will.

Carl Schmitt also wrote during a crisis. He saw that the spread of liberalism and legalism minimized the power and relevance of the state. In response, Schmitt proposed a theory of the political; politics transpire within the state, in which men find their true meaning. By marginalizing the state, modernity threatened to remove the space wherein men experience the most intense aspect of life. Against pacifist and legal dominance, Schmitt imagined men and the political in pre-modern terms.

Twenty-first century American neoconservatives also write amidst a crisis. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the United States opposed the Soviet Union as a mortal enemy. Each country espoused a different system of economics, politics and social arrangement. While life was tenuous during the 'Cold War,' the ends of political power and foreign policy were clear

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[363] Augustine, 'Lying.' In <u>Augustine: Political Writings</u>. Translated by Michael W. Tkacz and Douglas Kries (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, Inc., 1994), p. 256.

for America. However, in 1989 the USSR fell apart; this left the United States as the only remaining world superpower. For a decade, America lacked a genuine enemy and, consequentially, the nation's interest in aggressive foreign policy waned. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, a new enemy emerged: radical Islam. While international politics tilted towards peace treaties, military rollbacks and global cooperation, some American thinkers denounced the ability of these systems to address the reality of terror. Against the crises of international passivity and global terrorism, American neoconservatives developed their own political theory.

There are few concepts today more fluid than neoconservatism. Here, I am obliged to make certain assumptions in my analysis. I accept that the identity of neoconservatism has shifted over time; the 1970s version differs from that of the 2000s substantially. As such, I will suggest that it is impossible and inaccurate to talk about neoconservatism as a whole; rather, precise analysis requires a sharp focus to a particular stream of the ideology.

In this chapter, I will provide an historical context for neoconservatism by outlining its various stages. Then, I train my focus on the third generation of American neoconservatism, during the early- and mid-2000s. I dissect the works of preeminent thinkers and the public addresses of those attached to neoconservatism through qualitative and discourse analysis. I show that this strand of the ideology has similarities with Carl Schmitt's thought and pre-modernism more generally. Schmitt focused on state sovereignty and the nature of the political; third-age neoconservatives attend to international democratization or even political adventurism. While it appears that these two conflict, a thorough comparison of their political theories suggests otherwise. Pre-modernism animates both Schmitt's thought and that of the neoconservatives. In terms of reason, human nature, and the interplay between freedom and

government, both reject the 'progressive' and 'liberal' persuasions of their time. Instead, they propose philosophies of exceptionalism, take a dim view of human nature, and strike a balance between freedom and stability in government.

The First and Second Generation of Neoconservatism

While fleshing out the history of neoconservatism, I draw frequently from Justin Vaïsse's Neoconservatism.[364] The text is researched with great depth, it references multiple experts and seminal texts of neoconservatives, and contains interviews with prominent neoconservative scholars and practitioners.[365] Moreover, Vaïsse is neither an apologist for nor a harsh critic of neoconservatism; his work provides an objective biographical sketch of neoconservatism. Thus, I assert that Vaïsse's book is well qualified to use as a template for the history I intend to relate. While, to be sure, the following review draws on research and texts beyond Vaïsse, his framework influences much of the early structure of this chapter.

Most political scientists agree that neoconservatism is a predominantly American ideology. It initially arose in the 1970s as a vehicle for 'disenchanted welfare liberals' who lost faith in the utility of government.[366] The term *neoconservative* began as an epithet from Michael Harrington, an American socialist; he wanted to chastise former anti-communist socialists for their rightward shift.[367] Vaïsse classifies these trail blazers of neoconservatism as the first wave; thinkers like Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell and Norman Podhoretz emerged in this era.[368] Before their conversion, the first-generation thinkers began as socialists or even supporters of

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[364] Justin Vaïsse, Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA & London, UK: Belknap Press, 2010).

[365] Ibid., pp. 333-335.

[366] Terence Ball et al., Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal, p. 100.

[367] Gary Dorrien, Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), p. 7.

[368] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 50; Dorrien, Imperial Designs, p. 7.

Trotskyism; Kristol, for example, followed the writings of both Trotsky and Lionel Trilling, a socialist literary critic who underscored the paradox central to American liberal-democratic society.[369] However, they saw the liberal intelligentsia moving uncomfortably towards statism in the heart of the Cold War, and they feared this approach to politics would endanger the stability of the American state and the freedom of society. First-generation neoconservatives supported a politics that 'was expansionist, nationalistic and fiercely anticommunist; [they] prized patriotic values that were sneered at by the liberal elite.'[370] This first age harshly criticized communism as an ideology that could not flourish in the United States due to its civic culture.[371] These thinkers also believed that positive change in government policy could only come from within the state, rather than from outside.[372]

Vaïsse sets out several pillars of first generation neoconservative wisdom. First, America was in crisis; liberal civilization was being eroded by a caustic counterculture and radical leftism.[373] The surge in democracy and 'democratic distemper' also threatened to destabilize the republic; 'first-generation neoconservatives were cautious in their approach to democracy[as i]ts role was to safeguard liberty and allow elites to govern with the consent of the people.'[374] This compares with the philosophy of Leo Strauss, who suggested that democracy, fuelled by mass culture, will succumb to the 'tyranny of the majority'; as a consequence, democracy begins to decline because it has drifted away from its ancient roots.[375] Due to rebellion against the establishment and the growth of popular democracy, American government and society threatened to fall apart.

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[369] Douglas Murray, Neoconservatism: Why We Need It (New York: Encounter Books, 2006), pp. 30-31.
[370] Dorrien, Imperial Designs, p. 7.
[371] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 51.
[372] Ibid., p. 53.
[373] Ibid., p. 77.
[374] Ibid.
[375] See Murray, Neoconservatism, p. 19.

Second, the crisis was principally one of ideas; society trivialized traditional morals and virtues, and activists derided the principles of 'family, community, and work.'[376] Capitalism and hedonism supplanted older ideas; this was problematic because a democratic society depends upon certain virtues that capitalism alone cannot provide.[377] Allan Bloom, a neoconservative critic of the counterculture, charges this in his discussion of traditional and contemporary *openness*.[378] The former is a 'quest for knowledge and certitude' through education, whereas the latter 'stunts' the desire to learn in favour of complete relativism and 'intellectual humbling.'[379] By removing traditional values, we dull essential virtues and ideas. Our political society and our freedom depend upon these ideas; when we jeopardize these ideas, we risk our freedom.

Next, bureaucrats and intellectuals had set unreasonable expectations on the capacities of the state. Vaïsse writes that people 'expected the federal government to improve social and economic conditions in ways that the government could not meet.'[380] Liberals like John Kennedy oversold the state to the 'new class'; in vain, they anticipated that government would foster equality of condition and outcome.[381] Kristol criticized the overreach of liberal economics, coming from the state. 'The new liberalism,' he seemed to believe, 'thought too highly of equality.'[382]

Indeed, liberal economic policy harmed the United States in multiple ways.

Liberal economics penalized achievers, prevented wealth creation, and created a bloated welfare state. The enemy wasn't merely a youthful overreaction to Vietnam, but for the egalitarian illusions of the old liberalism paved the way to the disastrous new liberalism.

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[376] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 77.

[377] Ibid.

[378] Whether Bloom is a pure 'neoconservative' is an interesting debate. While, Bloom does not self-identify as a neoconservative, Murray argues that early members of the persuasion, because of negative connotations, often eschewed this term. Indeed, Murray demonstrates the neoconservative roots of Bloom and uses his work as evidence of neoconservative political thought. See Murray, Neoconservatism, pp. 22 et seq.

[379] Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 41.

[380] Ibid., p. 78

[381] Ibid.

[382] Dorrien, Imperial Designs, p. 9.

> The Civil Rights movement gave way to 'affirmative discrimination' and Black Power nationalism; Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty mostly benefited a 'new class' of parasitic bureaucrats and social workers; the emancipatory rhetoric of liberalism invited new assaults on the social order such as feminism, environmentalism, and gay rights....[383]

The overreach of the state through modern liberal economic policies disabled the possibility for self-driven success by creating an overgrown state. Through their obsession with substantive equality, modern liberals had only multiplied the number of radicalized groups that identified themselves solely in terms of race or personal ideology. In brief, neoconservatives argued that the state was not a panacea.

Also, since men are complex, there is limited scope for state action.[384] Thus, first-generation neoconservatives shied away from social engineering and government programs.[385] Traditional societal institutions embrace men's complexity, and thus 'it was best to be cautious and moderate in one's expectations' of state intervention in society.[386] While they had no attachment to the Old Right, they embraced older forms of government that infused patience and care with state intervention; they did not propose a return to the Old South.[387] Older forms of state influence endured because they reckoned with the reality of men.

Additionally, these neoconservatives took a classical conservative approach regarding intellectuals. They distinguished between an 'expert' and an 'intellectual,' with a negative perception of the latter.[388] They opposed the idea that intellectuals were the principal challengers to tradition; they became described as 'hypocritical, elitist, self-obsessed, secretly anxious about [their] social status, and the like....'[389] In contrast, experts were professionals who lent their

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[383] Ibid.
[384] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 78.
[385] Ilan Peleg, The Legacy of George W. Bush's Foreign Policy: Moving Beyond Neoconservatism (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), p. 50.
[386] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 78.
[387] Dorrien, Imperial Designs, p. 8.
[388] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 78.
[389] Ibid., pp. 78-79.

wisdom to the government against radicals who would disassemble traditional society and democratic institutions.[390] Rather than conflate the terms, first-generation neoconservatives drew an important difference: intellectuals endangered societal stability and experts defended it.

Last, the universities stifled free thought in favour of political correctness and aggressive intimidation of students into 'uniformity.'[391] On issues like ecology, Vietnam, homosexuality or women, anyone who dared to undertake a defense of tradition was dismissed as a racist or fascist.[392] Whereas universities ideally act as an arena of free debate and the exchange of free ideas, the new class had deleteriously altered that terrain, which neoconservatives noticed.

Taken together, the first generation of neoconservatism represented a rejection of external forces hoping to change the basic structures and values of society. They opposed the New Left that sought to use the state to destroy the family, traditional virtues and morals. These neoconservatives believed the state had limited scope. In general, this age pled for patience in politics, since rapid or radical change would risk the stability of the republic.

The second generation of neoconservatism arose within a more partisan context. After the 1968 defeat of Hubert Humphrey in the presidential election, leftist intellectuals within the Democratic Party began pushing for radical reforms of the delegate selection process to the nominating convention.[393] To avoid the old practice of back-room deals that allowed a cadre of elites to select the party's presidential nominee, reformers suggested that quotas be implemented so that groups previously discriminated against—women, blacks and youth—would have a voice in the process.[394] These changes did not benefit the electorate at large, but rather it gave

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[390] Ibid., p. 79; cf. Murray, Neoconservatism, p. 20.
[391] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 79.
[392] Ibid.; Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind, p. 339 et seq.
[393] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 83.
[394] Ibid.

'unprecedented' influence and a privileged edge to particular groups and ethnic movements.[395]

The influence of the New Left in the Democratic Party led to the nomination of South Dakota

Senator George McGovern as its presidential candidate in 1972—a politician who positioned

himself far too left for the average American.[396] In reaction to the sway of the New Left within

the party, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM) was formed in December 1972.

Its aim was to fight back against the influence of the New Left within the Democratic

Party, and propose the return of the traditional vision of the party.[397] Its founders were partisan

operatives like Ben Wattenberg, Robert Schifter and Max Kampelman, who proposed that the

CDM was both a political and an ideological instrument against the New Politics of the 1970s.[398]

Electorally, the CDM sought to nominate Washington Senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson as the

party's presidential nominee.[399] They failed in this, and saw Jimmy Carter win the nomination

and the presidency in 1976. Carter was a Southern progressive who lacked the neoconservative

fear of the Soviet Union, and he also did not appoint any neoconservative Democrats in his

administration.[400]

Vaïsse notes the four key positions of second-generation neoconservatism. First, the

politics of the New Left was a failure for Democrats.[401] The party's focus on identity politics had

been a 'contemptuous rejection' of the traditional Democratic base, such as labour; as a result,

Democrats had rejected McGovern in 1972, but still supported the party in Congress, which

suggested not all was lost.[402] Second, the popular sentiments of the voters ought to be respected;

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[395] Ibid., p. 83, 86.
[396] Ibid., p. 84.
[397] Ibid., p. 86; John Ehrman, The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs 1945 – 1994 (New Haven, CT & London, UK: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 34.
[398] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 86, 89, *passim*.
[399] Dorrien, Imperial Designs, p. 9.
[400] Ibid., pp. 9-10.
[401] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 89.
[402] Ibid.

the New Left were oblivious to the interests of the average voter and their lack of populism contributed to the defeat in 1972.[403] Third, while the CDM sought greater justice in society, the radical quota system was erroneous.[404] Neoconservatives embraced civil and political rights for blacks, but they dismissed quotas as a 'proportionalism' that distorted the type of progress Democrats wanted.[405] Fourth, they argued that America must dismiss 'isolationism and defeatism' in foreign policy.[406] In a presidential campaign pamphlet, Scoop Jackson argued that in foreign affairs, 'I'm not a hawk and I'm not a dove. I just don't want my country to be a pigeon.'[407] Moreover, he writes that American weakness abroad simply invites trouble, and therefore any sort of negotiations that the United States enters into must come from a position of strength.[408] Indeed, America should actively fight communism and accept its 'international responsibilities'; this contrasts with McGovern's approach of withdrawing from Vietnam and imposing severe cuts to Cold War military spending.[409]

It is with this last point that the second generation of neoconservatism really distinguishes itself. While the first age centered on intellectual debates, this next generation focused on foreign policy.[410] They despised the current of 'isolation, antimilitarism and anti-American feelings' arising from the New Left, and disagreed with their passive approach to the Soviet Union stemming from the communist victory in Vietnam.[411] Neoconservatives feared they were losing the Cold War; for them, arms control—the sort supported by the New Left—equaled

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[403] Ibid.
[404] Ibid.
[405] Ibid.
[406] Ibid., p. 90.
[407] Henry Jackson, 'Jackson for President 1972 Campaign Brochure.' 4President.org. Available online: < http://www .4president.org/brochures/scoopjackson1972brochure.htm >. Accessed 11 February 2011.
[408] Ibid.
[409] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 90.
[410] Ibid., p. 96.
[411] Ibid.

appeasement of communism.[412] Jeane Kirkpatrick argued that the friction between the New Left

and neoconservatives extended beyond policy differences; rather, each side understood the

essence of America in starkly different terms. She says,

> 'We' affirmed the validity of the American dream and the morality of the American
> society. 'They' adopted the characterizations of intellectuals like Charles Reich who
> described the U.S. as a sick society drunk on technology and materialism. 'We' rejected
> the effort to revise American history, making it a dismal tale of dead Indians and double-
> dealing white settlers, imperialism and war. 'They' rejected facts and truths we hold dear.
> 'Their' extravagant attack on American culture and institutions made 'us' progressively
> aware of our attachment to both.[413]

The approach of the New Left was one that demonized America as a country of profound evil

and wrong-doing; in contrast, second-generation neoconservatives believed that America was

both great and deserved an honest defence.

Neoconservatives of this moment positioned themselves to the right of Henry Kissinger's

realist strategy of détente.[414] Journals like Foreign Policy that promoted détente diminished the

importance of the American and Soviet conflict, the ideological nature of the Cold War, and the

role of military force in foreign policy; members of the CDM disagreed.[415] Neoconservatives

argued that the USSR, despite the SALT treaty or the Moscow Conference of 1974, still

repressed democratic movements and equipped Arab nations against Israel in order to co-opt

them.[416] As such, détente was an expression of weakness by the United States towards an

authoritarian regime that, despite its promises, failed to change. In response, the CDM was an

activist organization that sought more defence spending and the 'modernization of American

nuclear forces' in order to be better prepared for war with the USSR.[417] Vaïsse writes that they

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[412] John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), p. 74.
[413] Quoted in Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 98.
[414] Ibid., p. 100.
[415] Ibid.
[416] Ibid., p. 102, 103; Ehrman, The Rise of Neoconservatism, p. 92.
[417] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 104.

rejected the false dichotomy of *guns or butter*, by asserting that America could and must have both adequate defences and progressive social policy.[418]

Combining the principles of second-generation neoconservatism, one notes that its adherents hailed from the Democratic Party. Socially, it was progressive regarding Civil Rights issues. In foreign policy, its adherents were strong internationalists, anticommunists, and supporters of a fully-funded and modernized American military.

The Theory of Third-Generation Neoconservatism

The third stage of neoconservatism arose in a completely different context. In the mid-1990s, the scourges that first- and second-generation neoconservatives opposed—the New Left and international Communism—were gone, and, it appeared, so too was neoconservatism.[419] Instead, a newer version of the ideology emerged, one whose thinkers appreciated the unique moment. Men like David Frum, Robert Kagan, John Bolton and others prominent in the first administration of George W. Bush exemplify the third generation of neoconservatives.

Neoconservatives still in the Democratic Party were furious with their collective rejection by President Carter; they openly derided him and accused him of secretly fearing the power of the Soviet Union.[420] During the 1980s, in the final throes of the Cold War, the Republican Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency. He appreciated the threat from the USSR with equal concern as neoconservatives; since the Democratic Party turned their back on anticommunism, people inclined to support the neoconservative hard-line approach to the Soviet Union migrated to the Republican Party.[421] Then, with the USSR gone, America stood alone as the world's only

[418] Ibid.; cf. Jackson, '1972 Campaign Brochure.'
[419] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 220.
[420] Dorrien, Imperial Designs, p. 10.
[421] Ibid.

superpower.[422] This marked the first time in history that the hegemonic power was a democracy that had no interest in 'subjugating other countries' in a lust for domination.[423]

Vaïsse proposes that the third generation held to four principles. First, the United States must use its privileged position to ensure peace in the world.[424] In order to preserve their own safety and to fulfil the moral responsibilities of international superpower, America ought to actively seek a 'democratic zone of peace' wherever possible.[425] In the post-Cold War moment, American neoconservatives argued it was imperative that hegemony be pursued.[426]

Kagan argues that the United States has always been the guarantor of peace and freedom. Even before they declared independence from Great Britain, the founders envisioned their nation to be 'the embryo of a great empire,' an empire of liberty with a noble destiny.[427] Throughout the eighteen and nineteenth century, Americans believed that their founding principles were superior to the 'corrupt monarchies' of Europe or any other throughout history.[428] To this end, he cites Benjamin Franklin, who wrote that the cause of America is that of mankind.[429]

Absent some calamity that cripples the United States, their current position as world hegemon will remain, and the spirit of American exceptionalism will persist.[430] Unlike Europeans who cling to the idealistic belief that the laws of reason govern the actions of men and states, Americans believe that is far from the current reality; the United States must use pre-emptive force in the cause of democracy.[431] Kagan sees the United States as indispensible, and it

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[422] Peleg, George W. Bush's Foreign Policy, p. 20.
[423] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 233.
[424] Ibid., p. 232-233.
[425] Ibid., p. 233.
[426] Peleg, George W. Bush's Foreign Policy, p. 27.
[427] Robert Kagan, Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), p. 87.
[428] Ibid., pp. 87-88.
[429] Ibid., p. 88.
[430] Ibid.
[431] Cf. ibid., pp. 90-91.

seeks 'to defend and advance a liberal international order [, but] the only stable and successful order Americans can imagine is one that has the United States at its center.'[432] America is the world's superpower, imbued with the belief that it has a special mission in human affairs to promote peace and democracy throughout the world, even if by force.

Connectedly, the second principle provides a philosophical basis for American responsibility, namely, that democracy is intrinsically *better* than despotism.[433] Neo-conservatives reject the realist considerations of mere power and self-interest; they argue that only democracy creates the conditions that allow peace and security to flourish.[434] Plus, democracy itself contains value; the realist cynicism 'that democracy promotion is merely a fig leaf for imperialism and militarism misses the mark: it is not so much a moralistic camouflage as an element of [neoconservatives'] strategic calculus—which happens to be the right thing to do in principle.'[435] While democracy *can* operate as a tool to pacify bellicose threats, it also serves a just purpose. To that end, many neoconservatives argue that the freedom derived from democracy is 'a veritable locomotive of history' because men desire freedom as much as they desire breath.[436]

The realist approach to international relations—one that downplays the importance of moral virtues—is unworthy of the United States since it neither 'inspires nor edifies' the citizenry.[437] It is relativist, a 'perverse mode of thought' that rejects the truth of natural right or

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[432] Ibid., p. 95.
[433] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 233.
[434] Ibid.
[435] Ibid., p. 234.
[436] Ibid.
[437] Ibid.

the very 'notion of fixed truth' altogether.[438] Ilan Peleg refers to this approach as imperial universalism: the 'desire to democratize the entire world.'[439]

Frum and Perle argue exactly this. They compare the intrinsic difference between democracy and despotism, by discussing the Middle East.

> Take a vast area of the earth's surface, inhabited by people who remember a great history. Enrich them enough that they can afford satellite television and Internet connections, so that they can see what life is like across the Mediterranean or across the Atlantic. Then, sentence them to live in choking, miserable, polluted cities ruled by corrupt, incompetent officials. Entangle them in regulations and controls so that nobody can ever make much of a living except by paying off some crooked official. Subordinate them to elites who have suddenly become incalculably wealthy from shady dealings involving petroleum resources that supposedly belong to all. Tax them for the benefit of governments that provide nothing in return except military establishments that lose every war they fight: not roads, not clinics, not clean water, not street lighting. Reduce their living standards year after year for two decades. Deny them any forum or institution—not a parliament or even a city council—where they may freely discuss their grievances ... Combine all this, *and what else would one expect to create but an enraged populace ready to transmute every frustration in its frustrating daily life into a fanatical hatred of everything 'un-Islamic'?*[440]

They make a powerful argument. Unlike democracies, despotisms rob men of their freedom, their dignity, and a respectable quality of life. People in such regimes cannot express their thoughts openly, and turn to violence and resentment against the West out of a psychological frustration and hatred. As such, democratizing the Middle East would have the strategic benefit of pacifying those who hate the United States, but would also have the moral effect of providing others with a dignified life.

To accomplish this, Frum and Perle do not suggest simply creating a complex democratic infrastructure like that of the United States. They support creating forums where people can speak freely on political matters, setting up institutions that protect women and minorities, and

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[438] Murray, Neoconservatism, p. 100.

[439] Peleg, George W. Bush's Foreign Policy, p. 63.

[440] David Frum and Richard Perle, An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror (New York and Toronto: Random House, 2003), p. 160-161. Emphasis in the original.

deregulating stagnant economies so that individuals have opportunities to prosper beyond the reach of their government.[441] Realists and Europeans downplay the importance of aggressive democratization in the Middle East in fostering peace and security. Neoconservatives assert that it addresses their foes and improves the quality of human life. There are both schematic and virtuous defences of pre-emptive action against tyrants.

The belief in benevolent empire constitutes the third principle. Throughout its history, the United States has brought peace and prosperity wherever it goes; while at times they exude arrogance, no nation that has ever gone abroad lacked that quality.[442] In comparison to Russia, Saudi Arabia or even France, the United States are unique in their track record of instituting security and peace; this makes their action a 'global public good.'[443] The United States can provide the conditions for safety, freedom and prosperity that justify the creation of an Americanized empire. While liberals and socialists will criticize America's sense of superiority, neoconservatives argue that the United States must not surrender; it 'must press ahead, because we know that what we believe is not only for the good, but the right thing to do.'[444]

President Bush pursued this concept in his Second Inaugural Address.[445] He asserted that the United States has always guarded liberty 'by standing watch on distant borders,' and following the fall of communism 'came years of relative quiet, years of repose, years of sabbatical—and then there came a day of fire.'[446] Following the wake-up of 11 September, America recognized its vulnerability, the tyrannical evil it faced, and the necessity to promote

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[441] Ibid, pp. 162-163.
[442] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 234.
[443] Ibid.
[444] Murray, Neoconservatism, p. 166.
[445] George W. Bush, 'Second Inaugural Address, 20 January 2005.' Bartleyby.com. Available at: < http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres67.html >. Accessed 28 January 2011.
[446] Ibid.

human freedom in response.[447] Logically then, in order to preserve freedom in the United States, 'the success of liberty in other lands' is paramount; if tyranny ceases to exist abroad, then tyrants cannot threaten America.[448]

Consequentially, President Bush stated that American foreign policy must assist in cultivating freedom and democracy throughout the world.[449] While America does not *prefer* using force, it will use arms in its self-defence and the defence of its friends.[450] He informed the audience that

> The great objective of ending tyranny is the concentrated work of generations. The difficulty of the task is no excuse for avoiding it. America's influence is not unlimited, but fortunately for the oppressed, America's influence is considerable, and we will use it confidently in freedom's cause.[451]

While combating despotism will take time, the United States will fight. America has sufficient influence to wage this battle, and it can confidently assert itself in the cause of liberty.

President Bush's thoughts portray a succinct picture. America is a champion of freedom. Due to the attack of 9/11, Americans realize that their security and liberty depends upon freedom prospering abroad. With considerable military advantages, the United States will defend itself and its friends by force if necessary, and will pursue the advancement of democracy wherever possible. America has a special and vital responsibility in this struggle and must seek the death of tyranny with legitimate self-confidence.

The fourth principle builds from this: if the United States must act for the common welfare of the world, the United Nations cannot bind them.[452] The United Nations represents the idea that democracy can spread beyond the confines of the nation-state. Neoconservatives argue

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[447] Ibid.
[448] Ibid.
[449] Ibid.
[450] Ibid.
[451] Ibid.
[452] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 234.

the UN lacks the ability to promote democratization; while the Bush administration sought to work *with* the UN for resolutions to liberate Iraq, its bureaucratic and political structure obfuscated these efforts.[453] For third-generation theorists the 'only possible setting in which democracy can be exercised is the nation'; the UN invests veto-power over the international community to dictatorships like Libya, thus undercutting the potential for democratic intervention to arise.[454] In brief, the UN cannot foster democracy throughout the world if its power is constrained by tyrannical actors who derive no benefit from democracy. Neoconservatives argue that America must act outside of the UN, and provide itself with sufficient military strength in order to act unilaterally.[455]

John Bolton is a neoconservative thinker who was the American ambassador to the United Nations under President Bush. He writes of his experiences about trying to reform or abolish the United Nations Human Rights Commission (HRC); in 2003, Libya became chairman of the organization against the wishes of the United States and Canada.[456] As such, the HRC focused on criticism of Israel and America 'while real human rights abusers devoted their efforts to ensuring that the commission never took up their abuses.'[457] Rather than *actually* focusing on human rights, the HRC was cover for despotic states to background their own actions while fomenting their ideological hatred. Bolton felt constrained by past-U.S. policy on the HRC and by the fervent desire of the EU and Kofi Annan to strike any 'compromise' on a new commission that they could herald as a success, regardless of content.[458] Bolton stood firm against a deal that failed to address the HRC's flaws; he writes that America 'wants a butterfly[,

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[453] Ibid., p. 235.
[454] Ibid.
[455] Ibid.
[456] John Bolton, Surrender Is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Abroad (New York: Threshold Editions, 2007), p. 234.
[457] Ibid.
[458] Ibid.

and w]e're not going to put lipstick on a caterpillar and declare it a success.'[459] Bolton sought a reduction in the commission's membership, the exclusion of human rights violators like Iran, and ending the practice of regional groups simply selecting countries from their respective blocs.[460] However, each of these proposals was watered down in negotiation; this led Bolton to argue that any changes to the HRC would fail to result in substantive change.[461]

Despite his reservations and the New York Times' editorial defending Bolton's hard-line position against superficial HRC reforms, UN General Assembly president Jan Eliasson pressed for a vote on the reforms as soon as possible.[462] Bolton warned Eliasson that America was displeased with the negotiations and would consider withdrawing entirely, which the president did not take seriously.[463]

Bolton surmised that most delegations adhered to the 'we never fail in New York theory'; regardless of the body's actions, representatives trumpet them as successes.[464] At a lunch with other permanent delegates, Bolton chastised this approach, stating that if the HRC reforms passed he would not support them publicly, but rather he would tell the truth; this prompted the German delegate to respond that *truth* or *evil* were relative terms, which Bolton writes 'was certainly true at the UN!'[465] When the final vote arrived on 15 March 2006, the United States was one of three countries to oppose the reforms—reforms that, according to Bolton, failed to improve the HRC.[466] Since 2006, this 'new' HRC continues to vigorously criticize Israel as

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[459] Ibid.
[460] Ibid, pp. 234-235.
[461] Ibid., p. 235.
[462] Ibid., pp. 235-237. The New York Times' defense of Bolton's position is remarkable in that it has a reputation for being a liberal newspaper that often criticized the Bush Administration, particularly its foreign policy.
[463] Ibid., p. 236.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Ibid., p. 238.

'North Korea's brutality to its entire population and the Sudanese government's brutality in Darfur have gone unchallenged.'[467]

Bolton's reflections on the reform process of the HRC subscribed to the fourth principle of third-generation neoconservatism. The UN cannot promote freedom and democracy abroad; despotic governments use the UN to shield their crimes. One can infer from this that the United States, a country devoted to freedom, can support the growth of democracy and human rights whereas the UN is ineffective.

Armed with the above principles, third-generation neoconservatives played an important role after the attacks of 11 September 2001—they assisted in crafting the Bush Doctrine: the notion of using American force to promote a democratic Middle East.[468] Vaïsse notes that the doctrine rests on two pillars: the relationship between democracy and war, and the right of pre-emptive action. We will take each pillar in turn.

The ultimate premise of the Bush doctrine is that democratic governments seek to avoid war; 'the world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values because stable and free nations to not breed the ideologies of murder.'[469] Because men everywhere desire freedom, the idea that democracy was applicable in some countries and not in others was illegitimate—had this not been said about Germany and Japan, who today have vibrant democracies?[470] Rather, America must call evil by its name and refuse to compromise with tyrannical regimes where democracy is possible.[471] The realist approach of the preceding sixty years had only helped to

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[467] Ibid.
[468] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 244.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid., pp. 244-245.
[471] Ibid., p. 245

entrench the power of despotic Middle Eastern governments that eventually spawned terrorism; 'true realism' consisted of promoting democracy for America's safety.[472]

Paul Wolfowitz anticipated this pillar in his writings just before 11 September 2001. He criticized realists who talked of human rights as simply instruments of American foreign policy.[473] He wrote that promoting democracy actually advances American interests rather than endanger them.[474] He argued that '[d]emocratic change is not only a way to weaken our enemies, it is also a way to strengthen our friends.'[475] In the Philippines during the 1980s, the United States supported a democratic movement which changed the despotic Marcos regime, although this move would jeopardize some American bases; Wolfowitz claimed that America was safer with a healthy ally without bases than 'a sick ally with them.'[476] Promoting democratic change in South Korea and the Philippines propelled those countries towards democratic politics and enhanced human freedom; history 'vindicates' the United States' actions.[477]

Wolfowitz thought that the Philippines were a 'sick' nation prior to democratization. He intimated that despotism is a sickness—a moral sickness—that deprives people of the right to vote, speak and actively consent to their governance. Logically then, democracy is a healthy form of government that responds to the needs of the body politic; just as a man thirsts for fresh water in order to live, so men thirst for the freedom that only democratic government provides.

However, Wolfowitz pushed back against the idea that the United States should drive pell-mell into democratizing any nation. America must weigh its institutional capabilities and the

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[472] Ibid.

[473] Paul Wolfowitz, 'Statesmanship in the New Century.' In Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy. Edited by Robert Kagan and William Kristol (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2000), p. 319.

[474] Ibid. He concedes, however, there are specific moments when the promotion of full-out support of democratization, such as 'undermining' the Iranian Shah, would likely not have had a positive effect.

[475] Ibid., p. 320.

[476] Ibid.

[477] Ibid.

potential receptivity of a non-democratic regime before actively promoting democratic change there.[478] Every situation is different, and if the ground is infertile for pursuing democracy, or if the United States attempts to accomplish too much with too little, 'we may achieve nothing at all.'[479] A prudent reckoning of the situation is indispensible before democratic regime change can be a plausible strategy.

Wolfowitz expressed the first pillar of the Bush doctrine, albeit more elegantly and with more nuance than the first pillar *appears* to contain. He averred that democracy benefits U.S. interests, and that taking bold stances against authoritarian regimes—like Marcos's—can and will provide for a better international community vis-à-vis America. Indeed, he openly rejects the realist approach of passivity with autocracies.

Advising the United States to use precaution in democracy promotion may seem to conflict with the first pillar. Quite to the contrary, Wolfowitz provides a practical scope for the doctrine. The Bush doctrine does not insist that all despotic regimes be combated at once, neither was that the practice of the administration. Rather, the doctrine presupposes the superiority of democracy over authoritarianism, and that an increase in the number of democratic regimes improves American interests. By making the distinction between nations currently and not currently prepared for democratic change, Wolfowitz advised future neoconservatives about *how* to go about spreading democracy in a way that will be most effective.

In President Bush's Inauguration Speech, the effect of Wolfowitz's suggestion appears. Bush accepted that complete democratization will take a long time; it cannot be implemented with force all at once. Even if America *sought* that, their influence has its limits. When indeed they can wield enough influence to support the growth of freedom, says Bush, the United States

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[478] Ibid., pp. 320-321.
[479] Ibid., p. 321.

will. It would be illogical to assert that the Bush doctrine could be undercut by its creator on a day he celebrated his re-election to the presidency, having already proclaimed that doctrine years prior to the election. Instead, his words underline the fullness of the first principle: America needs democracies in the world, and when it is possible, it will assist in their creation.

To that end, Peleg writes that third-age neoconservatives are imbued with a Protestant, evangelist spirit of the eighteenth century; it was the moral duty of the United States to pursue free government around the world.'[480] Due to its political culture and history, Americans felt charged, as if by God, to help spread democratic politics internationally.[481]

The Bush doctrine's second pillar supports the first: in a world littered with democracies and despotisms, the United States must be willing to use force against an enemy *pre-emptively*; one cannot anticipate a terrorist attack before it happens.[482] Rather than determining the form of a military mission from the coalition of nations America can draw together, the mission itself will define those who wish to assist the United States in its quest to preserve global safety; this at times might mean America acting alone, and the military must be equipped for this possibility.[483]

Frum and Perle suggest exactly this when discussing the American campaign in Iraq and its war on terror and militant Islam. They begin by arguing that Islamofascism is a lie, one that 'proposes to restore the vanished glory of a great civilization through crimes that horrify the conscience of the world.'[484] The forces of militant Islam use terror and repression to subdue their population and quell the sort of human freedom that might threaten their rule. In that sense, they imitate Claudius by feigning piety they know to be in bad faith.[485]

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[480] Peleg, George W. Bush's Foreign Policy, p. 68.
[481] Ibid.
[482] Vaïsse, Neoconservatism, p. 245.
[483] Ibid., Vaïsse states that this logic is a 'neoconservative mantra.'
[484] Frum and Perle, An End to Evil, p. 276.
[485] 'My words fly up, my thoughts remain below/ Words without thoughts never to heaven go.' William Shakespeare, Hamlet (III. iii. 97-98).

Those that criticized American action in Iraq fail to realize that only through this pre-emptive force did Iraqis gain the opportunity for self-government.[486] While men such as Kofi Annan claimed that force could not lead to democracy, he failed to recognize that the efforts of his Ghanaian compatriots who fought the Japanese led to the democratization of Japan itself, where it has flourished.[487] Foreign peoples eschew democracy because they lack liberty, and the assumption that they have chosen tyranny because of their culture is to accept that 'there are peoples on this earth who value their own subjugation.'[488] Men crave freedom, and at times, it can only be restored through American intervention. Terrorists, however, choose to impose their values on innocent people through violence; they 'espouse an ideology of conquest, just as the Nazis and the Soviets did.'[489] As with Nazi Germany, the United States must strike at them to ensure their own freedom and the freedom of the oppressed.[490] In order to experience a world at peace, bound by law, and bursting with human freedom, American force will be the catalyst.[491]

Like Wolfowitz, Frum and Perle suggest support that is more elegant and implicit than the second pillar appears at first glance. The campaign in Iraq that they defend was pre-emptive, a war against a dictator who had not threatened the United States *directly*. However, Frum and Perle argue that in order to provide Iraqis with democracy and to combat the threat of militant Islam, such action was necessary. They reject the relativist claim that totalitarianism is a cultural phenomenon, but rather, a force that actively weakens its subjects; only American military force can break this. Their argument implies that the United States should defend itself from the threat of violence and terrorism by acting pre-emptively against militant Islam; in so doing, it

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[486] Cf. Frum and Perle, <u>An End to Evil</u>, p. 277.
[487] Ibid.
[488] Ibid.
[489] Ibid., pp. 277-278.
[490] Ibid., p. 278.
[491] Ibid., p. 279.

engenders democracy and makes peace possible in the world. Even if America needs to act without the UN's blessing—the United Nations did not assist in the Iraqi campaign—America must act against evil forces. Indeed, Frum and Perle suggest that the United States is 'the world's best hope' to create a more peaceful world, something that is certainly in the best interest of America.

Following Vaïsse's narrative of third-age neoconservatism, and comparing it with the writings of prominent members of this age, an image of neoconservative political thought emerges. They understand that America, as the world's only superpower, has a duty to act around the world. Connectedly, the United States must promote democracy because it is intrinsically better than despotism. Neoconservatives argue that creating a benevolent empire from American force is a global good that satisfies American and international interests. They reject the United Nations as an institution incapable of fostering democracy. Stemming from neoconservatives, the Bush doctrine supposes that a proliferation of democracies will result in a more peaceful world, but such action requires careful forethought. The doctrine also appreciates that, at times, pre-emptive and unilateral American force may be required when the cost of inaction threatens American security or the tacit promotion of terrorism. These are the broad strokes of third-age neoconservative theory.

Despite the apparent differences between the three generations of neoconservatism, it is worth noting the general themes that unite them. First, neoconservatives reject progressive and modernizing approaches to American political science. The first generation pushed back against the New Class in universities and civil society that wished to undercut traditional state structures and the family. The second generation repelled foreign policy 'doves' who sought more peaceful terms with the Soviet Union; they also opposed the radical actions of the Democratic New Left

that subverted the traditional configuration of the party. The last generation fought against the complacency of the UN and liberals regarding the threat of radical Islam after the fall of Communism. Common to each generation of neoconservatives is the rejection of progressive politics that undercut the traditional American approach.

However, something else unites each generation of neoconservatism: they view America as exceptional. First-generation thinkers posited that traditional American society consisted of unrivalled democratic freedom and a free-market economy. In preferring gradual political change, these neoconservatives imply that America, for the most part, has gotten in right for the previous two hundred years and ought not to change course. The second generation defended traditional American life against the charges of colonialism and 'a sick society.' They asserted the intrinsic value American morality and institutions. Consequentially, one can interpret their militant anticommunism as an argument for the dominance of American life over Marxist materialism. Third-generation neoconservatives *explicitly* argue that the United States is the hope of the world. Prosperity and progress follow America wherever it has gone, and because it endorses the ideas of freedom and democracy, it should use its hegemonic position to liberate those less fortunate. Either implicitly or explicitly, American neoconservatives embrace the idea that America is *exceptionally* great. That, combined with the refutation of modern, 'progressive' politics unites each distinct generation of neoconservatism.

Third-Generation Neoconservatism, Carl Schmitt and the Pre-Modern Connection

By looking at the two concepts I joined in the sub-heading, any comparison between their political thought seems unlikely. Schmitt attended to questions of state sovereignty and an existential interpretation of the political. American neoconservatives gazed beyond the state,

supporting democratic expansionism, freedom, and political adventurism. At a glance, a paradox appears to entangle any sort of comparison in contradiction. However, a reflection on their approaches to reason, human nature and government suggests some significant similarities. These similarities point to a mutual embrace of pre-modern political thought.

The first point of comparison appears in the approach to reason. Carl Schmitt bristles at the notion of pure reason; he argues that men need to unite to diagnose their existential enemy and oppose it in order to create peace.[492] Since young polities may not be experienced enough to make this diagnosis—thus endangering the possibility of peace—they enlist an educating dictator who provides the people with sufficient tools and know-how.[493] A collectivity of men can rationally distinguish their friends from their enemies when an educating dictator assists them. Schmitt's logic is clear: men on their own cannot make those rational distinctions, rather, they require the help of a higher power.

When one considers the first pillar of the Bush Doctrine as Wolfowitz anticipated it, we notice that American self-interest consists of promoting democracy around the world. However in removing despotic regimes, neoconservatives must ensure the ground is fertile for democracy; an unreceptive population will reject American influence. Additionally, institutional and practical realities restrain the ability of the United States to support the growth of democracy everywhere in the world; by overextending itself without devoting enough resources to ensure the success of its action, the change sought may be fruitless. While their interests thrive in a more democratic world, the quest for peace requires that Americans act only in situations where the possibilities for growing democracy are real. So the logic of Wolfowitz's argument is pre-

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[492] Schmitt, Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy, p. 28.
[493] Ibid.

modern; American interests rest in promoting freedom throughout the world, but greater peace and security emerge from a targeted use of American resources and might.

Wolfowitz's insistence on the careful use of intervention reminds one of Schmitt: in order to seek peace and satisfy the polity's interests, the United States must temper its will with a proper understanding of the concrete. For Schmitt and Wolfowitz, rational decisions do not spring naturally from men, but rather, come from calculation. Additionally, both Schmitt and Wolfowitz intimate that a nation rationally determines the identity of its friends through study; this suggests that men cannot recognize their allies by dint of their innate reason.

Additionally, reason appears in Schmitt's work as that which dispels lies. He dismisses the popular idea that constitutional law can predict future crises and prescribe the appropriate resolutions.[494] Schmitt notes the impossibility of this, since law lacks the physical qualities necessary to determine when a crisis exists and what measures ought to be applied.[495] When crises happen, Schmitt proposes that the executive branch suspend aspects of the law in order to quell an insurrection; this is his theory of exceptional sovereignty.[496] Constitutional democracies cannot be protected from crisis through legal positivism; the notion that law has the ability to suspend itself is an irrational myth.

Frum and Perle's work on militant Islam connects to Schmitt's illuminating use of reason. The United States, they write, has a responsibility to wage war against despotic, Islamofascist regimes because they disseminate a lie to their people. These tyrants teach that repression, the subjugation of women and terrorism are acceptable ways to govern, and that free speech and democracy are imperialist concepts propagated by the West.[497] One can see pre-

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[494] Schmitt, Political Theology, p. 14.
[495] Ibid.
[496] Ibid., pp. 13-14.
[497] Frum and Perle, An End to Evil, pp. 277-278.

emptive action against Middle Eastern despotism as the personification of the candle-flame burning away the shadows of militant Islam; they write that, at times, *only* military intervention can effect democratic regime change. In calling the United States the world's 'best hope,' Frum and Perle intimate that America stands in knowledge of a truth that others deserve to understand too.

Frum and Perle use reason the same way Schmitt does. Both lived in moments when a prevailing concept threatened the stability of their state. For Schmitt, the prevailing interpretations of the Weimar Republic's constitution that empowered *law* rather than the sovereign to act in crisis limited the state's capacity to protect itself from subversion. For Frum and Perle, the rise of militant Islam increased the number of potential enemies for the United States since it teaches people to hate America, and inspired the terror attacks of 11 September. The rational approach consists in exposing myths and suggesting truth in its stead.

Schmitt and the neoconservatives also share a common understanding of human nature. Schmitt's philosophy of politics rests upon the friend-enemy distinction. Wherever groups of men exist, friendship and enmity are inevitable amongst them.[498] While liberals sought to minimize the element of violent conflict, 'the world will not become depoliticized with the aid of definitions and constructions, all of which circle the polarity of ethics and economics.'[499] Moreover, men are destined to live politically, and therefore the political is their destiny.[500] This suggests that human nature is violent and evil. To that end, Schmitt writes that only political philosophy that considers men *to be evil* is genuine political thought.[501] If thinkers deny the

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[498] Schmitt, Concept of the Political, p. 27.
[499] Ibid., p. 78.
[500] Ibid.
[501] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

necessary condition of enmity between men, then they overlook the political; their work technically fails to be political.

Neoconservative philosophy also echoes a dark view of men. On this point, one must reflect more deeply on Kagan's writings. He dismisses the European belief that reason and law animate international relations. He writes that American and European foreign policy disagree 'where exactly mankind stands on the continuum between the laws of the jungle and the laws of reason [;] Americans do not believe we are as close to the realization of the Kantian dream as do Europeans.'[502] American neoconservatives in the Bush administration believed the violence and selfishness that mark the Hobbesian state of nature is *more* of a reality than Kant's kingdom of ends. Human nature is mired in savagery that resembles the past.[503] More directly, Kagan says that the dangers present in international relations stem from human nature. Of foreign affairs, he writes: 'as is so often the case, the real question is one of intangibles—of fears, passions and beliefs'; consequentially, 'the United States must sometimes play by the rules of a Hobbesian world, even though doing so violates Europe's post-modern norms.'[504] He argues that the tensions of this world arise directly from human nature, which consists of fear and passion.

One could infer that his earlier reference to Franklin—calling America the hope of mankind—has a double meaning. First, the United States offer the template for popular, consensual government for other countries to imitate. Second, its constitution anticipated the depravity of human nature, and thus, its government can diagnose it in other nations with greater

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[502] Kagan, Of Paradise and Power, p. 91.

[503] On page 95, Kagan suggests that while the United States take a more grounded approach to international affairs, they are still 'good children of the Enlightenment, they still believe in the perfectibility of man, and they retain the hope for the perfectibility of the world.' I would suggest this statement should be interpreted as an example of pre-modernity operating inside the horizon of modernity, as Strauss notes of Schmitt.

[504] Ibid., p. 99.

ease. It is the hope of mankind because it was the first to constrain human nature and therefore the best resource to other polities in need.

One can see the clear similarities between Schmitt and Kagan. Schmitt supposes that men and states focus their foreign policy towards combating an existential enemy because politics are based on the inevitable conflict that arises between men owing to their nature. Kagan writes that the nature of mankind propels American foreign policy to be aggressive and militaristic. Schmitt dismisses theoreticians who suppose that men are naturally peaceful because they neglect to embrace the true nature of the political. Kagan dismisses European bureaucrats who assume international relations are fuelled by rational law and deliberation; they exhibit an unjustifiable degree of faith in human nature not based in reality. The state theories of both Schmitt and Kagan begin with a dim view of mankind.

Schmitt's concept of sovereignty also contains a fundamental tenet of flawed human nature. That the sovereign must be able to act extra-legally in moments of crisis presupposes that men are capable of violent insurrection that the law cannot restrain.[505] If, for Schmitt, mankind were generally peaceful, the need to define sovereignty as exceptional decisionism would fail to materialize; nothing would preclude non-violent demonstrations from being the normal mode of dissent. In brief, Schmitt work underscores the darkness of human nature.

Frum and Perle construct an argument about the clear conflict between democratic and despotic governments; their logic is decidedly Schmittian. Democracies, they write, provide space for free speech and high standards of living. Despotisms, however, create misery and resentment through corruption and the reduction of human freedom. For them, it is obvious that tyranny breeds anger and violence: 'what else would one expect to create but an enraged populace ready to transmute every frustration in its frustrating daily life into a fanatical hatred of

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[505] Schmitt, Political Theology, pp. 13-14.

everything "un-Islamic"?[506] Logically, if they expect hatred and frustration from one group of people towards another, then there must be something within men that sparks this. If mankind were cooperative and peaceful, it is possible to imagine the subjects of despotism acting differently; rather than resent democratic peoples and engage in terrorism, they might idolize democracies and ask for their help. In fact, they might use peaceful or intellectual means to petition their government despite the consequences.

The logic of the argument follows Schmitt's. He argues that rebellion and crises are inevitable within the state; the sovereign must possess the power of extra-legal action to respond to those moments. Moreover, he suggests that we cannot avoid the paradigm of friends and enemies because one collectivity of men will inevitably threaten the lives of another due to violence and evil in human nature. Peace is only possible when one collectivity successfully slays the other. Frum and Perle believe that men living under despotism *necessarily* grow to hate and even terrorize democratic polities. As such, the United States must aggressively democratize Middle Eastern tyrannies in order to remove the threats of violence against them. Like Schmitt, one creates peace through the destruction of the existential enemy. One cannot afford to wait for men to gravitate towards cooperative or peaceful feelings—because they never will, due to the violent enmity of human nature. State policy must appreciate the violent realities of men.

Schmitt and the neoconservatives agree on one final aspect: the relationship between freedom and government. Schmitt does not deny that men should be free to act within the domains of public life outside of the political. Questions of ethics, morality, economics or even aesthetics are beyond the scope of sovereign authority.[507] The exception exists within the domain of the political, and decisions made therein pertain to the friend-enemy distinction. Since a

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[506] Supra, note 440. Emphasis removed.
[507] Cf. Schmitt, The Concept of the Political, p. 28; Idem, Political Theology, pp. 5-6.

political collectivity of men is essentially homogenous,[508] and since the sovereign decision on the people's enemy comes from their will, one cannot be completely free within the realm of the political. While the sovereign does not interfere regarding commerce, the arts or religion, men must submit themselves to his political decisions because their self-preservation demands it. Men retain their natural freedom that existed before government in all matters except the political.

On the balance between government and freedom, analyzing President Bush's thoughts seems appropriate because he was American head of state from 2001-2009. He discusses freedom and its importance:

> We have confidence because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in the dark places, the longing of the soul. When our Founders declared a new order of the ages; when soldiers died in wave upon wave for a union based on liberty; when citizens marched in peaceful outrage under the banner 'Freedom now' – they were acting on an ancient hope that is meant to be fulfilled. History has an ebb and a flow of justice, but history also has a visible direction, set by liberty and the Author of liberty.[509]

Deep within men, the desire for freedom lives. It was the lodestar of the American founders. History bears witness to its growth, and God wishes to see the blessings of His gift multiply.

However, Bush proposes political limitations to freedom that preserves public safety. In 2002, Bush advocated for increased security measures in America's airports, more intense screening at the borders, and the technological advancement of government security agencies.[510] The 11 September attacks propelled the president to sponsor the growth of security measures.[511]

The more government that a citizen experiences in airports and at borders, the less free he becomes. Perfect freedom consists in going wherever one wants without impediment;[512] as an American citizen travelling by airplane domestically, the possibility that security screeners for

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[508] Habermas, 'The Rule of Law and Democracy,' p. 134.

[509] Bush, 'Second Inaugural Address.'

[510] Bush, 'State of the Union Address, 29 January 2002.' American Rhetoric. Available online at: < http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/stateoftheunion2002.htm >. Accessed 28 January 2011.

[511] Ibid.

[512] This is Hobbes's classic definition. See Chapter I.

the government might prohibit me from taking that trip means that I lack absolute freedom. Steadfast in trying to prevent another terrorist attack against the United States, the president promoted these restrictions to individual liberty.

Bush's argument reflects Schmitt's approach to freedom and government. Schmitt proposed that the political space belonged to the sovereign; individuals are not free to dissent against these decisions since they correspond to the public will. Through increased security and intelligence, Bush promoted limits on liberty that might offend some citizens, but he directed them towards the end and responsibility of government. Schmitt places no restrictions on men within the domains of economics or religion, just on matters of particular political importance. Bush advocated the spread of freedom as a principle throughout the world; he argues it exists within the heart of every man, given to him by God. He simply supported a compromise between freedom and the power of government; it is not possible for citizens to enjoy their freedom if their lives are endangered. Both Schmitt and Bush turn Isaiah Berlin's 'minimum area of personal freedom'[513] on its head; they circumscribe a minimum area where one surrenders liberty in favour of political security, leaving the rest of civil society to the dictates of freedom.

On a meta-philosophical level, Schmitt and the neoconservatives connect in terms of pre-modern political thought. Consider the following syllogism: *if* Carl Schmitt's theory is pre-modern in terms of reason, human nature and government, and *if* American neoconservatives share similar understandings of the above subjects, *then* American neoconservatives share Schmitt's pre-modernity. For the first preposition, chapter II permits us to affirm it. For the second preposition, the analysis provided in this chapter suggests that we can affirm it too. Therefore, it is logically valid to claim that Schmitt and neoconservatives share a pre-modern understanding of reason, human nature and the interplay between freedom and government.

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[513] See note 193, Chapter I.

A brief comparison of pre-modern theory and the neoconservatives confirms this. Pre-moderns like Hobbes and Spinoza claim that self-interest must be tempered by the natural law that compels men to seek peace. Wolfowitz's preference for targeted and careful democratization strikes a balance between the American interest of seeing more democracies in the Middle East and ensuring that intervention transpires in receptive countries which makes greater peace possible. Spinoza understood reason to be the light of truth that removed the darkness of myth; Frum and Perle treat militant Islam as a myth the must rationally refute.

Hobbes supposed men's nature before government was savage and violent. Machiavelli supposed that men were wicked and deserve deception from the prince if it suits his purposes. Spinoza argued that men's passions drive them towards power despite the consequences, and will take whatever they want from each other. Kagan too defined human nature through negative traits and used pre-modern language—fear, passion, Hobbesian—in his acceptance of the 'law of the jungle' and reality of despotism.

Pre-moderns argued that freedom was derived from God and that government has no right to deny it *in toto*. However, both Hobbes and Spinoza appreciate that complete freedom provides no refuge from the depravity of men; an overabundance of freedom drove men into government in the first place. Thus, government must act as the ultimate authority on political questions in order to establish security and protect men from their violent passions. Bush supports the growth of freedom and appreciates its central importance for men. However, in order to preserve the lives of Americans, he accepted certain political restrictions. Bush proposes a pre-modern compromise between encouraging freedom and providing the basic level of security for which men entered into government originally: their self-preservation. Through both logic and direct comparison, neoconservatives share Carl Schmitt's pre-modernity.

In this chapter, I presented the full context of third-generation neoconservatism. These neoconservatives subscribe to theoretical principles. First, the United States plays an important role in the world. Second, democracy contains intrinsic value. Third, America must assist in the spread of democracy. Fourth, the United Nations lacks legitimacy to aid in democratization. Last, they endorse the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive action. Dissecting neoconservative thought, one notices its proximity to Carl Schmitt. On the surface, Schmitt focuses on state-centric notions of sovereignty and the political while American neoconservatives prefer a strategy of international adventurism. Despite an apparent paradox, at the heart of both their philosophies rests a strikingly similar treatment of reason, human nature and government. In fact, both Schmitt and the neoconservatives possess a decidedly pre-modern quality which both logic and content analysis prove. Both emerged in a moment of crisis and reacted against the growth of 'progressive' political philosophies.

CONCLUSION

Old men ought to be explorers
Here or there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning. — *T.S. Eliot.*[514]

T.S. Eliot's asserted that a new writer cannot exist in a vacuum, and neither can we judge his work in a vacuum. Literature of value reflects back on the canon of its tradition, but it also affects the way we interpret past literature in light of this new work. Eliot theorized that this interplay between tradition and the individual artist was the foundation for valuable works and the persistence of tradition. I wanted to investigate whether this concept applied to political philosophy; my research suggests an affirmative answer.

The tradition or the canon I depicted was pre-modern political thought. Machiavelli, Hobbes and Spinoza blazed a trail; they suggested that legitimate authority derives from the popular will rather than a divine monarch. They proposed the value of reason, yet they tempered it with natural law. They understood human nature to be violent and depraved, but they also appreciated the degree to which men crave freedom. Correspondingly, they offered a balanced approach to government and freedom that both allows men to enjoy their liberty and provides protection from external harm. In broad strokes, this is the pre-modern tradition.

When we read Carl Schmitt, it seems that pre-modernity influenced his philosophy. He too embraced the importance of reason, and following their tradition, he offset it with the need for an educational dictator. Like the pre-moderns, Schmitt saw men as innately greedy and fallen, and therefore sovereigns in democratic polities must be prepared to respond. Schmitt

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[514] Eliot, 'East Coker.' In Four Quartets (V. vv. 31-38).

provides men complete freedom in the domains of ethics or economics, but cordons off the political as the arena of sovereign decision; this compares to the pre-modern theories of the 'leviathan.' The spirit of the pre-modern tradition, to be sure, influenced Schmitt.

The third-generation American neoconservatives further demonstrate Eliot's idea. They follow Schmitt's pre-modern understanding of reason, human nature and government. While the stated objective of both neoconservatives and Schmitt appear to differ, their political philosophies share profound connections. Indeed, third-generation neoconservatives carry forward the *tradition* of earlier neoconservatives, even though they belonged to different parties and times. Like neoconservatives in the 1960s and 1980s, the contemporary ones pushed back against the rise of progressivism in politics. Also like their predecessors, neoconservatives believed that the United States is fundamentally a source of good and its conventions deserve a vigorous defence.

The primary part of Eliot's theory has been confirmed. Carl Schmitt and American neoconservatives certainly exhibit the impact of tradition on their work, even though neither set out to propose the pre-modern politics of Hobbes or Spinoza. However, insofar as they reject the full expansion of modernity and progressivism, Schmitt and the neoconservatives necessarily reflect the traditional works that made very similar arguments three hundred years previous. The influence of tradition, as Eliot postulated, endures in newer writings.

The complementary part of Eliot's argument also arises from my research: how we might re-read older texts in light of new pieces that fit within the tradition. Pre-modern thought existed in completeness before Schmitt or the neoconservatives; however, because their work meshes with the traditional canon, it becomes a part of pre-modern political philosophy. As such, it becomes possible for one to re-interpret Hobbes's leviathan as an early blueprint for the

sovereign of a state like Weimar Germany. In reading Spinoza's argument that reason dispels the darkness of myth, it now becomes possible to view this as a philosophical harbinger for the neoconservative belief that America ought to implant its values in the Middle East in order to remove radical Islam and its lies. Machiavelli's insight that men are evil and may be deceived by the prince in the name of self-preservation may now appear to be a rougher, coarser form of Schmitt's sovereign who must employ exceptional, extra-legal decisions during moments of crises. Even if those decisions might offend the sentiments of some citizens or civil libertarians, the sovereign is charged with the preservation of the state and the law, which at times, must be suspended in order to be protected against insurrectionists. These are but three instances that one could use to show that the interpretation of traditional texts can change when new works, imbued with older ideas, become part of the canon. This process suggests that a tradition in political philosophy can endure; it does so through its ability to influence future writers while at the same time being re-interpreted in light of new works. It is valuable because it is accessible and has been employed by past writers in response to what could be similar problems.

In this thesis, I sought to show a clear line of connection between Carl Schmitt, American neoconservatives and pre-modern political thought. In terms of reason, human nature, and the interplay between freedom and government, the research provided suggests that this connection exists. The significance of these findings is two-fold. First, we can confirm that T.S. Eliot's literary theory in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' carries into political philosophy. Second—and most important—we can assert that older ideas can endure and are valuable in political theory. I show that regardless of era, pre-modernity re-emerges as a response to the crises of modernity and politics. It is more than a stepping-stone to bigger and better things; it is valuable and it influences the resolutions of thinkers toward their contemporary problems.

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