

## HIERARCHICAL EXISTENCE IN THE AGE OF REPUBLICANISM: AN IDEOLOGICAL INSURGENCY

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### Abstract

*This essay critically examines the phenomenon of republicanism or democracy (both are used here interchangeably). It attempts to show that the said system of governance clashes with the human nature. In a hierarchical social structure, political mobilisation proceeds from the nuclear family. A community of families come together to give their allegiance to another family. The 'individual' operates within this power vertical. On the other hand, an atomised libertarian society reverses this mechanism and relies on individuals who pursue a horizontal existence. In such a society the ancestral ties of blood and soil make way for transactional relationships which revolve around the matter of facts of daily life, thereby, severing the organic link with the past and future. It has also been shown that monarchy perfectly aligns with the human nature. In it, sovereignty is personified granting the ultimate point of reference. It remains the only arrangement that concurrently upholds the aggregate past, the aggregate present, and the aggregate future of the folk that it rules, and that even the republics incorporate some of elements of the monarchical age like associating itself with the dominant culture to keep its space wedded to the historical flow.*

### Introduction

When Napoleon crushed Prussian forces at Jena (1806), in Hegelian dialectics the French Revolution and Traditionalist reaction had synthesized with the former subsuming the latter. The spirit of the age was the figure of Napoleon. He came out from the womb of French Revolution and upended the ancient order by stamping his seal on the new one.<sup>1</sup> Never again would the Old Regime be able to recover its former grandeur. A world had disintegrated. All the Metternichs and Castlereaghs of the world would try in vain to stem the rising egalitarian tide. The die had been cast; the shell had left the cannon.

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<sup>1</sup> Greg Johnson, *From Plato to Postmodernism* (San Francisco: Counter-Currents Publishing Ltd, 2019), 116-117.

Now between the French Revolution and our age there certainly have been attempts to resist and repel this wave but the meta-narrative of 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' has shown few signs of abetting.

The theoretical subtext during this epoch has been an emphasis on horizontal existence.

In the following space we venture to question this consensus. We maintain that egalitarianism and its logical extensions republicanism or democracy go against human nature. These systems erroneously assume a 'social contract' between the 'ruler' and the 'ruled'. We insist that political management stems from the social fabric, and that politics, which is the organisational management of an organic community, when outgrows this community and begins to isolate itself from its repository, the resultant stress creates severe divisions within society.

In the first part we define human nature and some of the flaws that some theoreticians have committed in their readings of man. The second part applies the observations made in the previous one on modern political management and tries to expose the dichotomies. The third and last section concludes the discussion by making some predictions for years to come.

Human beings have animal as well as transcendental characteristics. They eat, reproduce, and die like every other organism. Yet, their intellect grapples with infinity while their passions nourish high art and literature. They dwell between the earthly creatures and divinity. Brain the rationaliser and heart the metaphysician function within one organic machine. Such an arrangement signifies a compartmentalized hierarchy of nature. This dual existence manifests itself socially in the shape of nuclear families, tribes, clans, ethnicities, and nations.

How have the leading political philosophers misread the human nature? We have deliberately chosen the following because it is their doctrines that have been the spirit of our age.

Hobbes starts from the individual. Families, clans, and tribes do not occur in his calculations. His man operates in a 'state of nature' which is a frantic scramble for survival, but one in whom there is not much appreciation for the spiritual aspects of man. He is a mechanical and corporeal being wired

to always pursue his interests. It is a bleak atomised existence. Perhaps, the sectarian bloodshed that arose in the wake of the Protestant revolt traumatised successive generations, and, consequently, skewed their judgement. Survival became paramount which could only be assured by an all-powerful Sovereign. State was begun to be seen as a necessary force of coercion.<sup>2</sup>

Then came John Locke with his treatise on the nature of government. He too focuses primarily on man as a singularity whose material aspects override his spiritual (communitarian) dimensions. In Locke's terms, men come together to form a conducive environment which frees them to seek their well-being which he does not define. His political administration should act as a detached neutral referee. The only value it should uphold is its limited, and heavily trimmed character.<sup>3</sup>

The next theoretician in this chain of individualism was Jean-Jacque Rousseau. Like his ideological predecessors he also begins with an abstract, ephemeral man. He too doesn't ground him in an organic community. But, unlike Hobbes, in his 'state of nature' man is cheerful and carefree. He proposes the concept of 'General Will' of the people adherence to which would reduce inequalities and promote harmony. It is an aggregate will of all 'individuals'. People are sovereign. The government of the day must defer to this 'popular' sovereignty. No wonder his oeuvre was a loaded cannon in the hands of the French revolutionary mob.<sup>4</sup>

The final thinker of this particular school of thought was Marx. It might appear counterintuitive to place Marx in the same set with these 'bourgeois' and individualist thinkers but we insist that Marx too committed a fatal observational error when he painted all human history in materialist colours. His inversion of the Hegelian dialectics bifurcated history into the 'oppressor' and 'oppressed'. It was a fallacious attempt. The subsequent subversion paralysed civilised intra-societal dialogue crucial for an ordered life. There was to be a permanent domestic enemy that must be defeated to end

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<sup>2</sup> Isaac Kramnick. "An Augustan Reply to Locke: Bolingbroke on Natural Law and the Origin of Government." *Political Science Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (1967): 571-94. doi:10.2307/2148079.

<sup>3</sup> Des Raj Bhandari, *History of European Political Philosophy* (Bangalore: The Bangalore Press, 1986), 394-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

'exploitation' and 'bourgeois' excesses. Simply put, according to the heirs of Robespierre, Marat, and Dalton, industrialisation had brought Europe on the cusp of 'communism'. For the next three generations 'proletariat' anxiety was fanned to ignite an apocalyptic civil war which would overthrow the 'exploitative' elites.<sup>5</sup>

Such a selective, at occasions, naïve reading of history warped political thought for future generations.

Thus, the horizontal atomised individualism of the enlightenment gradually overcame hierarchical and communitarian features of human existence. It was nothing short of an ideological earthquake. Now, it is not that this rise was irresistible. The reactionary camp did fire back but it was too little too late. The spirit of the age had become 'democratic', 'republican', and 'egalitarian'. It was now morally reprehensible to espouse inequality and hierarchy in social domain. Monarchical, reactionary, and aristocratic positions were to be insurgencies from then on. We are demanded that we must instinctively believe that we have exhausted our ideological evolution. It is the 'end of history'.

Yet, human nature is the same as it was during the Homeric or Platonic time. In spite of all our technological advances, humanity has not been mechanised. A man may surround himself with sophisticated gadgetry but that ancient spirit still runs in his bloodstream. We still carry the resonance of our ancestors. We still raise nuclear families. We still identify ourselves with our communities, tribes, clans, religion, and race. None of these characteristics signify atomised individualism or an avaricious existence dedicated solely for the accumulation of wealth. They are deeply hierarchical features of our lives.

So, the question is, does our political morality adequately make room for the aforementioned dimensions? Of course, not. Then, what is that mode of political governance which appropriately addresses and accommodates natural hierarchies?

Contemporary political arrangement stands on 'individual rights' and 'universal adult franchise'. It elevates the *present* at the cost of *past* and

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<sup>5</sup> Roger Scruton, *Fools, Frauds And Firebrands: Thinkers of the New Left* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 5-9.

*future*. It has no place for spirituality for it would imply the pegging of the present with the other two points of time. Nor does it leave nuclear families in an autonomous state. Moreover, since it is fundamentally against any form of inequality, therefore, it actively intervenes to suppress these natural differences. Any organic society will have geniuses and dullards, industrious and mediocre, strong and weak, so on and so forth. A hierarchically alert structure will recognise these differences, and will not pit one against the other as that would weaken the social organism. But, since it lives only in the present, a republic will play one section of society against the other to prolong its survival. 'Class struggle' keeps everyone occupied while the technocratic, bureaucratic leviathan takes the spoils. Because sovereignty is abstractly shared by the 'people' and not personified in a sovereign or unequivocally defined, an increasingly ad-hoc oligarchy converts political management into an Orwellian charade. Further, lacking a personalised centre of gravity who should intervene to restore equilibrium, the social fabric and bureaucratized politics come face to face.

A republic governs in the name of 'people'. But what is this entity? Does it contain only the living? Or does it also take the dead and the unborn into consideration?

Can a parliament which is the repository of 'the voice of people' undermine or outlaw the dominant culture? If it can then it is hostile, and exceeds its mandate. If it cannot then there is some entity that supersedes it and represents the dominant culture. What is that entity? Where does it reside? What does it look like? And from whence does it draw its authority? The dominoes will keep falling. A serious consideration of these queries will leave an honest libertarian at his wit's end. They cannot be addressed without undermining the republican case. Man's hierarchical nature makes authority not only inevitable but crucial for his and his posterity's survival. He might simultaneously be a father, a son, a husband, and a brother. None of these roles are equal. How can he properly express them politically? Or which political system would be organic enough so as to provide equilibrium to all of them?

Republicanism does not take such subtleties into account. It clips any communitarian extensions a man could have to integrate him in an egalitarian electorate. Interestingly, where familial and tribal hierarchies are still relatively stronger, republican individualism finds it taxing to stand on its

feet. Strong nuclear families and libertarian freedoms are severely antithetical. If they repeatedly clash then one generation confronts the other eyeball to eyeball. In view of the fact that metaphysically republicanism deals with the present, it gets tricky to square ancestral values with the rights of the living and breathing.

Apply this conceptual framework on the West and one will realise the underlying factors behind the emergence of nativist anxiety. What we often presumptuously dismiss as 'far-right' and 'fringe' elements are actually the organic vestiges of a bygone social order. Politics cannot be merely technocratic supervision. If any given state does no longer identify itself with the collective historical consciousness of the ones in the name of whom it governs, it then becomes more of a prison enforcer than an organic representative of the national folk.

For instance, Hungarian constitution explicitly mentions the nation's Christian heritage. It is a straightforward declaration that the Hungarian social fabric is organically connected to Christianity.<sup>6</sup> The past, the present, and the future share the same well-defined course. Legitimacy flows from this paramount theme. The state is bound to protect and preserve this heritage. Now, if the political administration of the day curbs individual freedom to uphold communitarian ethos, would it then not go against the spirit of republicanism or democracy? Wouldn't that make such democracy a little hierarchical and authoritarian?

Conversely, the American constitution does not clearly delineate the culture and traditions of its citizenry. It is a classic Lockean document. The preamble begins with 'We, the people' but nowhere in the document does it describe this 'we'. This vagueness has always created divisiveness between Lockean conservatives and the ones who identify the 'idea of America' with a particular ethnic group. Here, technically, the federal government is under no obligation to uphold any Church or religious tradition. Though it can be countered that the American system stands on strict separation of church and state. Nevertheless, that separation becomes problematic if competing narratives augur civil strife. Where is the ultimate point of reference?<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Hungary's Constitution of 2011", available at [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Hungary\\_2011.pdf](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Hungary_2011.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> "The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription", available at: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

One of Israeli Basic Laws passed in 2018 declared the country first and foremost as the 'Nation State of the Jewish People'. Domestically, it was vehemently criticized by the Arab citizens of Israel. However, it is another attempt from an otherwise democratic country to submit its republican individualism to the hierarchy of values.<sup>8</sup>

The Preamble of the Pakistani constitution lucidly lays out the dominant culture of the society. According to the document, sovereignty belongs to God and people's political expression must not clash with the divine laws. The individual rights must adhere to them in their operation. The Scripture's reach is debatable but its centrality is out of the question.<sup>9</sup>

Across the Radcliffe line, the Republic of India like the United States of America politically assembles itself through the expression 'We the People'.<sup>10</sup> The political management does not make room for any specific verticality. In the republican sphere, no faith, race, ethnicity, or language holds a privileged position. However, interestingly, the society is deeply hierarchical, which asserts itself in the same manner politically. Generally, people give their respective caste, language, religion, and region serious consideration. They mobilise themselves around these sensitivities. Now, it can be argued that such attitude is 'obscurantist', 'archaic', or 'antediluvian', but, as we have pointed out in the preceding space, a human being cannot be atomised at the flick of the switch. He actively seeks to balance his individualism with his hierarchical nature. Hence, the dissonance persists. The polity is hierarchical but the political system is libertarian. Incidentally, the doctrine of 'Hindutva' has been one such attempt to politically manifest a theme which the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) deems should be the only point of reference for the Indian social fabric. It can be criticized on egalitarian grounds but given the realities of Indian society and a lack of an ultimate hierarchical benchmark, conceptions like these only appear logical. Hitherto, we have discussed republics with contrasting modes of political expression. Some of them like Hungary, Israel, and Pakistan operate under clearly defined meta-political boundaries which they cannot outlaw by mere

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<sup>8</sup> "Basic Laws of the State of Israel", available at: <https://m.knesset.gov.il/EN/activity/Pages/BasicLaws.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> "The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan", available at: <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/preamble.html>.

<sup>10</sup> "The Constitution of India", available at: [https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/npj/files/coi\\_part\\_full.pdf](https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npj/files/coi_part_full.pdf).

legislation. On the other hand, democracies like the USA and India do not explicitly restrain their republicanism under any dominant subtext.

What we infer from these cases is that even a system that vows to give an individual maximum liberty has to recognise natural hierarchies and adjust itself to them. Also, where there is abstraction and vagueness (India and USA), there exists doctrinal strife and ideological tension.

At this juncture, then, we ask ourselves whether there has ever been any system of political governance that stands on its own and perfectly aligns with the human nature, and which does not have to make ideological concessions. We maintain that that system is monarchy.

We present our case in the succeeding space. Sir Robert Filmer ends the first chapter of his *Patriarcha or The Natural Power of Kings* with the following words:

If we compare the Natural Rights of a Father with those of a King, we find them all one, without any difference at all but only in the Latitude or Extent of them: as the Father over one Family, so the King as Father over many Families extends his care to preserve, feed, cloth, instruct and defend the whole Commonwealth. His War, his Peace, his Courts of Justice, and all his Acts of Sovereignty tend only to preserve and distribute to every subordinate and [inferiour] Father, and to their Children, their Rights and Privileges; *so that all the Duties of a King are summed up in an Universal Fatherly Care of his People* (emphasis is ours).<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Sir Filmer perfectly captures the essence of political management which is to correspond to natural human hierarchies and transcendence. A monarchy represents every facet of a man albeit on a more elevated plain. It organically links itself with the past, the present, and the future of a folk inhabiting a particular realm. It centres on the nuclear family. Moreover, it provides an ultimate point of reference whenever an ideological conflict surface. It is the throne that represents the eternal spirit of the people which is above the legislature. It cannot be outlawed. Sovereignty is not split

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<sup>11</sup> Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha Or The Natural Power of Kings* (London: St. Paul's Churchyard, 1680), 24. Available at: [http://oll-resources.s3.amazonaws.com/titles/221/0140\\_Bk.pdf](http://oll-resources.s3.amazonaws.com/titles/221/0140_Bk.pdf).



abstractly but firmly personified. Political authority draws its legitimacy from the Sovereign. Political administrators come and go but the office of King never dies. Meta-politically, these arguments appear medieval in our fervently republican and democratic age. Nonetheless, as demonstrated earlier, even a regime that is republican with maximum emphasis on individual liberty draws mechanisms to peg this liberty within an organic context.

*What to make of modern 'constitutional' monarchies?*

- Firstly, the term is absurd. It is an oxymoron. A constitution neither establishes a monarchy nor can it limit its authority. It is the other way around. A Monarch bestows legitimacy for he personifies sovereignty and the soul of his realm.
- Secondly, by receding from the political sphere a monarch ruptures his organic links with his subjects and their collective historical trajectory. He leaves his realm at the whims of the legislature which possesses a transitory character meaning it changes its colours as one generation overtakes another.
- Lastly, if bad monarchs constitute an argument against monarchy then genocidal Jacobins should also point towards the devilry of 'popular rule'. If a monarch's tyranny obliges a parliament then according to the same logic an out of control parliament must also be made to bend its knee in front of the symbol of unity. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

**Epilogue**

Perhaps, we stand on the cusp of a major ideological breach. Ours might be the last of generations before the spirit of French Revolution finally recedes. If we firmly believe in progressivism then how come in the words of a Belgian historian there is no progression beyond 'liberty, equality, and fraternity'?<sup>12</sup>

*Why must we not evolve further?*

Also, if all we ever required was food and luxury, there would not have been the vitality, altruism, sacrifice, honour etc. that we observe in history. We could barely have improved our Neanderthal conditions. The magnificent archaeological reminders of yester ages like the Acropolis, Persepolis, St.

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<sup>12</sup> Tumblr House, "Is Democracy the Pinnacle of Progress?", Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nae2C2enzqA> Date Published: 23 October 2017, Duration: 7:18.

Peter's Basilica, the Roman aqueducts, the sculpture of Michelangelo and Bernini, the Biblical renderings on the walls of the Sistine Chapel, the majestic Egyptian pyramids etc. all emphatically address their onlookers that human history has just not been a run-of-the-mill plebeian struggle for daily survival; they characterise an epoch in which a certain communitarian spirit transcended societal divisions. A loyal peasant stood by his dignified Sovereign for the glory of his realm. These grand monuments did not come out of the blue. They were produced in a society which recognised that nature is deeply hierarchical. It understood that its architecture should adequately preserve its worldview for future generations.

Christianity is part and parcel of Europe. Russia cannot be described without the Orthodox Church. Irish nationalism is incomplete without Celtic history and Roman Catholicism. The crosses of St. George and St. Andrew are the standards of England and Scotland respectively. In yesteryears, when it had not yet been 'constitutional' and freedom and duty were mutually inclusive, monarchy used to absorb these hierarchies of religion, race, and ethnicity. How far our age of republicanism permits us to relate to that hierarchical meta-narrative is the question that has potentially threatened the prevalent technocratic and inorganic political framework.

We do not stress that Republics will become monarchies. But what we do hold is that human beings are not mechanical beings. They do not come in this world with a clean slate. They are historical beings. They prefer to live in organic communities, and politically organise themselves accordingly, and that this organisation usually clash with doctrinaire republicanism or democracy. What if a community desires to segregate? How would a democratic or republican state respond? Would this community be coerced 'in the name of freedom' to integrate with the rest?

It is only in the last 300 years or so that we have begun to see ourselves somehow wiser than our ancestors. Certainly, we are more knowledgeable than our predecessors but, as for wisdom, the jury is still out.