The Cunning of Freedom: Saving the Self in an Age of False Idols

by Ryszard Legutko

Summary and Commentary by David Alexander

Introduction

Legutko experienced freedom primarily as a practical problem despite his philosophical training. Under a Communist regime in Poland, his freedom of speech, action, and even thought were painfully restricted and he sought respite in books, looking for more in them than they could yield.

He mentions his disillusionment with some of the major interpretations of freedom including, specifically, Isaiah Berlin's famous essay on two concepts of freedom. He was surprised to discover Berlin's essay full of platitudes and falsehoods when he had initially fallen under its spell along with many of his contemporaries. He found Berlin's rejection of moral knowledge pernicious, and all the more so because it became a cliché.

Legutko did not like the "philosophy of freedom" under Communism, and he liked it even less after Communism's collapse. He found that the debate about freedom then lost its seriousness and it rapidly shrunk in its scope, along with the set of questions that it had addressed. He found no place in the different sides of the debate and was eventually driven to rethink freedom and resort to the classical philosophical tradition for answers. He rejects Berlin's fear-driven avoidance of questions about freedom, and holds that the concept of freedom should indeed open us to many weighty philosophical questions.

Chapter 1

"Negative freedom" is the absence of coercion. No one can say that they do not require some domain where they are free to do what they want. "We all agree that being coerced is such an unpleasant experience that wanting it for ourselves would go against human nature."

Attempting to define the principles for the apportionment of freedom generates profound problems. Our subjective sense of freedom conflicts fundamentally with any generally applicable principle about how it can be distributed. Society institutes a legal framework to deal with rival individual egos but this becomes an end in itself. A system of distribution can become a hornet's nest. Someone may place equality or justice over freedom and humanity's welfare can, in utilitarian fashion, be made a priority over freedom.

Human self-interests are far more likely to take control of rules than to obey them. When this is done, rules lose their inviolability and do not regulate those self-interests but rather become their products. Bending the law has been a characteristic of all political systems.

"Our current age of democracy is nourished by a belief that is as boastful as it is self-contradictory. It claims that democratic laws are both stable and responsive to people's needs, more resistant than ever to arbitrary power, and more in tune with the new aspirations of our changing times. These claims are irreconcilable: democratic laws are far from stable and not at all resistant to arbitrary power. The democratic system hopelessly confuses the self-interested aspect of freedom with the law's supposed objectivity and often blends the two together….Once one particular group's freedom is confused with the legal framework of freedom, then the language of freedom is likely to become mendacious. And this is what has happened over recent decades in the Western world."

Various interest groups have greatly restricted liberties in practically every area of life through identity politics, including free speech, free inquiry, and free thought. Their successes are generally sanctioned by legislatures and courts and presented as victories for freedom. The situation is so pathological that there is practically no external body left that can question conclusively the constitutional dubiousness of limiting basic liberties and discredit the mendacity of the language in which it is described.

Chapter 2

Negative freedom enjoyed in full measure would be something similar to Robinson Crusoe on a desert island (without Friday). Few would want to have Crusoe's degree of freedom but many would want Bill Gates's power and riches. We must surely realize that limits to our negative freedom are indispensable. Absolute freedom is loneliness (Raskolnikov alone on a peak). The fear of prison has much in common with the fear of absolute freedom. A world in which freedom of speech was absolute would be similar to Crusoe yelling out his opinions on the beach of his island. Absolute negative freedom is not a rational aspiration and not what a man truly wants. [The Proverb which says, "What a man truly wants is unfailing love; better to be a fool than a liar" comes to mind].

Chapter 3: Maximum Freedom

The abstract, purely theoretical construct of a "state of nature" in which the world is free of all obstacles other than the limitation of one's freedom by the greatest possible freedom for others has served as a vehicle for the radical reform of many political structures. This construct has been powerfully countered by two constitutive principles, both bearing on the implied anthropology of an answer to the question which asks: "What is man?":

1) This construct reduces people to individuals, rather than to social beings. Rousseau's view of these individuals was that they were self-contained, pre-moral beings, who were motivated by the simplest and most natural desires.

2) All people are equal, and their aspirations and goals are of equal value.

Hobbes and Rousseau both argued that compromising these two aforementioned principles would severely weaken liberty's original state. These philosophers did not consider loneliness and human happiness as if it existed as a major problem. The assumption that individuals were self-contained and self-sufficient beings invalidated such a consideration, and it was assumed that developed individualism would compensate for any losses that were incurred.

The state of nature theory, despite having problems, retained its attraction and a degree of ambiguity - it belonged to a hypothetical beginning but could also stimulate thinking about a hypothetical future.

Legutko classes libertarianism as consisting of theories which refuse to conclude that the state-of-nature hypothesis necessitates a strong government. Today's prevailing ideological jargon of liberal democracy reflects some of these main tenets. As with the state-of-nature concept, it subscribes to the same principles: society consists of individuals; the individuals are equal by definition; an individual or group's freedom is limited only by the freedom of others. In the political fantasy that is then espoused, society resembles a department store in which everything is offered, everyone can find what they want, no one feels underserved, one can change one's preferences, and even the most selective desires can be satisfied. This, however, mixes two incommensurate worlds and it exists as an ahistorical pretense. Identities of communities have a long history to them and placing them in an egalitarian social framework adulterates them although this fact is ignored by libertarians and other radical pluralists. "Two loyalties, one to one's particular community, the other to an infinitely open system - cannot be reconciled." [It seems to me that idolatry is often characterized by a false infinity, such as in this infinite openness, or in this attachment to an object and attributing to it a sort of infinite resource rather than to its Maker].

A utopia that is built on diversity has never really exhilarated mankind's imagination. The most misleading aspect of the libertarian world is the spatial representation that it suggests. Society is a space but not an infinite one. Also, laws, culture, education, customs, traditions and many other areas cannot be separated spatially. Individuals and groups compete for the power to adapt these core rules to their own interests.

The idea in multiculturalism that society should be made more spacious and inclusive shares some affinity with libertarianism. Where they clash is over multiculturalism's embrace of big government.

> "All political projects that neglect human nature and disregard the lessons drawn from centuries of political experience have to compensate for their lack of realism by a disproportionately high degree of intervention in both the social fabric and in human minds." p. 23

This intervention is falsely claimed to be restricted to and conducted for the sake of cooperation between groups, rather than as an alteration of the affected groups' identities.

The Tyranny of Liberalism

The liberal/libertarian model divides (into two levels) rules for cooperation that are applied to the entire society and creeds or beliefs for groups or communities. These rules benefit from this division and they exist as *de facto* rulers because these rules are the rules that are applied to society. The only other group that benefits from this division are the individuals and groups that have compromised their views to the extent of acknowledging the general principles of negative freedom as morally superior. For example, those Christians embracing abortion and same-sex marriage in effect are saying that the rules of the "open society" are superior to the moral teachings of Christianity. [Often charges or accusations against Christians of their being supremacist are made to advance this type of supremacism]. There is nothing really to distinguish these compromised Christians from liberals and multiculturalists.

Demarcation of Christian identity from liberalism and multiculturalism

The results of the initial plan to secure freedom for everybody through the imposition of general, liberal principles has resulted in things which have nothing really to do with freedom but are about good and

evil, life and death, as is the case, for instance, with euthanasia. The argument that the ultimate meaning of life should be left to individual consciences to decide rather than to society is spurious since leaving questions of abortion, marriage, or euthanasia for individuals to decide is in itself a decision that dramatically changes a society (indeed, in a revolutionary manner). Such laws, once in force, imply moral acceptance and not just legal admissibility. Then new laws are introduced to make moral opposition to this law more difficult and legally risky. [This is exactly what is happening, for example, with the laws that are being pushed by the Biden administration which would seek to criminalize actions which, in turn, try to reject any allowing of biological males to compete and dominate in the field of women's sports. Criticism of this is equated with driving "transsexuals" to suicide and so preventing the maximization of space for individual expression and authenticity]. "Of late, the crusaders have succeeded in getting hold of major institutions and other instruments of power." [And that was written before our last election].

In matters of this kind, there are no exclusively individual decisions and it is mendacious or naive to pretend otherwise. The supposedly merely "legal" decisions have moved the moral boundary markers from one place to another. Hence, to use the argument of individuals' right to negative freedom to justify such legal decisions is disingenuous. In fact, in most cases, these decisions have been made with the deliberate intention of changing society's moral fabric, and the legal reasonings about individual freedom and "the meaning of life" serve only as efficient tools. This ploy is brought into relief by comparing the modesty of the legal arguments that are given versus the foundation shaking results which follow in terms of undermining immemorial institutions as this exists, for instance, in marriage.

Human Rights and the State of Nature

Legutko writes that increasing numbers of people are now persuaded that they can jump into a kind of pre-political world: hence, temporarily or permanently suspending their obligations to society while still retaining the blessings of its institutions. The world which they leave for exists as a mysterious, pre-political, even pre-moral, world (independent of actual conventions). He describes the claim that we all have unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as outlandish and baseless. He ascribes this statement to the will of the founders who wished this to become a foundational principle. These rights were given precedence and priority over the obligations to state, community, and fellow citizens because they were theoretically rooted in a pre-political order of things. Obligations were said to come afterwards. This led to the mostly inchoate belief that one can have one's rights from the state of nature and then go on to live in a civilization which equips one to fulfill these rights.

This belief has led to confusions regarding the role of the state. One view emphasizes the danger of the state's despotic power. Another view states that the state must protect rights. This includes making the state the guarantor of the endlessly vague and fungible rights to "safety and happiness." A third view is a radicalized version of the second, that the protection of rights is the sole duty of the state, the failure of which delegitimizes it.

Respecting human rights became the criterion for evaluating political regimes and in the later half of the 20th century, countries like Rhodesia and South Africa were ostracized internationally and punished with sanctions. However, this was done only selectively and not against the more powerful USSR and communist China by the European countries. Only the American administration used the concept of human rights to antagonize the Soviet Union.

In profound violation of European moral traditions, international institutions and sovereign governments in Western countries have, of late, elevated artificial human rights, particularly those dealing with life and death, to being fundamental "European values."

Human rights have entered the public arena through declarations and charters - through arbitrary acts of political will - apart from their having any kind of satisfactory philosophical grounding. There is, however, the now widely accepted justification (given in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) which says that all human beings are born with an inborn human dignity that entitles them to rights, irrespective of any prior legal and political arrangements. The concept of dignity that is invoked here is not found in the early liberal thinkers if we attend to Hobbes, Rousseau and Locke and it radically departs from the ancient notion of dignity. In the classic doctrine, dignity was always about obligations and never about rights. Today's doctrine of dignity as the basis of rights can be compared, however, to the ideology of hereditary aristocrats who claimed that, simply by birth, they were entitled to certain liberties and privileges, except that today, this kind of claim or right is being extended to all human beings. This has become alluring because now everyone can explain and argue for their demands, irrespective of their moral quality, in the language of rights. New aspirations cloaked in the language of rights have grown at a speed that no one has anticipated and so have the number of enemies that are allegedly conspiring to take these rights away from us. The world, however, cannot accommodate such a moralistic, political, ponzi scheme and, eventually, it will abhor it.

Chapter 4: Freedom from Tyranny

There is the state-of-nature hypothesis and its narratives but there is also a somewhat opposite approach which takes as its point of departure that human history began with despotic and authoritarian regimes and then gradually moved into more expansive freedom. Many landmarks can be pointed to as indicative of this progress in freedom. The imaginations of those who fought these battles against despotism tended to be fired with a view of freedom that was not negative or empty space but one comprised, instead, of lofty goals and content. Liberty was always perceived as heralding positive, higher, and nobler objectives.

This tool, however, like the state-of-nature hypothesis, can turn into a dogmatic stereotype. Indeed, the radicalization of this into ideology converts it to the belief that everything in the past was either tyrannical, or it served tyranny, and therefore it deserves to be cleared away, and so, by abolishing prior autocracies, we can create the empty space of negative freedom which we can finally fill how we should choose.

>   [-When the distinction is lost between man's artifice and creation, often the creation itself is taken to be the tyranny. Hence, the critiques of modernity's gnostic twist.
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>   -"Karl Jaspers is closer to the truth, no doubt, when he sees Marxism not as science but as 'mythmaking' based on certain notions borrowed from magic, as for instance the belief that the destruction of the existing world will lead to the birth of new man." *The Socialist Phenomenon*, p. 240]

Legutko observes that revolutions have been brutal applications of the state-of-nature concept which manufactures a need for a *table rase* in order to restructure society and to give it a new identity, hence a consequent demand for purges. He notes that in modern liberal democratic society, defense against

revolutionary changes has been very weak and the offensive has been moving forward from victory to victory.

"…the key to freedom is a richness of deeply rooted social practices that are too diverse to be codified by written laws and formalized procedures, and stem from a combination of social groups, classes, occupational and professional associations, and complex interactions of old and new communities." p. 45

Egalitarian rules pertaining to the distribution of freedom undermine the rooted communal practices that Burke and Oakeshott had praised. "Burke's little platoons have been disbanded and political rationalism … has taken over." [As a general rule of thumb, when someone in a position of authority speaks in favor of "equity" (outside of the financial meaning), you can assume one of two things: they are either clueless or they want to engage in racial discrimination.]

 In the new liberal democratic society there is neither poetry nor conversation. He cites speech codes in Canada against criticizing "gender identity and expression" and France, against attempts to dissuade women from having an abortion.

One problem with the narrative of the successive growth of negative freedom is its unclear notion of what despotism is. Centralized power with considerable resources of repression is one definition but it is also commended as the foundation of the modern state. The French Revolution and the Bolshevik Revolution were both extremely brutal but are considered the foundations of a new liberating spirit of politics. In defense of the modern state, it is argued that Hobbe's political system's constraints on freedom were rational and free from the arbitrariness characteristic of former despotisms.

Many objectives of the Communist system were accepted by the ideology of liberal democracy, such as the undermining of social estates and social classes, militant anti-conservatism; feminism and an unsympathetic attitude towards family. The lack of negative freedom was one of the most noticeable aspects of the Communist system. Communism put society in a rigid straightjacket but at the same time made everyone feel insecure by abolishing the old forms and institutions. There was no tyranny of truth, no ideological rule of what had been declared absolute. Ideological meaning was adjusted to suit the occasion.

There was a sense of elation with the fall of Communism and the restoration of negative freedom, but there was more. Communism was an artificial construct, conceived as an ideological project and derived from a deeply flawed philosophy that made people live in an artificial reality but it was not just this. The artificiality was made to penetrate to the inner lives of citizens, directing them to aspire to false ideals, to worship false ideals emotionally, to condemn friends and eulogize enemies. Their moral-sense was paralyzed by self-doubt.

Once we understand the existential, internal situation of the people living under Communism, we can see clearly that the basic problem after Communism's collapse was not primarily opening up free space but reconstructing "the old order," bringing back what was real, good, and proper, resurrecting the ceremonies of innocence. Communities had to be rebuilt, historical symbols had to be reintroduced and revitalized. Moralism had to be revived and moral sensibilities rehabilitated.

In post-Communist Poland, an ideological war was waged between those defending the need to create some kind of continuity and those who held that the architects of the new Poland should just shake off

Communism and the pre-Communist past. The problem became insoluble. Those demanding that non-political, foundational assumptions should be respected could not help but make them political because these assumptions became an object of attack by those rejecting heritage and cultural continuity. It was demanded that the conservatives transfer their beliefs to the private realm but then the private realm was liquidated by "the personal is political" mindset. Modernizers recognized that they faced the greatest obstacle in people's homes, hearts, and thoughts.

Liberalism attacked the foundational assumptions as endangering freedom but imposed its own morally distorted requirements. The new despotism has largely not been taken seriously. Concepts and language such as a mistaken notion of tyranny ambiguate responses to curtailments of freedom and the idea that the liberal order might be against freedom is rejected out of hand. But the rebel conservatives still wage war for historical and cultural traits.

Chapter 5: On Positive Freedom

In contrast to negative freedom, positive freedom exists as a set of qualities and conditions that are needed if we are to achieve important aims. A free person is someone that is not merely unexposed to external pressures. Hegel, Marx, and Rawls and many others give a theoretical description of the system that offers people conditions which will somehow disarm negative freedom's paradoxes and the inequity of outcomes. In this they differ from the classical scrutiny of the free man's nature.

The concept of a free person had assumed that reality has a hierarchical nature. A natural hierarchy of competence was assumed. This undoubtedly fostered an attitude of cautiousness towards equality as a principle, and toward consistently accepting and working with egalitarian principles. Aristotle, seeing the ubiquity of slavery, theorized that some are slaves by nature; they are preordained to become slaves.

Chapter 6: The Philosopher

For the ancients, the philosopher's most important preoccupation was the life of the mind. It was believed the he was free from having to attend to our biological and physical needs. Through the leisure that is devoted to contemplation, we enter a region where mundane necessity is not in force and thinking serves only its own objective. Truth was regarded as independent from human and divine perceptions and decisions. The philosopher's attitude to truth was that of admiration and awe for something that was not of his own making; for something that elevated him to a lofty height from which he could look down even on the struggle of the gods.

A dualistic view of human nature developed and the soul was rediscovered. It was defined primarily by its high cognitive powers. Great hope was placed in this discovery. Being such an important component of human nature, it should be given the justice that it deserved as a guide for human conduct and its driving force. This change in perception was a revolution that is under appreciated today. [Indeed, many of the modern revolutions carry an implicit view of human nature that undermines this view].The sense of a radically new existential situation that is now being discovered permeated Plato's writings.

It seemed to provide a solution to our human weakness since it was believed now that people fell because they surrendered to the body and had forgotten the soul. The solution thus: let the soul control the body which, in the Greek intellectual tradition, meant relying on reason to steer us to all that is

good. [Our times abound now with forms of perverse moralism and it would seem that the obscuration of this perspective provides grounds for such weeds.]

Contemplation of immortality arose out of a search for a connection between a rational soul contemplating eternity and that world itself. The mind could disarm the terrifying prospect of death when illuminated by philosophy. Medieval Christianity adopted and reinterpreted ancient philosophy in light of Revelation. The word "freedom" has a similar meaning for the Greeks and the founders of Christianity. People acquired freedom when the soul, not the body, became their master. If one compares Boethius's freedom in the prison cell to that of a non-philosopher in similar dire circumstances, it becomes clear that the freedom given by philosophy is not fictitious.

It was due to Christianity that the old idea of the contemplative life survived.

The idea of the university could be said to have originated from the classical notion of the contemplative life. The seeds of the idea of liberal arts can be found in Seneca who wrote that the only really liberal study is that which gives a man his liberty as this comes to us through the study of wisdom. Everything else is "puny and puerile." The medieval idea of the university's purpose was to cultivate the free mind.

The idea of the university had a powerful impact well into the 20th century, and our world has been shaped by it in a clearly salutary way on the whole. Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University* is a brilliant exposition of this idea but it came at a time when the elites had already begun to turn away from this idea. They began to require that universities provide practical value and serve more concrete ends and so they rejected the notion that a cultivated intellect is a good in itself.

Newman's called a man whose intellect was cultivated through the liberal arts a "gentleman." This was not an exact match with the classical idea as it did not mean a man who is liberated from earthly entanglements although it did mean a man with a larger, more profound, historical and philosophical perspective which precluded hasty commitments and rancor. A gentleman's education did not prepare him to follow Boethius's example although it did equip him to appreciate his work as an outstanding performance of a free mind.

There is a close link between how we perceive human nature and what we expect of a university. Since early modernity, Europe and then America started drifting away from the Greek/medieval dualism of body and soul which is essential to the medieval idea of the university. Even in Descartes's dualism, the resemblance to the ancient dualism is lost. Neither Socrates, Plato nor Aristotle would recognize the soul in the idea of *res cogitans*. Protestantism made the drift more acute. The Protestant soul centered on an increasingly subjective faith that was isolated from a body that is irreparably infected by sin. As a result of the Reformation, and later during the Enlightenment, the division of the body and soul lost its political legitimacy and political organization including education came to be viewed as the prerogative of the government; religion was relegated to the periphery. On the theoretical level, religion was considered anachronistic and harmful. [An example of the sentiment is perhaps found in Whittaker Chambers's French mother's who included in her teaching of him his social manners that one ought never to argue about religion and that it was always in bad taste for one to try and prove that things exist in religion, in this way and not in this other way.] To conform to a new philosophy of human nature, schools had to remove any place for or honor for a form of contemplative life except as something which was silly, exotic, or eccentric. Reason was dethroned to become a slave of the passions. [In Critical Race Theory, holding up the ideals of objectivity and impartiality is rejected as a form of white supremacism). The contemplative life was disgraced and made renegade.

Chapter 7: The Entrepreneur

Under Marxist influence, entrepreneurs were called capitalists although this was misleading because it was not the end of profit nor the type of property or capital that characterized them. Rather, the essential elements that make him what he is are calculation, risk, investment, and innovation. Many have taken the entrepreneur to be the exemplar of positive freedom because of his having a goal-oriented, go-getter mentality. And, indeed, entrepreneurs are to be found behind much of the dynamism that exists in our modern society.

In the Protestant religion, according to Max Weber, man was irreparably contaminated with original sin and it was not in his power to make a free decision that would bring him close to salvation. Neither did he have any possibility of freeing himself from sinful existence. All that remained was pure, disinterested faith but, paradoxically, despite the state of overwhelming paralysis such a state of affairs could produce, believers were propelled by a desire to disperse their doubts and to experience a certainty of grace through the mediation of intense worldly activity which produces signs that point to the reception of grace. While free to deal with "the things that are below," the Protestant entrepreneur was subject to iron necessities and disciplined rigor. Legutko writes that Weber accurately captured one of the entrepreneur's essential characteristics: his having a unique combination of freedom and necessity.

As Protestant piety loosened its hold on the soul, the capitalist system gained speed through its own inner dynamic, without any regard to religious or philosophical motivations. [An essential characteristic of Woke capitalism is its godlessness]. The pursuit of wealth came to be associated with purely mundane passions which often give it the character of sport. In consumerist society, there may be secular monks with a discipline and an asceticism like their great grandfathers, but today's is a different society: one which commends consumption and which encourages our human appetites. Originally an entrepreneur's soul dominated everything that he did; later, his soul became completely separated from his entrepreneurship. The new entrepreneur has evolved from being "inner-directed" to having an "other-directed" personality that is characterized by being accommodating in his views, seeking and providing pleasure, and being receptive to fashionable impulses, prevailing ideas, and public opinion [Woke capitalists]. The new entrepreneur has lost his moral agency and inner authority to resist outside pressure. The Frankfurt school bemoaned his amorphous character, which had no distinct individuality about it. Once the soul retreated - the soul which told the entrepreneur right from wrong - the entrepreneur was swept up by society's currents.

Some argue that the spirit of entrepreneurship will eventually triumph over all authoritarian political and social structures, but examples abound that disprove this thesis. Capitalists are not able to be free from authoritarianism because they themselves are not free in the classical sense. Autocratic regimes have embraced capitalism to fill the place of communism, doing so with an awareness that it will not jeopardize their regimes. In the West for some time now, the public and private realms have become highly ideologized and politicized. Entrepreneurs, both individually and collectively as corporations, have volitionally joined the ranks of the ideological crusaders' army and have spent astronomical sums supporting the cause. These have been driven by an irresistible urge to conform ideologically. The American film industry is a notorious example of the behavior of today's mass culture. Often producers have ignored moviegoers' sensitivities, sometimes subjecting them to unpleasant experiences, just to impose their own ideological propaganda, sometimes sacrificing profit in order to be Woke.

Chapter 8: The Artist

Modern civilization was said to have reduced the human individual to a cog in a machine and art came to be viewed as the way out of this new slavery. At the same time, ==art came to be redefined or reinterpreted in a new way: not as the creation of artifacts according to certain, well-defined rules, but rather as the free play of the imagination.== The artist became conceived of representing or being as the avant garde of freedom. These new elites disdained bourgeois society in particular, not only for its vices but also for its virtues. Legutko proffers the examples of Thomas Mann's *The Buddenbrooks* and John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* in which artistic men and women are portrayed as the superiors of faithful, bourgeois spouses.

[I am reminded of this quote: "Contemporary romantics wish generative marriage to be a lofty thing, unburdened by possession. Never can that be entirely so - a fact confirmed when marriages founded on the romantic view crash to earth and end in divorce court, haggling over who owns what," Joshua Mitchell's *American Awakening*, p. 86].

--Romantic exaltation of the artist
--Specially affecting marital relations and interpretations of marriage
--Gadamer---
--Reno and Barth---confronted liberal 19th and 20th German mindset

The contempt shown the bourgeoisie was very strong. They were considered philistines, incapable of transcending their limitations (like white, heterosexual males of today).

==The key concept for understanding the modern notion of the artist was that of the "spirit" which transcends nature and political organization and which finds its realization in art, philosophy, and religion.==

--President Obama's use of the term "politics" in its negative connotation. The Communist dream of a stage beyond politics.
--Guernica --
--Goya, gravitas

Artists, given this conceptual framework, occupied a more exalted status than scientists, philosophers, or priests because they touched the spirit directly througha kind of intellectual intuition. Music especially was considered exceptional as the closest representation of the spirit, comprehensible only to those who can grasp its non-discursive meaning. This view of music had little patience for the mathematical ,constructivist aspect of music which had fascinated the ancients.

However, the modern artist was not as godlike as he believed himself to be. Despite being utterly contemptuous of the average man, he believed that his art was so powerful that it could save people from their miserable predicament. The truth that is received by scientists and philosophers needed no audience but art had to have its recipients.

--Vaniteux; the tendency of art to look at what other are thinking; perhaps less manly in the sense of males being more abstract in focus and less concerned about effects

As art became less about the type of beauty that reflected some ultimate meaning, and instead became more self-referential, its interest in penetrating the metaphysical heights waned. Art itself became the object of art and "experimental" novelty became the aim.

--Novelty versus symbolic representation

However, the artist could not rid himself of the old problem of being in an organic relationship with his audience. Having parted with the spirit representing something which is high, modern artists changed their perspective into one of old versus new.

Art became politicized with its turn to placing a premium on the new. Artists were more than eager to participate in the march of time that is headed by political movements. Many of them turned into docile apologists for totalitarian regimes and ideologies that punished disobedience. For several decades now, art has been deeply immersed in politics, and this political commitment has become a part of the artistic orthodoxy of our times. Nowadays, a shockingly large part of the artistic establishment proudly proclaims their subjugation of art to political causes (the political causes of the artists).

Chapter 9: The Aristocrat

For the Greeks, the *aristoi* were a virtuous elite who possessed the quality of *kalokagathia*, an ideal form of personal conduct to which the rulers of the polis should aspire. This moral quality did not depend on noble heredity. This sort of true aristocracy of the soul has been written about in works of philosophy and fiction since antiquity to the present age.

The Greeks contrasted the concept of the noble man with that of the tyrant and the multitudes, both of which were characterized by excess (*pleonexia*) and uncontrollability (*akolasia*), especially the tyrant. For Plato, both the tyrant and the multitudes represented the lowest level of humanity, close to that of animals, though the multitudes could be controlled by their guardians. He likened the tyrant to a drunkard and glutton; the former destroys his soul and the later their bodies (an uncomfortable topic).

[This reminds me of an excellent article by Anthony Esolen that I just read in which he discussed the Irish drunkard and the problems that are facing the black communities today. See reference below].

They were slaves to their passions. The aristocrat in contrast was a free man because, unlike the animal, he was capable of mastering himself and curbing his whims and passions to follow and do what was right. Tyrants and the multitudes could not comprehend how living within the constraints of rules and regulations made a man free, while indulging in *pleonexia* and *akolasia* made one a slave. It seemed doubtful to them then, just as it seems doubtful to many today. But rational evaluation exposes the vacuity of these doubts.

A person who succumbed to his body at his soul's expense was called *philosomatos*, "he who loves the body" [the ones who took soma in *Brave New World*]. Since the soul was life's controlling force, putting the body first disabled the self-organization of one's life. Being master of oneself meant being ruled by what is loftiest in human nature, the soul and its guardians such as reason, logos, lofty ideals, and moral norms.

Socrates embodied the Greek notion of *eleutheros*, a free man. Even his chief critic, Nietzsche, acknowledges Socrates's lordliness. The Greek and Christian view that the soul exemplified the best of human nature and should therefore be its guiding force was met with formidable criticism by Nietzsche. ==For Nietzsche, the real aristocrat was not someone who is governed by his soul but by a powerful, vital energy. He held that man's biological energy could be revived as a creative force in an aesthetic form.== He provided rationalization for the philosomatos's elevation of the body over the soul, for a kind of total biology. He became vastly popular since it was believed he showed how to be both an untamed animal and a refined creator of aesthetic and intellectual values.

==The problem with Nietzsche's view is the primacy it gave to the body led to conformity, not creativity.== The elimination of classic metaphysics from the modern world's philosophical horizon has led to an astonishing degree of leveling. The philosomatoi's greatest ever victory was the sexual revolution. It entrenched the polar opposite of classical ethics by making doctrinaire the notion that the removal of sexual barriers increased our positive freedom and that sexual *pleonexia* and *akolasia* were a victory over repressive culture . The *philosomatoi* have dominated and their two greatest victories, legal abortion and homosexual rights, have become rallying cries and almost universally acknowledged moral messages the world over. Other rights are easily suppressed whenever they are believed to clash with abortion and sexual privileges (such as a child's right to her biological father and mother and the right to freedom of speech).

There are four crucial things that the aristocrat should contribute to the modern world, and that their absence deprives it of: the rejection of historical inevitability; the defense of the ethics of obligations (such as marriage); an acceptance of body/soul dualism with the soul taking the dominant position; and a classic concept of shame. According to classical and Christian doctrines, the aristocrat's freedom stemmed from overcoming social preferences, historical circumstances, and political imperatives by excelling at the rules of a noble life irrespective of these circumstances. The modern in contrast abounds with ethos-killing notions of determinism and inevitability.

The aristocrat in a liberal democratic society is one of the final defenders of the soul in its classic understanding. The soul he defends predates the body-lover's revolution of 1968. Whoever today defines himself by such notions as anachronism, progress, the dustbin of history, or historical inevitability deserves to be called a slave in Aristotle's sense, rather than a free man.

The aristocrat embraces the philosophy of human nature for the true freedom it provides. In contrast, the modern willful victim (vying for the top place in the intersectional matrix) is made so by a preoccupation with rights and a view of human beings as primarily and exclusively rights-bearing people. History seems to them a slow process of gaining more rights. The aristocrat in contrast is defined by his obligations, not by his rights. Obligations to country, family, and friends are fairly stable, perenially so. The whole point of rights, in contrast, is to become unencumbered, to get rid of as many obstacles as possible which might stand in the way of our claims and entitlements. The soul comes to be conceived of as a roadblock to these obstacles' removal. Nature's basest standards make the higher standards ashamed. (Even motherhood is now attacked as implying discrimination against transsexuals and homosexuals' equality). The ethics of obligation has a formidable enemy in the ethics of rights. It is hard to defend the soul in a secularized environment, but only with the apprehension of the soul can the classical mechanism of shame be restored.

(Sometimes I come across passages which hit a nerve of shame in me and they seem to me kinds of jewels, opportunities for self-reflection I might and ought to avail myself of. An example is the passage

quoted from deTocqueville in a book I read recently that spoke of the tendency of people shaped by democracy to become isolated in little family units).

(This article, "Maleficent Obsession: The Long Dark Tunnel of Resentment" by Anthony Esolen, strongly complements this chapter and is a pithy, down to earth, truth-speaking article that applies this metaphysical view to both the history of the Irish in the United States, and the current situation of blacks in the United States. [Maleficent Obsession by Anthony Esolen | Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity (touchstonemag.com)](touchstonemag.com))

Chapter 10: On Inner Freedom

A third sense of freedom, inner freedom, is one where one is free only inasmuch as one is the author of what one does, says, and thinks. In this concept, objective criteria do not count. An example refers to cases of people who have committed something that is morally reprehensible and who claim that they were not themselves and so, by doing this, they renounce their own personal responsibility. They might be enslavers, yet they nonetheless feel themselves to be enslaved (as in slaves to sin).

[Theodore Dalrymple was good at describing this behavior among criminals. "And then my hand fired the weapon", etc.]

Whether one is or is not oneself seems to be an entirely subjective opinion that cannot be verified externally. Examples abound of people who identify themselves wholeheartedly with movements that any elementary intelligence would deem to be silly and irrational. Others sacrifice their lives for what outside observers would rightly consider to be absurd where in both cases, it would have been futile to try to prove their gullibility to them. In some way, they were "possessed" by their doctrine (or they were what Eric Voegelin called "philo-doxers").

[This degree of silliness and irrationality is seen now in BLM's calls for defunding the police.]

In spite of authenticity's profound subjectivity, we generally believe in the value of being authentic. There is a growing awareness that one needs to be different than others and to have an unquestionably unique identity, but at the same time there has been an equally strong desire to join groups and to assimilate oneself with collective identities. As the process of homogenization has accelerated, individuals have become increasingly less distinguishable in their views, conduct, language, and actions: thus rendering one's search for one's uniqueness all the more urgent. The new wave of collectivism has made the attainment of this uniqueness ever more stark. Sex, which was once believed to be the most intimate carrier of one's individuality, has quickly surrendered itself to the new collectivism as it is transformed into a powerful instrument for creating collective ideologies that regulate life's most private aspects.

The question of inner freedom depends on a more basic question: what is "my own self"?

Chapter 11: The Nonexistent Self

One hypothesis claims that no unified self exists. Bruno Snell had argued that this was the case for Homer's Greeks and that their basic existential experience was a fragmented thing. (Some have contested this. Was there not a continuing identity for Odysseus in his ultimate homeward return? Yet he was held captive by other women along the way.) The Homeric man felt free to do whatever he wanted although he had a latent respect for the roles that he was supposed to play and a sense of being a part of a larger plan.

Classical philosophy and later Christian thought challenged this view and made the strongest philosophical argument ever that the human self does in fact exist and that it has a powerful metaphysical core. Modernity, however, rejected Christian medieval philosophy and accepted, in a piecemeal way, only the secondary concepts of the Greeks, rejecting their core ideas.

[Again, these new philosophies and ideologies trade too much away from personhood and they distort the substance of our core humanity]

David Hume provided the most influential argument against the unity of the person. He "killed to dissect," dissecting human consciousness and reducing it to its basic constituents. Like Homer, Hume resorted to the device of mutatis mutandis, relying on the influence of external forces, mainly social rules. Custom in place, he held that the question of the philosophical unity of the individual self became irrelevant. Hume did not entertain the possibility that once people stopped believing in the beneficial consequences of conservatism, conservatism might disappear for good.

Pascal on the other hand feared "half-learned ones" who are motivated by their intellect's destructive power to decimate the simplicity and naivety of simple folk's beliefs. Custom could survive only in integrated selves, who made the power of custom possibly through repetition, predictability, and clearly defined social rules, not vice versa.

Those who did not care about Hume's cynical conservatism's weakness in its problem with self integration tended to see its essential instability as a crucial condition of inner freedom. A view of our existence as being episodic in nature arose. These separate episodes in our identity are not separate stories authored by ourselves, but a sequence of authorless events. (In the absence of God, man fragments).

As the classical formula of man as being guided by reason lost its power and attractiveness, and a growing number of "unreasonable men" rejected religious faith, freedom came to be regarded as man's most primal, authentic condition, anteceding all of his social roles, diversions, experiences, and provisional identities. This brought him into murky waters and to the verge of nonbeing. The existentialists like Sartre and Camus viewed man as both nothing and God. The experience of freedom had to be concrete and so they said freedom expressed itself in resolute action. Freedom was a negative act of defiance and rebellion and a positive manifestation of existence. Sartre held that how an individual expressed his freedom conditioned how others expressed theirs. Philosophers attracted to this view had a singular penchant for violence, which was thought to be a salient manifestation of individual freedom.

The philosophers who were carried away by their belief in political violence's redeeming role denied its systemic character, even in the movements that represented the most extreme forms of party discipline and conformity.

The entire project was flawed both in its positive and negative aspects. "Rebellion against a particular society's oppressiveness, or in favor of some future society, became so programmed and stereotyped that it was the last place to look for radical nonconformity. In fact, rebellion soon became the very epitome of mental conformity." (pp. 128-29) The fact that Camus opposed Communism and criticized his Communist fellow travelers was because he as a man had more honesty and decency than his colleagues.

The idea that the nonself could have a godlike creative power to develop its own authentic and existentially vibrant identities, including political ones, assumed the *creatio ex nihilo* principle that from nothing everything could emerge. But this was unconvincing and quixotic. The nonself had neither means nor ends at its disposal. By annihilating the self, philosophers deprived themselves of all conceptual instruments through which to combat ideologies such as Marxism. Their fall also refuted the belief that the nonself was the condition of inner freedom. Their acts of flirting with the most abhorrent regimes revealed their propensity for their actualization of freedom to be a sham. Their opposites, people who believed in the religious and metaphysical essence of human existence, fared much better confronting totalitarian regimes.

Chapter 12: The Minimal Self

The minimalist version of the self reduces the self to a few simple characteristics like utility or self-preservation. Once we assume that what we do, think, and aspire to is a consequence of our natural desire to survive, experience pleasure, or seek power, then the problem of inner freedom disappears.

Reductionism of the self

[There is an irony in that what the Critical Race Theory BLM espouses undermines inner freedom and reduces the humanity theoretically of those who adopt it.]

We are bound by objective conditions that cannot be changed by our decisions. If a man desires gratification of a lust but is threatened by the gallows if he acts on his desire, two simple drives of sexual desire and of self-preservation come into conflict, but the question remains only which is the stronger of the two drives. In the minimalist descriptive construct, the matter of free choice does not enter into the equation. Even in the case where a person must choose between betraying a friend and facing death, if the minimal self is consistently defined as essentially self-preserving, betrayal of the friend is then not a problem because it is part of being authentic to one's true self. The intimacy of friendship in this model does not touch the core of being human.

Similarly, if man is defined by his drive for utility, life can be constructed with elaborate rules that resemble a complex game that people play in order to maximize utility. In such a game system, the aims diminish in importance and what matters is how one plays in order to reach the chosen objective. But this also does not manifest or display inner freedom. The question in a world reduced to utility is not whether one is authentic or true to one's real self, but only how many errors there are in one's strategy to maximize utility. Socrates and Christian exemplars cut poor figures from the perspective of such decision theory.

[Liberalism, especially when it comes to sexuality, is a relinquishment of our responsibility for our interests themselves, and by doing this, it undermines our personhood. Conscience demands a capacity

within to distance from one's own desires and to measure them according to a standard of 'right living' but liberal messages try to undermine that critical distance by urging that desires are determined and immutable. It is dehumanizing to say of anyone that they are incapable of rationally evaluating their sexual urges and desires and the concepts they have about sexuality, and ordering their responses in a way that comports with reason. It is also an insult to intelligence to treat liberal notions about sexuality, especially when those liberal notions are insulated from criticism, as if they were the measure of reason itself on this topic. Liberals are acting as the enslavers of the mind, and seeking ever more coercive means to marginalize their critics.]

Philosophies which reduce the human self to simple characteristics that can be objectively interpreted in economic, biological, praxeological, and other theories have difficulty in distinguishing between a description and a norm. Their theories are essentially descriptive, leaving little room for a normative dimension. (Hence, Charles Taylor writes that modernity has "occulted its moral sources.") Because of this, doing justice to our inner freedom, or even conceiving of it properly, has been endemically difficult for such theories. To introduce normative content means or implies a revision of the minimalist self to acknowledge that, beyond utility and self-preservation, people are often misled by various illusions, phantoms, and idols, bizarre creeds, irrational fantasies, etc. Most of the calamities caused by the human race are the result of quelling our instincts of utility, it is thought. In such times it is felt that if we just ignored the big ideas and focused on the norm of utility and self-preservation, we would live more sanely.

Yet this view obviously causes us to bracket larger and higher dimensions of our motivations, to distrust them, and to strip ourselves of social, moral, religious and other bonds and rules in order to be our authentic minimalist selves.

The minimal self takes a consistently anti-conservative stance without realizing it. It assumes the past is an arena in which the real sought to liberate itself from the artificial. The norm of the minimal self always tends to simplify complexity, flatten hierarchies, truncate that which is too ornamental and ramified, and downsize what is not useful. Nietzsche reduced Western metaphysics to a form of disease; Freud reduced it to sex, the unconscious, the death drive, and various ways of coping with them. What defined human life for them was the low and vulgar.

Liberalism stimulated the process of stripping our social life and ourselves of many elements along the lines that liberal philosophy had envisaged. It pushed society toward individualism. The norm, however, rather than giving us the freedom to be ourselves, acts to the contrary of what it was supposed to solve: it draws us into dependence, proscribing any actions which deviate from theoretical models. A preset, common pattern is prescribed to the minimal self by these theoretical constructs.

There is very little in the minimal self that can be called its own. Hegel observed that modern man has an abstract sense of self-identity. The problem arose of how the inner and outer man should cooperate with each other. The outer man was thought subject to existing laws but the inner self was thought to be free and undisturbed. In practice, the handling of the two became a serious political problem. Outer religion came to be considered a fount of violent enthusiasms. The separation of church and state was therefore proposed. Government, however, came to be regarded as the supreme pontiff, guaranteeing physical safety and wielding the power to invalidate all religious objections to society's rules.

In societies that attempted to follow the liberal model, the arrangement ultimately led to religion becoming neutralized. Locke argued that religious tolerance left society's moral mechanisms and

principles untouched, but once government involved itself in morality and began legislating matters of life and death, first in totalitarian systems, then more recently in liberal democracies, those mechanisms and principles stood in modernity's way and had to be removed. Hobbes's concept that the law was the public conscience's invalidation of the private conscience has taken on new life.

Trapped in the minimal self, "men without chests," modern man has lost whatever chance he had of justifying his aspirations to authenticity. The aspiration remains and has become more acute than ever, but there is nothing left at his disposal with which he could justify his claim and satisfy his need. (He needs to kiss the dirt like Raskolnikov did). What are we to make of the sensitivity of society that has no qualms about outlawing moral consciences and ruthlessly imposing its political rule over the moral interpretation of life and death, but cannot bear to single out gender dysphoric biological males by barring them from girls' locker rooms and sports competitions?

Chapter 13: A Strong Concept of Self

The concept of the minimal self is having its heyday today since it is held to be the only acceptable view of human nature, but it is a concept that was never at the center of the Western philosophical tradition. Reducing society to a collection of individuals can only be conceived in something like a thought experiment and brought about only through intense social engineering or social disintegration. Contrary to the minimalist conception of the self, human societies have never been simply collections of self-contained, isolated individuals. The minimalist conception of the self displaced a more robust, more true view of the self.

Western societies today are rampant with radical, collectivist ideologies built along racial, sexual, and ethnic lines, leaving less and less room for non-ideological activity and thinking. The demand for these artificial identities reveals something important about human nature. Despite the philosophical obtuseness of the dreams about self-sufficient individuals, human beings need a deep sense of belonging and the more they are individualized, the more they are eager to assimilate collective identities.

[Resembles in some ways Mary Eberstadt's thesis in Primal Screams.]

Aristotle was the first thinker to define the human being in his social and historical dimension, using the expression "political man." He claimed human beings could evolve and thrive only as part of communities which provided them with a moral and political education, with all the skills necessary to develop human nature.

[This seems a very helpful framework: how can I and my community help provide my boys with moral and political education?].

The minimal self searches for a mode of existence that was claimed to be suppressed by allegedly imposed loyalties. It involves trying to escape "false consciousness" by reflecting on one's life and decisions in order to find something untouched by external influences. Political man, in contrast, asks: how much of my humanity have I been able to activate and what skills have I acquired to develop my human potential? Enlarging one's freedom does not mean becoming unencumbered with various social roles and social costumes but, on the contrary, accepting these roles and costumes to gain the necessary competencies.

Rather than thinking of freedom in terms of being unencumbered, it is better to think of it in terms of the freedom of the disciplined musician who has learned his art well and is free to express himself in ways that the neglectful musician is not. (The idea of the genius may be the repository for many dreams of virtuosity without effort). Virtues like prudence, justice, and courage bear a resemblance to the gradually acquired skill of the musician. They are acquired by acting prudently, justly, and bravely, and learning from failures, and carrying on years in the practice.

Making contemptuous statements about the virtues is like saying to control oneself better, one would have to cut off certain limbs or refuse to walk or speak. Like the young pianist who refuses to subject himself to the demanding process of musical education, and who consequently excludes himself from the prospect of any serious musical career, a person who renounces the political man's duties must considerably reduce his ambition to retain his inner freedom. (Contempt for patriotism tends to lend itself to the neglect of the virtue of courage, and failure to acquire courage can threaten one's country's freedom but also one's inner freedom to act in defense of the known and loved).

The liberal order's belief that permanent rebellion against conservative forces is not only morally right and intellectually sounds, but also liberates from false gods and identities has turned into a dogma that few dare to defy. It has been used like Marx's concept of the class struggle as the key to all areas of life from literature and art, to morality and law.

Aristotle's view that man identified himself with the city-state had to be modified for the modern world. Since Greek city-states ceased to exist long ago, the nation-state became the obvious new object of political identification and civic education. Both the ancient and modern versions of the concept of national identity referred to something that was a part of everyone's experience: national differences and identities were easily observable and impossible to deny. Critics claimed these identities were not real and a sense of national identity led people astray, distorting their imaginations and making them susceptible to powerful enmities. The question today is not whether nation-states will be able to survive but whether they will be able to exert a creative influence on human life.

Liberalism has the most powerful ideology in the Western world and has been adopted by both governments and international institutions. Today there is both a growing dissatisfaction with supranational institutions, which are considered notorious for their arrogance and heavy handedness, and at the same time liberal ideology continues its conquest of Western societies.

Two dispositions define the essence of Western culture. First, we believe that the world is not self-explanatory. Second, the search for truth enlightens us and opens our minds to the world.

Plato regarded most of humanity as being in chains, implying they were uneducated (*apaideusia*). Their perception of the world is coherent, rational, and true within limits, but they are uneducated. Plato's chains symbolized a rather common intellectual state that categorically precluded metaphysical inquiry. The hostile reaction to *homo metaphysicus* has recurred throughout Western history and was reflected in philosophy, too. The men in chains not only refuse to admit that they are in chains but they want to destroy every possible perspective from which their chains can be seen. By eliminating which perspectives, the cave becomes the entire world and their point of view, the only legitimate one.

Nonetheless, what the metaphysical man said and aspired to became a central part of Western civilization. With the disappearance of *homo metaphysicus*, a large part of Western civilization was bound to lose its relevance and legibility. His delegitimization over the past few centuries has practically

annihilated the enormous output of human genius which he had animated in an earlier age and has debunked the impressive results from its wrestle with the ultimate.

Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in many aspects resembled Plato's Allegory of the Cave but crucially the Superman did not draw his creative strength from metaphysics, but from "the Earth." The problem is that when the metaphysical dimension was driven out from human nature the minimalist self resulted. "The man who maketh everything small" turned out victorious.
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"Aristotle was the first thinker who defined a human being in his social and historical dimension, using the expression 'political man,' the adjective 'political' referring initially to the Greek polis (city-state), and later to a state as it came to be understood in the modern era… But Aristotle also formulated a philosophical argument: human beings were essentially political, he claimed, because **they could evolve and thrive only as a part of communities which provided them with a moral and political education**, and, consequently, with all the skills necessary to develop human nature. These skills (the Greeks called them 'virtues') were a mark and a criterion of how successful people were in their humanity." p. 152

Aristotle's conception of human beings as Legutko describes it strikes me as clearly more "robust," salient, and truthful than the modern conception of the minimal self. I feel an agitating pang when reading the part I have highlighted in the quote above because I think of the present day weakness of communities and of their weakened effectiveness in providing a moral and political education. The minimalist self conception is a kind of all-pervasive mold. It would seem to require tireless, Herculean deliberateness not to fall into its slopes and slants. There is a malaise with the milieu as ubiquitous as air, it seems, which is usually not seen but can be isolated and examined and even treated. It is perhaps characteristic of the minimalist bent that, when reading the aforementioned line, my first reaction is a no doubt salient discomfiture but also an immediate jumping to the question of how to address this brokenness, and what may be the best strategy for mitigating and healing the brokenness, especially when I think of it in relation to my own children and how the impairment of society by the constraints of the minimalist self degrades their moral and political education. It seems, though, that vaguely resisting this propensity in myself to look for a solution does not clearly help and the way forward may be only by going through it.

Oddly, simply thinking in terms of the categories of how to ensure my children's moral and political education seems resonant with promise. Both are categories which the minimalist mold eschews, conceptually obfuscates, or detrimentally blunts. Merely the thought of deliberately devoting reflection to each category seems wild with promise, no doubt because modern man is taught to neglect these categories.

Aristotle is also assuming the concept of our having natures, and that practicing the virtues activates our otherwise potential or nascent humanity. No other way exists. Many moderns think we have no nature at all, or that we can simply dismiss it like an unwelcome guest, at the door, adopting, for instance, the "gender" of our choosing as a mere effortless act of the disembodied will. One diehard Communist once touted to me an article in which the author starts out by claiming that modern thinkers have shown that human beings do not have a nature. These strike me as bizarre beliefs that are sanguinely believed.

Chapter 10 of The Discarded Image-- Modern man - the universe given meaning only by man; the medieval man in contrast seeing meaning in the universe in the sense of 1) that it is an admirable design and 2) it is a manifestation of the wisdom and goodness that created it. See also treatment of Dionysius by Hans Boersma in *Touchstone* Mar/Apr 2021, p. 21

Conclusion

"Formerly, such concepts as pluralism, diversity, tolerance, and openness were intended to soften human interaction and to temper the strictness of the political and moral order. They also sheltered those who felt excessively dominated by others. Today, these words have acquired a sinister meaning. The erstwhile soft concepts have turned into ideological sticks with which to bludgeon opponents. They no longer provide shelter; they intimidate because they now mean the exact opposite. Pluralism means monopoly; diversity -conformity; tolerance-censorship; openness - ideological rigidity. In just about every private or public institution, school, or corporation, there are offices responsible for diversity, tolerance, pluralism. All of them are gruesome ideological agencies, spreading fear and imposing conformity, not unlike their inglorious Communist predecessors."

-Ryszard Legutko, *The Cunning of Freedom: Saving the Self in an Age of False Idols*, p.174