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## The “ages” of civilization as the structures of political representation



*The aim of this article is to delineate a comprehensive account of the development of human civilization in terms of increasingly representative structures of governance, structures that make people more and more present on the upper echelons of decision-making. I hypothesise that there are three essential dimensions of this development: first, media of communication becoming increasingly abstract makes society increasingly conscious of itself because it gets the ability of self-reflection and self-critique from increasingly complex perspectives that do increasing justice to the society; second, the anthropomorphising/relativising of the increasingly creative forms of life; third, if the law-making is conducted within the exchange of perspectives in which the being and the people are properly represented, the laws thus issued make societies increasingly free (1) from the dictate of violent power (2) and to practise the art of interdependence, that is, to create new models of cooperation. The basic narrative is that of a balancing between the dependence on the outside force and self-dependence; growth occurs when we are able to relativise the force that creates our life on this particular stage, that is, to establish communication with it. If we are too reliant upon it or upon our own power, we stop participating in the exchange of perspectives, in politics that creates new, wider and deeper, contexts for social life. In this sense, humans are “called” to representational politics, to make themselves and each other present on the upper levels of law-making, so that the laws by which people live do justice both to their own desires and to the reality outside of them. The possibility of this representational activity is grounded in the icon of the Trinity where persons make themselves present to each other to the extent of full transparency but without any erasure of the difference.*

**Key words:** political representation, lawmaking, statecraft, governance, theology, Christianity, political theology, stages of development, metamodernism, representative democracy.

### Introduction

The aim of this article is to delineate a comprehensive account of the development of human civilization in terms of increasingly representative structures of governance, structures that make people more and more present on the upper echelons of decision-making. The basic narrative is that of a

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balancing between the dependence on the outside force and self-dependence; growth occurs when we are able to relativise the force that creates our life on this particular stage, that is, to establish communication with it. If we are too reliant upon it or upon our own power, we stop participating in the exchange of perspectives, in politics that creates new, wider and deeper, contexts for social life.

## 1. Stone Age

In the beginning, human life depended on nature. She surrounded and steered us. Like all animals, we were at her mercy. It was she who selected who is to survive as who is to die out. If she were not to provide us with the wild plants to gather and wild animals to hunt, we were no more.

Then something unprecedented happened – we began to turn nature from our foe into our friend so as to turn her natural selection from an arbitrary fate into something which we can *negotiate* our way through.

We started to “talk” to her, and there was no media to our communication, it was immediate. We simply had to dissolve in our bodies – and by dissolving in our five senses we became one with our material environment – we *materialised* ourselves so as to become adapted and adopted to nature as if she were our mother. Our science was that of synesthesia, the sensual knowing that knew no boundaries between the channels of our perception and the events in the material environment. If we dance like rain, it ought to be raining soon. If we move and sound like deers, our hunters are sure to return with some game in the evening. Our cult was that of animism – the shaman was to disidentify himself from the custom of the tribe and retire to the wilderness so as to totally identify himself with some spirit of nature. The human task was to *name* nature so as to *animate* her – to make her a participant in the humane conversation – because the more something is *personified*, anthropomorphised, the easier it is to communicate with it and listen to it. The shaman was on the margin of the tribe, almost outside it, yet he had the “last word” because he was in the most intimate and *familiar* relationships with nature – he had the knowledge of nature and he copied the characters of the nature – therefore he had the right to *represent* it in the politics of the tribe.

The communal decision-making in the Stone Age was the closest we ever had to the state of matriarchy. But because of the deeply relational and political nature of the mother’s role in the tribe, this was also the closest thing we had to democracy. The shaman represented nature because he knew nature and ministered the cult of nature. The women symbolised nature because they could be mothers and represented the people because they in the mother was the focal node of kinship lineages and all relationships in the tribe – children loved

their mothers and not fathers because they knew who their mothers were and mothers tended to stay at home which meant more time to intimately connect and knew what people actually articulate as their desires.

There were also elders in the tribe who represented the traditional knowledge and customs of the tribe, its artificial culture, but that was the age when human culture was dwarfed by the power of nature. These representatives see reality from different perspectives. To get a “whole picture” of reality, they have to exchange their perspectives, that is, talk to each other. The primordial matriarchy allowed the tribal decision-making to do justice to reality because it was on the direct exchange of viewpoints, on conversations.

And there was also the chief, one who took command during the time of hunting and warfare. He represented the will, willpower, power, and the tribe’s own power. As the tribe was “falling” from the primordial innocence of the animistic kinship with nature, the chief was becoming increasingly more powerful – transitioning from a person represented in decision-making to the sole decision-maker of the tribe – the autocratic king.

## 2. Bronze Age

How could we fall from such a paradise?

Conversation with nature as with a mother means we are on the same ontological plane. But humans began to worship the particular parts of nature as having independent value in themselves – to fetishise them. We had fallen prey to the illusion that by accumulating stuff of the world we can secure our livelihood. It was a revolt against the reality of one’s vulnerability and mortality that led to war for the patches of the divided land. The politics of the Stone Age turned into the geopolitics of the Bronze Age. This meant creating a zero-sum-game for the scarce resources and imprisoned humans into a scarcity mindset.

We enslaved wild plants and wild animals thus turning into cattle-breeders and workers of fields. Because human welfare no longer was a “gift from wild nature”, we began to rely on our own powers, to work in the sweat of our brows, and thus fall under the illusion that our success is of our own making, that we are self-created. Because of this effort put into the land and cattle, we began to think that we’re justified in owning it. As soon as it happened the warfare with other tribes ensued – thus making the chieftain, the military commander, increasingly authoritative. Our science became all about gaining power and control – the procedural knowing of various skills (*techné*) that empower us to impose our will on the outer world. In the Greek myths we see how gradually the older generations of gods who personified elemental forces of nature were defeated by the gods who personified human skills. Our cult began to centre around the character that

allows one to accomplish great deeds, impressive feats of courage – around heroes as those who succeed at imposing their will on the outer world, that is, at *coercing* others. Thus, the paganism of the ancient Greeks consisted of the artisan gods who personified skills and the heroes who personified willpower. But in any pagan religion, at the pinnacle of the value hierarchy, that is, of the hierarchy of gods, we find not the most skillful or the most heroic god, but the god of sheer arbitrariness and tyrannical power like Zeus, Baal, Wotan, or Perun. Our attempt to find a common language with nature and to turn her from an arbitrary force of fate to a partner in communication had backfired – we ended up subjugated by a deity that personified the most arbitrary element of nature – the thunder.

How could we fall under this delusion of self-createdness? The new media of information exchange are to blame – the myths. Whereas the communication of the Stone Age humans was not mediated by anything – theirs was the immediate face-to-face communication – the myths of the Bronze Age led to the people's disconnect from reality because people's communication was mediated by a media that selected (because of the constraints of oral storytelling that has to capture and impress the audience by recourse to its passions) for the accounts of heroic deeds and instilled people with the idea that the world is created through the struggle of warfare.

So what about communal decision-making and law-making during this age? Because the people of the Bronze Age think in concrete procedural terms and worship power, they cannot help but confuse their present rulers with gods and worship them accordingly. Because of this, the statecraft became subordinated to the arbitrary will of the despot. The education couldn't help because both the priests and the sages were complicit in the worship of the emperor-god.

Thus we see the state of affairs where the whole society is enslaved to the will of the king. And he gains supposed immortality by indulging in the spectacle of earthly power – he wills that thousands of his people die under the scorching heat of Egyptian sun so as to build him a pyramid, a tomb that will be as beautiful and exuberant as his palace during his life and – because they think in concrete terms – this splendour could not help but “overflow” into the life after death. But in reality he gets no immortality. He just acts as a cancer cell that sucks the life out of society. Worse than that, he is not happy even during his lifetime for he does not have humane relationships and his vision becomes narrow and delusional because he lacks access to different viewpoints due to the lack of critical feedback – people are too afraid of him to say what they think is true. His palace is actually a prison.

### 3. Axial Age

How could humans escape such slavery? In the simple terms of this walkthrough the “Axial” revolution can be understood as the empowerment of the “elders”. As the civilisation developed, the scribes with the access to great literary traditions, were able to abstract the common patterns that relativised individual success and underlined the historical path of the country, deciphering the common thread that ran through the various stories, the history.

There was a tribe of nomads most intimately connected to the wilderness of the desert, the Jews. Somehow they managed to “pass over” the form of life that constituted the Bronze Age. Instead of the circular time of the myths, everlastingly telling the same success story of individual prowess, they were obsessed with the idea of history, with the God who held together the patriarchal lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They centred their life around God who had put them on the historical path of liberation from slavery. This liberation had to do with liberating them from each other’s injustice, from the lower kind of freedom that the powerful have over the weak. It meant that their historical progress was linked to the establishment of social justice through keeping the commandments – the Mosaic law.

Thus the laws became the main media of communication. The law is the abstraction of many stories, many myths. And the perspective of the national history allowed the Jews to stop being impressed by the success-stories of the heroes because they knew that their individual success had nothing to do with the success of the society in its totality. The Jews were much more interested in the common good and in the way in which individual actions participate in it by their obedience to the Law.

There were also the Greeks. The Sophists used the *techne* of rhetoric to argue for any case and to impose their opinion regardless of its concord with the truth. Socrates, on the other hand, preached a participatory kind of knowing, *gnosis*. For instance, he was trying to define various virtues so as to let his behaviour participate in them. The knower thus undergoes a transformation into what is known. Against the eloquence of the Sophists, Socrates offers the *parrhesia*, the speech that participates in the truth and thus effects virtuous conduct of life. Socrates takes the Greek concept of power as *virtuosity* and redefines it as *virtue*.

Whereas the skills empower you to impose your will, the virtues set you in a right relationship to things that are bigger than you – wisdom sets in right relationship with the truth, righteousness with the good, justice with the society. Plato attempted to “build in words” the republic in which the philosopher-kings have this intimate “gnostic” rapport with the God of Reason by means of debating the eternal ideas – but all the other humans

are excluded from this communication and are left to keep the laws drawn by these philosopher-kings. Because only those who think abstractly can do justice to the complexity of society in its totality. There is still a hierarchy. This is the Patriarchate. Moses is connected to God intimately but other Jews are afraid of talking to God directly, "lest we die". But the fact that the Law connected the Jews to that on which their life depends (culture, tradition, custom) in a non-arbitrary way makes it in fact a step over the depravity of the other Bronze Age nations whose posited the centre of lawmaking not in the history of liberation but in the extant ruler.

Instead of the belief in the arbitrary fate expressed in the infamous statements like Thrasymachus's "might makes right", both the Greeks and the Jews had put their hope in the communication that results respectively in the *anagoge* that leads them from materiality into the realm of abstract ideas and the *synagoge* that leads them from slavery to the promised land of social justice, in philosophy and in history.

#### 4. Modern Age

Unfortunately, both the Jewish and the Greek ways of escape out of slavery ended up undermined by the Roman Empire. All empires aim to abolish politics – to bound all people under the dictate of a single ruler. Yet there is a sense in which Rome was exceptionally imperial. *Pax Romana* was established on the honouring of the balance of geopolitical powers under the cult of the Emperor. It effectively implied sacralisation of the zero-sum-game that effected human Fall from paradise.

According to Hegel, "Caracalla's edict which made all subjects of the empire equal before the law was merely the ultimate stage in this stripping of the subject of all independent power *vis-a-vis* political power as represented by the emperor: *imperium* became indistinguishable from *dominium*. Ultimately, Christianity emerged as an answer to this utter lack of mediation between the subject and political power" [Avineri 1972: 227]. To understand how it happened we have to read the Gospel as the model of political representation. In it, we find two components – teaching and healing.

First, a real politician is a *teacher* of his constituency: Jesus acts in the name of the people, yet he does not yield to their immediate "general will" – he teaches them the will of the Father<sup>1</sup>. His shameful death on the cross was not an "easy sell" for his disciples – even Peter is adamant about it [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 16:23]. If Jesus relied on the plebiscite, he would have never accomplished the goal of his ministry. Though, on the other hand, it was

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<sup>1</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father..." [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 7:21].



the plebiscite that did him in. The problem with the education is that it takes time, whereas the popular opinion of the crowd is easily manipulated – the people that were a moment ago hailing Jesus as a king had acclaimed Christ’s execution when “the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus” [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 27:20].

Second, a real politician is a healer. Healing precedes growth. Society cannot grow until it is healed. To heal means to make whole. To make whole means to include those who were excluded. This was the healing Jesus practised. Healing of a disabled person makes her a subject of communal and public life. He knew that without this radical inclusion of everyone under the auspices of the community (for healing also includes feeding the hungry, protecting the weak, and welcoming the strange), without making persons whole, allowing them to take part in society, society cannot be healed and made whole.

Of course in the time of Jesus healing had to do with transgressing the customary boundaries that existed within Jewish society and threatening the privileged, people who would ask him questions like “Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?” [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 15:2]. Time after time, Jesus shows how, under Patriarchate, the seemingly pure law-keepers are farther away from God than the seemingly impure people on the margins of the society: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick... For I did not come to call righteous, but sinners...” [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 9:12]. Jesus’s mission was to reach the people whom he called “lost sheep of the house of Israel” [The Holy Bible: Matthew 10:6] – otherwise referred to in the common parlance as simply “sinners”.

Yet Christ’s kingdom had a hierarchy – the twelve apostles are on a higher level of representation. What sets them apart from the others? The fact that Jesus taught them in a special way: “It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 13:11]. “Therefore I speak to them in parables” [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 13:13]. In the early Church, the level of representation is based on the level of education. Like Plato, who distinguished between the philosophers who are able to come to terms with abstractions and the general populace who have to be fed carefully crafted myths, so does Jesus teach the mysteries to the apostles and speaks in parables to the vague followers: “Without a parable he did not speak to them” [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 13:34].

If education is the criteria of selection for the leadership roles, what is its substance? A leader is he who lives for the others: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them... Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant... Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 20:25-28].

In fact, the whole substance of Jesus's teaching was a theory of the kingdom of God where people live in each other's name. To be its citizen, said Jesus, forget about the necessity to provide for yourself. First do the work of representation, that is, simply live in the name of the other – and then the body politic will take care of you: "Do not worry about your life... Look at the birds of the air... heavenly Father feeds them... Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?'... For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 6:25-33].

How is it that Jesus personifies mediation between the subject and political power?

Jesus knows his constituency by name and by heart. Recall the apparition account in John 20:11–17, where Mary recognises him only after he addresses her by her name, "Mary". Jesus has the "right" to act in her name, to represent her, because she recognises herself in the way he says her name. But it's not just about the names. The real politician takes up the sins of the people. Jesus's ministry starts with the baptism of John the Forerunner "for the remission of sins". Yet Jesus entered the waters of Jordan not to cleanse himself from his sins but to take on the sins of the people onto himself. In this way the real politician takes up people's sins so as to become responsible for them, to make them speak. Jesus has to make them present and make them public, present before God and present before the heart of public life – the Temple and its keepers. To fulfil his ministry, Jesus heads to Jerusalem to stage a demonstration against the Temple. The crowd greets and hails him by quoting one of the Psalms: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord" [The Holy Bible 1994: Luke 19:38], thereby showing that he represents them because he truly represents God. For all intents and purposes, he has the popular support of the people.

All of this takes place amidst the season of Passover – the time when the highest number of people would visit the city. Jesus underlines that his ministry is public, not private: "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing" (John 18:20). But Jesus's enemies were in the habit of leaving the public space to conspire in secret: "The Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him" (Matthew 12:14). "Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle him in his talk" (Matthew 22:15).

On the eve of being betrayed and executed, Jesus invites his disciples to enter the New Covenant by drinking his blood: "Drink from it, all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 26:28]. People's sins which he takes onto himself are to kill him. By taking onto himself the sins of all humans, he stepped into the domain of violence.



The High Priest – standing for the Jewish law – sees the “protestant” representative of the popular will as a unique danger to the smooth proceedings of the ritual – he is afraid that the imperial authorities will see the unrest as another uprising and use force in suppressing it: so they judge that “it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” [The Holy Bible 1994: John 11:50]. Pontius Pilate – apparently trained in Greek philosophy – rhetorically asks Jesus “what is the truth?” [The Holy Bible 1994: John 18:38]. He is a relativist with regard to the truth but he sure believes in the power of the emperor – therefore he condemns Jesus.

These people based their careers on exploiting people’s fear of God. It made them entitled to judge and reject. But Jesus shows that it is these very people who constituted the “wrath” of God – that God they believe in is nothing more than a mere myth, a fiction. The consequence of the Fall, our self-rejection because of our vulnerability and our desire to protect ourselves from this vulnerability by rejecting others, was used by the patriarchal authorities to subjugate the people by constraining them within the “gated communities” and pitting them against the damned “outsiders”. Jesus simply demonstrates that one of these “outsiders” is God whom they claimed to represent.

As Rowan Williams puts it, God refuses to reject those who reject him. And our only way to salvation is to turn to the one whom we rejected – which is only possible because God re-presents him to us. “There is no other name under heaven by which we may be saved” [The Holy Bible 1994: Acts 4:12]. In the resurrection we see the essence of representation – God re-presents the victim to his oppressors not as a judge but as a saviour. “God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah” [The Holy Bible 1994: Acts 2:36]. “And grace is released when the judges turn to their victim and recognise him as their hope and their saviour” [Williams 1982: 3].

This process of representation was the process that created both the church and the persons. Through it, many humans who previously were not recognised as persons were being named and called as such. This “calling” is the church – Greek for church, *ecclesia*, means “calling together”. Its usage must have had an obvious flourish of Greek democratic procedures for the early converts to Christianity.

In terms of politics, the experience of Jesus’s re-presentation rendered authority based on the threat of violence powerless. Christians were freed from the necessity to bend knee to the imperial balance of powers – to worship the network of geopolitical deities who personified the power of various nations under the rule of the emperor-god. This opposition was made especially poignant by the fact that Christians were defined by precisely the lack of a “homeland” from which it derived its power – Christianity was from the beginning based on a different kind of solidarity that had nothing to do with sustaining a “gated

community” defined in opposition to certain geopolitical enemies. “In the world where religion, culture, and identity were found in the land of origins, Christians looked forward to a land that was their destiny” [Irvin, & Sunquist 2012: 66] – it was purely political and inherently anti-geopolitical, its political vision was fully cleansed from geopolitics. The emperors who proclaimed themselves divine, Nero and Domitian, are likely candidates for being the great beast in chapter 13 of the book of Revelation, while the imperial city of Rome is most likely the Babylon whose destruction is prophesied.

“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father”” [The Holy Bible 1994: Romans 8:14].

The apparition accounts are the miracles of representation – of doing justice to the one you represent, of making someone truly present in your actions. Present, but without sin – for the one who represents you has “answered” for your sins. Somewhere in the process of representation the sins really are forgiven and people are freed from the necessity to defend themselves against one another. They can live not as the “saved” and the “damned” but as brothers and sisters because God has become their brother and God-the-judge has died. It is the ambivalence of Yahweh that dies on the cross – turns out God is “dialectical” all the way down – that the heart of creation is the word, not some unintelligible and arbitrary will.

The Christian affirmation of the reality and centrality of representation allowed the Ecumenical Councils to develop what I refer to as a “good faith” – since there is no necessary zero-sum game in the relationship between God and the humans, maybe there should be no unavoidable zero-sum struggle between the humans themselves. It had arisen out of a need to affirm that for God to act in us no part of our humanity has to be amputated, rather, the whole of our humanity, mind and body, has to be properly articulated.

Jesus fully represents both the humans and God – he lives both in the name of humans and in the name of God without competition between the two – and he makes both present to an extent of *being* both fully human and fully God (the traditional claim is that it is *only* Jesus who is *fully* human among humans). This is a “high view” of representation that is based on love in which one can say “you are me” and “I am you”.

If Jesus is both fully human, it means that in his personal life he made God fully present, that his conduct of life truly represented God, and that nothing stops us from following his suit. It meant that in our relation with God there can be no competition but there can be representation. It is the ideology behind the claim *vox populi, vox dei* – to represent people is to represent God. It also meant that the whole of a human being can be a vessel for divine action and that she or he or else should be given freedom to express this divine action. This development went hand in hand with the sanctification of martyrdom.

*Martyria* was the proof that one’s loyalty lies radically *elsewhere*, that it is a loyalty to the kingdom *not of this world*, the “kingdom” that is still a “work in progress”, that will be realised in the “age to come”. This radical acceptance of vulnerability and mortality that reversed the Fall was made possible by the faith that one’s life “in the others”, “in the name of the others”, is as real as one’s life proper, and that, therefore, death does not have the last word – rather, love and language “reanimate” the person in the the community which is in turn “reanimated” by the sacrifice of this person that participates in the act that constituted the community in the first place – in the self-sacrifice of Christ. It meant that what was relevant to the martyr was not the balance between existing powers (she was willing to make herself radically powerless in her relation with the powers-that-be) but the transformation of the current state of affair. The transformation that renders the current state of affairs awkwardly transient in light of the “age to come”.

A new kind of character was being cultivated – now that the martyrs were venerated, people with a faith in a certain “invisible” ideology (people who participate in the inner conversation) that equips them with an “inner confessional depth” to bear being called names like “enemies of the people” or “enemies of the human race” for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. With a “moral compass” which makes them fully *subjects* independent from the consideration of their social status. It means there emerged a pattern of recognition for those who fall “outside” the norm. The beatification of martyrdom paved the way for the paradoxical social acceptability of persons whose creativity puts them at odds with the social custom. The boundaries of rejection and exclusion were put on the path of abolition.

Christians claimed that Christ united and fulfilled the three roles of the biblical Israel – the king, the priest, and the prophet. The king ruled, the priest worshipped God, and the prophet critiqued the extant state of affairs in the nation from the perspective of God.

We can see how Christianity made space for these roles in Modern society: the politician, the artist, the scientist. The scientist represents nature without recourse to the established authority. The artist represents culture without being afraid of shocking the public. The political leader represents the people while listening to the scientist and the artist so as to mediate between what people want and what is really good for them, so as to be the *ratio* between the will of her constituency and the will of God.

But there is also another very important role. One of the earliest references to Christianity in an exchange of letters between Pliny the Younger and the Roman emperor Trajan attests to Christians as people who “bound themselves by a solemn oath (*sacramento*)... not to break their word” [Pliny 2022]. By honouring the word Christians instilled trust in contractual relationships and thus created the lawful space for the trade between the individual creators

of produce – that is, the space of capitalism. This was still competition, still contest, but less brutal and more graceful, based on the reciprocal respect for the rules and for each other's word. It is this increasing gracefulness of relationships that characterises the development of human civilization.

The market has created many rich people. Long before that, Jesus had already warned that “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 19:24] – it is hard for the rich not to be servants of the capital – but “with God's help” [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 19:26] they can become the equal participants of the communion – can represent the capital in the political conversation. The rich can participate in decision-making based on their personhood or manipulate decision-making through market mechanisms based on their will. If the rich use their wealth to stealthily influence political decision-making with the eye to enrich themselves, it means that the economy is not represented properly, as a partner in political conversation, but rather political conversation itself becomes subordinated to the *diktat* of the basest motives of the populace only so as to allow the capital to accumulate itself without end. This will become *the* problem of modernity. As Douglas Rushkoff has it, “the rich have destroyed the planet and now try to escape it” [Rushkoff 2022].

Already in the Gospel we read of the “original sin” of capitalism – the reduction of values to market values. There is the blood of the New Covenant, and there are the silver coins for which Judah had sold it. The Sanhedrin authorities see this money with disgust, they even say that: “it is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood” [The Holy Bible 1994: Matthew 27:6]. In the New Covenant, capitalism will be putting a price tag on everything, and it begins with Judas selling the blood of the New Covenant itself.

In its extreme, this de-politisation would find its most popular expression in the libertarianism of Ayn Rand: “I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine” [Rand 1957].

John Milbank points to the nominalism, the univocalism, and the voluntarism of the scholastic *via moderna* of Franciscan scholastic theologians like Duns Scotus and William Ockham as responsible for the construction of secular modernity – the space where brute force of the aggravated private players on the market dwarfs the reality and authority of common political agency – because nominalism makes abstract universals unreal, univocalism stipulates God and humanity as sharing the same conceptual space under the rubric of the “Being” of which they are the exemplars, and the voluntarism had divorced the character of God from its “bondage” to reason and morality (it is important to note that later, during the Reformation, Luther will account for his meeting with God by recounting the thunderstorm). All of this was

necessary to create a Modern system of education where human subjectivity is the starting point of life [Milbank 2018].

Regarding the media of communication, the Reformation and the printing press meant that the individuals were allowed to make up their own minds regarding the scripture.

The “inner depth” of individuals which started with the subjectivation of Augustine – a quintessential Christian hero who – instead of the fight against the outer enemies – executed a ruthless confession of his own sins, started to be filled with the the ideologies, coherent systems of abstractions, which possessed people as if they were the “ghosts” of those who developed them – Marxism.

These obsessions ended up in WWII which was the war of modern ideologies.

## 5. Metamodern Age

It was Hegel who (even before this “possession” took place) proposed a totally different approach to education and politics. According to Hegel, in Hegel’s philosophy God finally becomes self-conscious. Instead of the subjectivity as the starting point (think of Augustine or Descartes), Hegel posits the birth of consciousness in the experience of the other – in the “transjectivity”<sup>1</sup>. Later Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud will poke their respective “holes” in the integrity of the subject – its createdness by the economic class, powerlust, and the body, but in Hegel the *conceptual* work of sublating the subject has already finished.

Hegel claimed that in his science of the perspectival knowing, in the dialectics, he had revealed the true essence of the Trinity as thinking and loving – the “non-violent apprehension of the other as other”<sup>2</sup>. This realisation allowed Hegel to see Trinity as the model of representative democracy – in it, persons know each other absolutely, yet there is always a kept distance between them – the other is known, but the otherness is never erased.

In terms of politics, Hegel was concerned with the issue that became especially pertinent in our times – that the atomisation of the voters under the auspices of universal suffrage will lead to the increasing indifference and depoliticisation of the people. He wanted to make sure that the decisions that are made in the name of the people truly *represent* them. Therefore Hegel aimed to synthesise the Greek *paideia* and German *Bildung* – the education of lawful obedience to the objectivity of the state and the education of subjectivity, the freedom and creativity of the person. He wanted to cultivate the citizens

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<sup>1</sup> I refer mostly to John Vervaeke’s usage of the term [Vervaeke, & Ferraro 2013; Vervaeke, Lillicap, & Richards 2012].

<sup>2</sup> The formulation is attributed to Iris Murdoch [Lin 2021].

who are *made and make themselves present* on the various levels of decision-making – guilds and syndicates, trade unions and worker unions, cooperatives and churches, city councils and neighbourhood watches – thus connecting the subject with the state by a “chain” or “network” of representation.

Hegel saw the necessity of educating people in the ontology of excess – the view of the world that sees it as created through the debate on the public square, through the dialectics. His *Phenomenology of the Spirit* is obviously connected to the task of such education [Hegel 1977]. He wanted to show how the Trinity unfolds as the stages in history, as the succession of covenants where people gradually learn to compete and relate to each other in the increasingly graceful and openly defenceless manner – “we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...” [The Holy Bible 1994: 2 Corinthians 3:18].

Between the subjectivity of the person and objectivity of the state, between the civil society and the government, Hegel strikes an intricate balance of the transjective dialectics – sometimes even in the form of a war. Which takes us to the russian invasion of Ukraine [Zizek 2022].

It is that geopolitical lust for the *Lebensraum* mentioned earlier as something that caused the Fall and was sacralised in the Roman Empire that is dramatically resuscitated by putin’s russia. It was justified by the realist school of international relations (Meerscheimer and his acolytes) that venerates the balance of geopolitical powers as if it were the only recipe for peace – but the peace they offer looks much more like the *Pax Romana* and totally unlike the universal march of democratisation advocated by Hegel. They essentially want to sacrifice Ukrainians to their god – the balance between geopolitical powers, because they believe that only the sustaining of this balance will let us survive in the world under the threat of the usage of nuclear arms.

Under neoliberalism, citizens outsource their political responsibility to the market. Under putinism, citizens outsource their political responsibility to the extant ruler. While libertarianism does not allow for the governmental political control of the civil society, seeing individual’s freedom of choice as sacred, putinism smashes civil society because it sees the autocrat’s freedom of choice as sacred. In both cases, the civil society cannot speak – it either dictates its will without any political mediation or it cannot say a word under the *diktat* of the autocrat. It is important to see that in both cases the political decision-making again became to be perceived by people as arbitrary fate – as something unintelligible that takes place without their consent. Attempts to “read putin’s mind” are as futile as the attempts to find wisdom in the work of the “invisible hand of the market”.

In putin’s russia, it is not the market but the Cold War that was the game that taught Russians to value the character that is the exact opposite of political representation – that of the secret agent [Putin 2004].



It is impossible to overemphasise that Putin went through the KGB schooling. He was trained to *not* be anyone’s representative. He was taught to distrust, to suspect, to interrogate. This is an ironic twist of the Modern critical thinking that penetrates “under the skin” of the surface phenomena – its Russian acolytes are so obsessed with the idea that everyone has something to hide and can easily be made to reveal it under torture – even the Russian word for what is thus revealed, *podnogotnaya* (rus. for “that-which-is-under-the-nails”), comes from one of the tortures of the secret service – to tear off people’s nails.

He was trained to deceive, to pretend to be someone other than himself, to live under a made-up name. The secret agent uses names as tools for deception. He pretends to be someone in order to betray another at a convenient moment. His regime is based not on representation but on betrayal (play on Russian words *predstavlenie* and *predatelstvo*).

Since he himself acts in this way, he cannot but suspect the same selfish goals behind the actions and aspirations of others. He sees “double loyalty” or selfish interests behind any publicly stated position.

As a consequence, Putin does not believe in the opposition. Discontent cannot be based on the level of open political communication – on the level of ideological disagreement – because no one can seriously base their position on moral convictions, no one sincerely cares for the common good, for the society in its totality. Behind every position lies either avarice or the will-to-power.

For Putin, the public square cannot be the centre of human creative power. Open communication, the word as such, for him are merely tools for imposing his will. Any relationship, contracts, deals, promises, expectations, laws, for Putin, all these are just judo techniques to use the power, the substance of the opponent against himself. Putin had exploited the neoliberal malaise of today’s West because from the very beginning he saw the channel of communication with it as a means to deceive and betray the naive partner.

## Conclusion

To make an unforgivable generalisation, the Westerners delegate their political responsibility to the market and the Russians delegate their political responsibility to the secret police because the former believe that the future is created through market competition and the latter believe that the future is created through war. Both are to blame for the war in Ukraine and both are perfectly capable of destroying the world, either through climate change or the use of nuclear weapons. I end with this thesis: our future can be created only through the routine of representative democracy.

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**Денис Бакіров. «Віки» цивілізації як моделі політичного представництва**

Метою цієї статті є опис розвитку людської цивілізації з точки зору дедалі більш репрезентативних структур управління, структур, які роблять людей все більш і більш присутніми у вищих ешелонах прийняття рішень. Згідно з гіпотезою статті, існує три основні виміри цього розвитку: по-перше, засоби комунікації стають все більш абстрактними, змушують суспільство бути більш свідомим стосовно самого себе, оскільки воно отримує здатність до саморефлексії та самокритики з дедалі складніших точок зору, що робить суспільство все більш справедливим. ; по-друге, антропоморфізація/релятивізація все більш творчих форм життя, перетворення їх з свавільних

сил на “рідних” партнерів для спілкування; по-третє, якщо законотворчість здійснюється в рамках обміну перспективами, в якому реальність та люди належним чином представлені, закони, видані таким чином, роблять суспільства все більш *вільними* (1) *від* диктату насильницької влади (2) для практики мистецтва взаємозалежності, тобто створення нових моделей співпраці. Сюжет розвитку полягає в балансуванні між залежністю від зовнішньої сили та мітом само-створення; Розвиток відбувається тоді, коли ми здатні *релятивізувати* силу, що створює наше життя на цьому конкретному етапі, тобто знайти з нею спільну мову та зробити її “рідною”. Якщо ми занадто покладаємося на зовнішню силу чи на власну силу, ми перестаємо брати участь в обміні перспективами, у політиці, яка створює нові, ширші та глибші контексти суспільного життя. У цьому сенсі люди “покликані” до репрезентативної політики, щоб зробити себе та один одного присутніми на вищих рівнях законотворення, щоб створити в них закони, за якими живуть люди, відповідали як власним бажанням людей, так і реальності як такої. Можливість цієї репрезентативної діяльності заснована на вірі в Трійцю, де Особистості стають присутніми одна перед одною до міри повної *прозорості*, але без будь-якого стирання *різниць*.

**Ключові слова:** *політичне представництво, правотворчість, державництво, управління, теологія, християнство, політична теологія, етапи розвитку, метамодернізм, представницька демократія.*

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