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Recommended Citation

Mahoney, Daniel J. "One Civilization Among Many? Academic Reflections on the West and the Rest." *Western Civilization and the Academy*. Edited by Bradley C.S. Watson. Lexington Books, 2015, pp. 39-51.

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Chapter Three

One Civilization among Many?

Academic Reflections on the West and the Rest

Daniel J. Mahoney

We live in an era that oscillates incoherently between a humanitarian ideology that is too anxious to assert the unity of the human race and a multicultural dogmatism that too facilely denies those universal experiences and affirmations that connect man as man. We have largely lost the capacity to conjugate the universal and particular—to affirm what is genuinely universal about Western civilization while, at the same time, recognizing what in the West is not readily capable of “universal” application and emulation. We are thus poorly prepared for that “dialogue of cultures and civilizations” to which Pope emeritus Benedict XVI has so suggestively called us, in large part, because we have no idea what civilization is. We do not reflect enough on that humane mixture of civility, self-restraint, self-government, and thoughtful inquiry that is civilization itself. The arduous moral and intellectual virtues that adorn our humanity have become unthinking “values” produced by local cultures. The dialogue that Benedict XVI points us to presupposes some understanding of the relation between universal principles and particular ways of life; we, on the other hand, rest content proclaiming the universality of rights—without ground or foundation—and the radical particularity of every culture and civilization. Most fundamentally, we have lost sight of the primordial distinction between civilization and barbarism, the precondition for affirming human dignity and for recognizing the choice-worthiness of any civilization as such. How, then, are we to find our way? Where are we to turn for wisdom?

THE PLURAL WEST

To begin with, we need to recover a capacious sense of the "plural" and dialectical character of the West. The West is not reducible to what the Danish historian David Gress has aptly called the "New West"—the West of science, human rights, and commerce. In many contemporary interpretations, this New West traces its origins to the Enlightenment and is not dependent on any "values" other than the "autonomy" of the individual. Here, the claims that the moral contents of life—religion, tradition, family, art, philosophy, and truth—make on us are all subordinated to freely chosen "consent." Subsequently, there is an impoverishment of the human world.

In a masterful work of political and intellectual history, *From Plato to NATO: The Idea of the West and Its Opponents*, Gress reminds us that the New West is dialectically dependent upon the old Western synthesis that brought together Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, and the spirit of independence bequeathed by the Germanic tribes of northern Europe. This synthesis came together by the year 1,000 and left a distinctly "libertarian" mark on western civilization. The West was an essentially pluralistic civilization and could not be reduced to a single dominant principle. This pluralism was a source of the West's dynamism, its powerful protection against tyranny. Gress ably shows that political liberty and the rich and varied spiritual aspirations of the West are not reducible to an Enlightenment project that said adieu, once and for all, to the Old West. The theoreticians of the New West were often fierce critics of tradition and the broader inheritance of the West. But the best among them, the theoreticians of moderate enlightenment such as Montesquieu and Tocqueville, appreciated that the emerging world of liberal modernity cannot sustain itself without a firm grounding in a western inheritance that keeps despotism at bay, safeguarding the moral contents of life, and melding tradition and a questioning spirit in a manner that is unique to the West.

THE LIMITS OF CONSENT

In contrast, the illusion of unadulterated Enlightenment is that the human being "is the sovereign author of the human world." In that new understanding, autonomy and consent reign supreme and refuse to bow before the contents of life. As the contemporary French political theorist Pierre Manent has put it, the tendency of late modernity is to grant "exclusive legitimacy to the principle of consent."

But as Manent has compellingly argued, there is something tyrannical about submitting "all the aspects of the world to a single principle," even if that principle is liberty. A regime of liberty depends on things outside it-

self—the moral capital of the West as well as the territorial framework, the nation or territorial democracy, that makes consent possible, that gives it form and structure. As the British conservative philosopher Roger Scruton has argued, the people who consent to govern in our modern democracies already exist as a people within traditions and with commitments that are not merely the product of consent. “We can make sense of the social contract only on the assumption of some such precontractual ‘we.’” A people must exist as a people before a contract can bind them politically. Behind constitution-making, however noble and necessary, behind the evocation of the Rights of Man, lay an inherited or “providential” constitution that men do not simply design. We never simply begin anew. The universal is not the pure extension of humanity, in the sense of ever greater inclusiveness, or an ever more self-confident affirmation of Humanity in its unity. Nor is it a morally and intellectually empty exercise in the Will willing itself. Rather, it entails a spiritually arduous task of conjugating choice and necessity, tradition and innovation, limits and possibilities. Liberty negates itself when it ignores its crucial preconditions. It becomes an exercise in nihilism, a negation more than an affirmation of freedom. This is the paradox affirmed by the conservative liberalism that rejects the temptation of radical or pure enlightenment.

The nineteenth century French statesman, political theorist, and historian François Guizot, was a preeminent example of such as conservative-minded liberal. His wisdom still speaks to us today. In his magisterial *The History of Civilization in Europe* (1828) he beautifully captured the link between Western pluralism and the absence of despotism in western theory and practice. Near the beginning of that work he writes:

While in other civilizations the exclusive, or at least predominating dominion of a single principle, of a single form, has been the cause of tyranny, in modern Europe, the diversity of elements which constitute the social order, the impossibility under which they have been placed of excluding each other, have given birth to the freedom which prevails in the present day.

In that work, Guizot richly displays the “diversity of elements” that have marked western civilization. The West is “neither narrow, exclusive, nor stationary”; in it a variety of “forms, ideas, and of principles” struggle and seek “after a certain unity.” Downplaying the Greek origins of the West, he shows how Rome and Roman law, Christianity, the spontaneity and “love of independence” of the German tribes, and the bourgeois tradition of civic or urban freedom, came together to form an essentially plural civilization. Guizot does justice to each of these elements: the moral law and human “spontaneity” are both crucial elements of a freedom worthy of man. He is sensitive to what is problematic in the willfulness or voluntarism affirmed by much enlightenment thinking. Against an understanding of freedom that emanci-

pates the human will from tradition and constraints, Guizot emphasizes the "sovereignty of Reason," not the rationalism of the French enlightenment but a trans-historical (and universal) standard of justice that keeps the human will at bay. He steadfastly opposes the emancipation of the will from its moorings in a natural and divine order of things. He would never endorse autonomy or consent as self-contained principles, nor would he approve the effort to divorce the achievements of the modern West from its roots in an older Western tradition.

THE TEMPTATION OF CONSERVATIVE MULTICULTURALISM

Today, in contrast, many defenders of the West are tempted to renounce universalism in the name of a conservative version of multiculturalism. The West, they argue, is a particular civilization whose distinctive historical experience and long traditions of liberty are not easily replicable by non-Western civilizations and cultures. Modernization and globalization offer thin substitutes for a Western experience rooted in millennial-old traditions of constitutionalism, civic freedom, and a Christian affirmation of the dignity of the human person. The Enlightenment's evocation of the "rights of man," no matter how anti-traditional in emphasis, is dialectically dependent on the very Christian traditions it tended to reject or, at best, presuppose. The danger is to throw out the baby with the bath, to forget the classical and Christian foundations of western civilization.

Conservative "multiculturalists" such as David Gress and Samuel Huntington are eloquent defenders of a western tradition under assault. They fully appreciate that the West did not begin with the Enlightenment and is thus more than a "universalist" project. They are critics of a left-wing multiculturalism that sees in the West an essentially culpable civilization, who see in the West only a catalogue of historically-unprecedented crimes. Huntington does not hesitate to speak of a "concentrated and sustained assault" on western civilization by "a small but influential number of intellectuals and publicists." These intellectuals and publicists have "attacked the identification of the United States with Western civilization, denied the existence of a common American culture, and promoted racial, ethnic, and other subnational cultural identities and groupings." In this approach, ethnic separatism goes hand in hand with a romantic vision of the Third World. The "Other," in all its abstraction, is constantly evoked and romanticized. In the words of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. these same multiculturalists seek "redemptive infusions from non-Western cultures" whose faults and limits are barely acknowledged. Little about the West is said to be admirable or choice-worthy. Multiculturalism might be said to be the ultimate or definitive project for severing any

remaining links between America—and Western democracy more broadly—with what is left of Western civilization.

Given Huntington's vehement and articulate critique of multiculturalism in its dominant form, what right do I have to refer to him as a conservative multiculturalist? To begin with, for all his defense of Western civilization, Huntington refuses to acknowledge the universalist dimensions of the Western tradition. He affirms less the relativity of cultures and civilizations than the fact that they are closed in on themselves, rooted in distinct ethnic, linguistic, and especially religious considerations. The Western way of life ultimately refers to nothing outside itself. Huntington lacks the philosophical or "metaphysical" concerns, the German brooding, of an Oswald Spengler. But like his great German forebear of a century ago, his conception of the West cannot really ground its distinctiveness in anything other than the specifics—the practices—of our own tradition. Accordingly, Huntington is hesitant to acknowledge civilization as such; humanity is said to be divided into eight or nine civilizations that do not and cannot truly meet.

However, at several points in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Huntington reluctantly concedes some limited truth to moral universalism. He acknowledges that "virtually all societies share certain basic values, such as murder is evil, and certain basic institutions, such as some form of the family." He even concedes the existence of a human "moral sense," a "thin" minimal morality of basic concepts of what is right and wrong." But he is hesitant to admit that this "universal civilization" is "relevant" to the life of peoples and nations. The sharing in common of a human moral sense may explain aspects of human behavior, but it cannot "illuminate or explain history, which consists of changes in human behavior." This all-too-summary concession to moral universalism is, in the end, all Huntington has to say about the universal dimensions of civilization. He is silent on the fundamental distinction between civilization and barbarism even if, like all civilized men, he presupposes that distinction.

Huntington is convinced that the era of western dominance of global affairs is now over. The West's power has irrevocably declined vis-à-vis other civilizations. Huntington particularly sees a resurgent Islam and China as posing threats to what is left of Western hegemony in the contemporary world. For such an astute political observer, there is something strangely apolitical about his analysis. In the last resort, civilizations don't go to war with each other. Of course, Huntington acknowledges the continued place of national conflict and national self-assertion in world affairs. But he is not clear on the specifically political sources of international conflict. He never persuasively explains how a resurgent China, for example, is best understood as a "civilizational" actor rather than a national and political one.

Huntington's advice for statesmen in a multicivilizational world is to pursue the path of prudence, as he conceives it. "The constructive course," he

writes, "is to renounce universalism, accept diversity, and seek commonalities." There is much wisdom in this recommendation. The West, indeed, ought to avoid the doctrinaire promotion of democracy, both because authoritarian regimes are sometimes the only available alternative to outright tyranny and because the civic traditions of the West cannot be transported abroad by fiat. He rightly appreciates the limits of the neo-conservative strand in foreign policy. Nor should we presume that modernization necessarily brings with it civic freedom and the recognition of the dignity of the human person. But prudence need not entail a rejection of the universal good that is political liberty (including basic human rights) or of those features of our own tradition that speak to man as man, not merely to the West in its historic specificity.

The contemporary West thus has a delicate balancing act before it. It must not confuse what is "universal" about the West with the thin veneer of globalization or the sometimes spiritually flaccid pressures of mass, relativistic democracy. It must esteem the best in all high cultures and civilizations. At the same time, it must not hide from its own superiority in guaranteeing civic freedom and in realizing the various possibilities of the human soul. Nor must it deny that the politics, philosophy and religion of the Old West, in particular, have been powerful means for "mediating" universal values and principles. We shall return to this theme in the course of our discussion. And if human rights must be coupled with human obligations as the best western wisdom has always asserted, it does not mean that the protection of the individual against the pretensions of a despotic state is not a universal desideratum.

Huntington is a worthy critic of "thin" universalism. But he shows no awareness that universalism, in the most ample sense of the term, is at the heart of the West: The West, at its best, is always searching to concretize "universal" human and spiritual principles and experiences. The West renounces this kind of universalism only at the price of its soul. In the final analysis, conservative multiculturalism is a contradiction in terms since the West cannot be the West if it renounces every form of universalism. Truth be told, this is a question of political philosophy that can barely be addressed within the framework of Huntington's "civilizational" analysis. What is missing in that account is a searching *philosophical* examination of the conjugation of the universal and the particular.

LIBERTY AS A CONCRETE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

Let us return to the work of David Gress who shares Samuel Huntington's anti-universalism, but who has a more profound grasp of the issues at stake in the debates about the nature of western civilization. The 600 pages of *From*

Plato to NATO are an impressive effort to recover the historical concreteness of western civilization. For Gress, liberty is best understood as a concrete historical experience rather than an abstract philosophical principle. He attacks the "Grand Narrative," as he calls it, that posited a continuous western tradition beginning in classical antiquity and culminating in the inevitable triumph of liberal modernity. He opposes a teleological account of western development that sees the contemporary West—secular, relativistic, and unsure of itself—as the inevitable culmination of a millennial-old civilization. Like Huntington, his target is universalism, and again like Huntington, he makes no distinction between true and false universalism. Above all, he opposes a humanitarian ideology that confuses the West for the world.

Gress wants to remind his readers that democracy first arose not as the result of a philosophical project, but rather as "an old practice in the niches of liberty." Geopolitical pluralism divided power and prevented any person or entity from becoming "supreme." "This was not done by planning or foresight, as in the American constitution." Rather, "it happened by accident, because the balance of power never allowed a permanent empire to arise." It "then appeared in hindsight" to theoretical reason "that dividing power was a condition of liberty." But democracy first arose where centralized power "could not exercise total control." These "early and partial forms of liberty gave people incentives to to work, save, and invest without fearing expropriation." These "niches of freedom" eventually produced a "new synthesis": the New West of "political liberty, property rights, and economic development."

Gress is certainly right that the West is more than modernity, secularism, and liberalism. He writes movingly about how the original western synthesis came together and how old warrior virtues were transformed into that form of Christian honor known as chivalry. The Old West had come together by the year 1,000. It was in many ways an admirable civilization, and one where freedom did not entail a "break with the past." By contrast, in the modern West a qualified skepticism gave way by the late twentieth century to thoroughgoing nihilism: the essence of the West is now said by the *bien pensants* to have no essence at all. To the partisans of late modernity, tradition is regarded as the enemy of culture. Skepticism about religious dogmatism gave way over time to a more radical denial of human constancy and to anything resembling the moral law.

Gress is a friend of tradition, but he strangely ignores one part of our tradition—the heritage of Greek antiquity. He denies that the West began with the Greeks. Here he simply gets things wrong. For it is clearly the case that the West *began* with Greek philosophy and politics *even if* the West did not become fully itself until the achievement of the old Western synthesis at the end of the first millennium. By ignoring the Greeks, he downplays the central role of reason or philosophy in Western self-understanding (a reason

that should not be confused with the radical anti-traditionalism of modern enlightenment thought).

Gress's work is inspired by the undoubted truth that liberty was not, first and foremost, a "theoretical" insight and achievement. The niches of freedom in the Old West are, indeed, a precondition for modern liberty. A moderate enlightenment thinker such as Montesquieu appreciated that freedom emerged "out of the woods of Germany"—that it was not fundamentally a theoretical invention. Yet Montesquieu himself theorized modern liberty by providing a rich phenomenology of modern liberty in the form of his unsurpassed description of the English constitution in books eleven and nineteen of *The Spirit of the Laws*. He recognized what is New in the modern synthesis even if he did not conceive it as entailing a *radical* break with the past.

THE DIALECTIC OF THE OLD AND NEW WEST

Gress is equally right that "the New West of democracy, capitalism, and the scientific method grew out of the Old West symbiosis and cannot survive if it does not keep its umbilical connection to the past alive." A West that repudiates the Old West is no longer the West—it is an essentially post-Western entity that has lost touch with the profound roots of civilization. Nor is Gress wrong when he stresses the central place of conflict in the story of liberty. Liberty is an acquisition that depends on the martial and civic courage of those who benefit from it. As Churchill wrote so forcefully and eloquently on the eve of World War II, "(I)t is vain to imagine that the mere perception or declaration of right principles . . . will be of any value unless they are supported by those qualities of civic virtue and manly courage—aye, and by those instruments and agencies of force and science which in the last resort must be the defense of right and reason." There is no "end to history," no end to the struggle to maintain the precious and precarious goods of civilized order. Great western statesmen such as Winston Churchill and Charles de Gaulle combined humanity and deep thoughtfulness with a spirited regard for civilization. Formed by the best of the Old and the New West, they helped preserve liberal and Christian civilization. We need to cherish their examples and to imitate them within the limits of our powers.

There is much to be learned from David Gress's insightful and provocative defense of Western civilization. Yet by so emphasizing the particularity of the West, he has told only part of the story. He is, to be sure, an eloquent and scorching critic of debased universalism. But he does not begin to do justice to the place of the universal in Western self-understanding.

The work of Pierre Manent provides a penetrating corrective to the anti-universalism of the conservative multiculturalists. Like them, he vigorously defends the "plural" character of the West and opposes its reduction to the

abstractions of enlightenment rationalism. He, too, knows that the New West is dialectically dependent upon an Old West it is tempted to consign to the dustbin of history. But Manent refuses to jettison the quest for the universal that gives life and force to Western civilization. Affirming both plurality and universality, his is a political approach informed by philosophical and theological reflection and grounded in the historical experience of the West. Manent does not go so far as to identify the West with Civilization itself. He acknowledges that there are vibrant non-Western civilizations which are worthy of our respect and which, in their own way, mediate the human experience of the universal.

THE (QUALIFIED) SUPERIORITY OF THE WEST

But Manent does not hesitate to speak of a certain "superiority" of the West. This superiority is rooted in the fact that "our civilization's exploration of human possibilities is more complete than other civilizations." Beginning with the Greek city, the West learned to produce "something in common"—to put "reasons and actions in common" through the cooperative and agonistic enterprise which is free political life. The City was the first home of human self-government. In the classical experience of civic life, truth and community were conjugated in a manner that was specific to the West. Community or the common good was concrete or bounded, located within the contours of "the most narrowly unified community possible." For its part, Truth "tends to merge with 'the universal,' and therefore to spill over the bounds of every given community." The West is the civilization *par excellence* that aims to mediate the universal. The city, the Church, and the nation each gave concrete expression to the universal and prevented it from becoming lost in abstraction or in an ethereal realm inaccessible to mere mortals. The "dialectic between community and truth or universality gives movement and rhythm to the history of the West." This dialectic is effaced by a contemporary religion of humanity that aims to abolish it and that replaces the mediations that give us access to the universal with an empty appeal to human self-assertion, if not self-deification. Both truth and community are victims of an abstract humanitarianism that no longer poses the question of man (that would assume that truth is a meaningful proposition) or allows human beings to put things in common as opposed to asserting the triumph of Humanity over all those mediations which, in fact, bring together and vivify the concrete and the universal. Endless Extension of our humanity ("We are the World") wins out over a recognition of Transcendence, and a thin or faux universality substitutes for the real thing.

Contemporary humanitarianism is undoubtedly a vehicle for inculcating "fellow feeling." But it is far from a "political resource." "It concerns an

immediate humanity indifferently encompassing 'all people' and 'everyone,' that offers no resource whatever for mediation." One of the problems with the conservative anti-universalism of Huntington and Gress is that neither can adequately distinguish the humanitarian substitution for—and subversion of—the universal from the dialectic of truth and community that was the lifeblood of the Old West. Hence, their deeply problematic suggestion that the West jettison universality, that it understand itself merely as one co-equal civilization among many. In this way, paradoxically they succumb to the very categories of late modernity that they ostensibly reject.

THE MEDIATION OF THE UNIVERSAL

What is needed is a spiritual and intellectual restoration of a "science of mediation." No more than Athens does Jerusalem represent pure particularity. Israel, the other profound spiritual source of the Western soul, is, in Jewish self-understanding, "the mediator between humanity and its creator." Israel's election is not a victory for particularity, as Spinoza suggested in bad faith. To the contrary, "Israel's election creates a covenant between God and human beings for the benefit of all humanity." Likewise, the nation is more than a particular political form. It was, above all, the mediator of "the two great universals that Europe has known: the Church's and humanity's." Whether under Christian kingship or the democratic proposition, the nation was a "concrete universal" that allowed truth and community to coexist and even flourish. It incarnated the Western aspiration to the universal by giving it a *body* or concrete form. As Manent makes clear in *The Metamorphoses of the City* and *Seeing Things Politically*, the distinctive energy of the West is tied to the never-ending "mediation of the universal." Thus, the West can renounce universality—or replace it with the pseudo-universalism of humanitarianism and unthinking cosmopolitanism—only at the cost of its soul.

The (qualified) superiority of the West is tied to its invention of the political city (which unleashed tremendous energy and the very possibility of "putting things in common") and its discovery of the soul, the great synthetic principle of human life. The soul is not a poetic metaphor but rather the very source of human integration and self-consciousness. As Manent points out, the soul was above all a discovery of philosophy, and not of religion as is commonly presupposed. Indeed, Western history "is constituted by the effort to deploy these possibilities of the soul as completely as possible." The greatest of these possibilities may be conversion, which is predicated on the "possibility of becoming completely different while staying the same." Conversion—whether philosophical or religious—recognizes the soul's capacity to change and to respond to the calling of truth while staying the same. "It takes great confidence in the soul... to take up this adventure," to respond to

the invitation to begin anew. Some religions such as Islam denounce conversion as apostasy, not simply because they are hide-bound prisoners of an obtuse orthopraxy, but also because they do not recognize conversion as a real human possibility. Conversion is thus "forbidden" because it is understood to be "impossible." The West, in contrast, did not have to wait until the Enlightenment to free itself from the tyranny of "received customs and external circumstances." This was inherent in the capacious sense of the soul's possibilities that is coextensive with Western civilization itself.

For Manent, the West kept the question of man alive in an unsurpassed manner. Having invented politics and discovered the fullest possibilities of the human soul, it can lay a claim to embodying civilization as such. But today humanitarian democracy wants to say good-bye to the "mediation of mediations" which is national political life.

Contemporary Europe is under the thrall of the twin temptations of de-Christianization and de-politicization. The European Union "blends with humanity" and repudiates the age-old European quest for the "concrete universal." It is not political, it no longer mediates. It satisfies itself with indefinite territorial extension (the six nations have become twenty-seven, with no end in principle) and a soft, moralistic identification with the cause of Humanity. This religion of humanity, founded by August Comte 175 years ago and for all intents and purposes now established as the new religion of a post-political, post-religious Europe, gets in the way of Europe's defining quest. Blocking an authentically political community from being formed, it also "prevents the question of humanity from being posed." It thus presages what can only be called the death of the West. Manent's sobering analysis is, however, far from an invitation to despair. He wants the West to recover the full possibilities of the soul: to take the question of truth and community as seriously as our great forebears, to open ourselves to the adventure of conversion. Far from jettisoning universality, we must rejuvenate the science of mediation that is the West's unique contribution to human and political self-understanding.

It is precisely the mediation of the universal and the particular that defines the adventure of the West. The conservative critics of universalism rightly want to defend the integrity of the West. But they fail to appreciate that universality, the binding together of truth and community, is the engine of the West's prodigious development. They rightly oppose the contemporary religion of humanity, but do so at the expense of the dialectic that gives life to the West. One thing is clear: a true dialogue of cultures and civilizations can only commence when the question of humanity is raised intelligently and forthrightly. We must respect the spiritual integrity of non-western civilizations without succumbing to a facile and self-destructive relativism. At the same time, we must avoid the Scylla of humanitarianism, with its facile identification of the universal with endless extension, and the Charybdis of

multiculturalism, which fails to do justice to the reality of Civilization itself. In doing justice to the “concrete universal” which is the West, we must not be afraid to bow before a Truth which is not culture-specific and that ultimately belongs to man as man.

SOURCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

For the theological and philosophical grounds of Pope Benedict XVI’s evocation of the “dialogue of cultures and civilizations” see the speeches collected in Marc D. Guerra, ed., *Liberating Logos: Pope Benedict’s September Speeches*, Preface by James V. Schall (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2014).

For a particularly rich treatment of the limits of social contract theorizing as well as of the “territorial” character of Western political loyalties, see Roger Scruton, *The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat* (ISI Books: Wilmington, DE: 2002).

Samuel P. Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1996) admirably addresses questions of contemporary global politics. For Huntington’s problematic reflections on the commonalities of civilizations and the limits of universalism, see p. 56 and pp. 318–320.

François Guizot’s *The History of Civilization in Europe* (originally published in French in 1828) is the best general account of European political development that I know of. See the 2013 re-edition of William Hazlitt’s 1846 translation (with an Introduction by Larry Siedentrop) released by Liberty Fund in an elegant paperback edition. The discussion of the Old West’s distinctive aversion to a single tyrannical principle can be found on pp. 33–34.

I have drawn on the full breadth of David Gress’s magisterial *From Plato to NATO: The Idea of the West and Its Opponents* (New York: Free Press, 1998) as well as the five-page executive summary of the book, “The Idea of the West,” published in *Foreign Policy in Focus*, vol. 1, No. 5, August 1998.

For Pierre Manent’s critique of the tyrannical character of a notion of consent that recognizes no preconditions or limits, see Manent, *Democracy Without Nations? The Fate of Self-Government in Europe*, translated by Paul Seaton (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007), especially pp. 83–84. The bulk of my discussion of Pierre Manent’s work draws on the final chapter (“What is the West?”) of *Seeing Things Politically: Interviews with Benedicte De-Lorme-Montini*, translated by Ralph C. Hancock with an Introduction by Daniel J. Mahoney (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2015). See also the philosophically profound discussion of “mediation” in the final chapter (“The Stakes of Mediation”) of Manent, *Metamorphoses of the City: On the*

Western Dynamic, translated by Marc LePain (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 304–327.

Winston Churchill is the preeminent example of a statesman who vigorously defended civilization while thoughtfully reflecting on its nature and prerequisites. His most complete and satisfying reflection on the meaning of civilization can be found in a speech (“Civilization”) that he delivered at the University of Bristol on July 2, 1938. See Churchill, *Blood, Sweat, and Tears* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1941), pp. 45–46.

Any reflection on the relationship of the universal and particular must come to grips with classical philosophy, especially but not only the indispensable moral and political writings of Aristotle. For a modern effort to blend the particular character of the “spirit of the laws” with a universalist rejection of despotism, see that great work of modern prudence that is Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws*. See also Tocqueville’s unsurpassed reflection in vol. II of *Democracy in America* on the distinction between—and necessary interpenetration of—the old and new dispensations he calls “aristocracy” and “democracy.”