

# Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

## Surrendering The Mind

*Nothing more than feelings*

### Deacon's Diner

*Food for a restless mind*

Colloquī is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose: to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God.

Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

Be forewarned! Articles may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the express intent to seek the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God.

## Surrendering The Mind

*Nothing more than feelings*

There is a war waging, in dispute a trifling thing,—as if transcendence should betray the ontological essence of becoming and being: human—with antagonists contesting over a mere bauble from a claw game machine. That it is a cruel affair none may deny for war is inherently mean and desperate by its own account in its conduct and execution.

It makes no sense, endeavoring to determine the sensibleness of it, commendable as such efforts may be, for the combatants are conflicted *phenomena* demigods of apparent make-believe at war against *noumena*, that is to say, reality. The legions who march under the dark flag of *phenomena* drink liberally from that common psychotropic trough, unmindful of the deadly poisonous verso-venom so gullibly swallowed.



What most distinguishes the *Universal Church of Phenomena* is its creed which—unlike the Christian “*Credo in Deum*” or “I believe in God”—begins “*Nos autem credimus quod mihi credere*” or “We believe what we are told to believe.” There is, of course, the *Reformed Universal Church of Phenomena* which broke union with the UC of P over such an offensive declaration. The RUC of P has thus adopted the more inclusive “*Nos credimus quod volunt credunt*” or “We believe what we want to believe,” believing it to be a far less offensive doctrine for their lemming-like disciples to swallow.

The first principle defined in the *Dogma of Phenomena* to which all true disciples must uncritically adhere is that there is no “I” in “WE”. This, naturally, warms the cockles of the socialist’s cold misshaped heart—which, in a bit of divine irony has been found to strongly resemble the bivalve mollusk of

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of the genus *Cardium*, a somewhat heart-shaped cockle—who weeps crocodile tears for the amorphous masses so oppressed while quite proudly confessing to the mass-murder of countless individual souls.

**P**roponents of liberal, progressive, socialist ideologies—disciples of the *Church of Phenomena*—are wont to describe their religion as the one true path to nirvana, like a tranquil trip down a slow-moving stream when there are no more oppressed, all are perfectly content and happiness reigns supreme.

The foundational premise of their philosophy is straight out of *Star Trek*, borrowed from a bit of fictional Vulcan metaphysics, “The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one.” What one may “logically” conclude from this shibboleth will depend upon which side of the toast you butter: the liberal, progressive side or the conservative, traditional side. Charles Kesler writes that

the prevailing liberal doctrine of rights traces individual rights to membership in various groups—racial, ethnic, gender, class-based, etc.—which are undergoing a continual process of consciousness-raising and empowerment. This was already a prominent feature of Progressivism well over a century ago, though the groups have changed since then.

Conservatives, by contrast, regard the individual as the quintessential endangered minority. They trace individual rights to human nature, which lacks a race. Human nature also lacks ethnicity, gender, and class. Conservatives trace the idea of rights to the essence of an individual as a human being. We have rights because we’re human beings with souls, with reason, distinct from other animals and from God. We’re not beasts, but we’re not God—we’re the in-between being. Conservatives seek to vindicate human equality and liberty—the basis for majority rule in politics—against the liberal ... alternative, in

which everything is increasingly based on group identity.<sup>1</sup>

This is of profound importance, not just within the body politic but for humanity in the main. Removing all mention of the individual from the progressive lectionary effectively denies the Christian claim to the inestimable value of the human person created by God. What is perhaps most telling is that those most likely to join the progressive chorus are those who profess no religious affiliation, the so-called “Nones.”

The notion of collective rights is wholly the invention of the Progressive founders of the administrative state, who were engaged in a self-conscious effort to supplant the principles of limited government embodied in the Constitution. For these Progressives, what Madison and other Founders called the “rights of human nature” were merely a delusion characteristic of the 18th century. Science, they held, has proven that there is no permanent human nature—that there are only evolving social conditions. As a result, they regarded what the Founders called the “rights of human nature” as an enemy of collective welfare, which should always take precedence over the rights of individuals. For progressives then and now, the welfare of the people—not liberty—is the primary object of government, and government should always be in the hands of experts.<sup>2</sup>

**T**he fundamental postulates of Progressivism and Socialism were first developed in antiquity; they are not, as neo-socialists and progressives would like to suggest, modern constructs. Similar ideologies were present in antiquity, as Victor Davis Hanson reminds us:

appealed to the volatile, landless urban “mob,” or what the Athenians dubbed pejoratively the *ochlos* and the Romans disparagingly called the *turba*. Their popular unrest was spearheaded by the so-called *demagogoi* (“leaders of the people”) or, in Roman times, the popular tribunes. These largely urban protest movements focused on the redistribution of property, higher liturgies or taxes on the wealthy, the cancellation of debts, support for greater public employment and entitlements, and sometimes imperialism abroad. Centuries later, the French Revolution and many of the European upheavals of 1848 reflected some of these same ancient tensions. Those modern mobs wanted government-mandated equality of result rather than that of opportunity, and they believed egalitarianism should encompass nearly all facets of life.

This populism operated via redistribution and it was the antecedent of today’s progressive movement. Contemporary progressive populists favor higher taxes on the rich, more entitlements for the poor, identity politics reparations, and relief from debts such as the cancellation of student loans. Various grassroots movements like Occupy Wall Street, Antifa, Black Lives Matter, and the Bernie Sanders phenomenon have all promoted such policies.<sup>3</sup>

In a speech delivered at Hillsdale College’s 164th Commencement ceremony on May 14, 2016, Clarence Thomas, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States spoke of the natural rights of man. He prefaced his remarks with these words:

My words will perhaps seem somewhat vintage in character rather than current or up-to-date. In that

context, I admit to being unapologetically Catholic, unapologetically patriotic, and unapologetically a constitutionalist.

**J**ustice Thomas spoke of his grandfather and the lessons he learned from his wisdom.

My grandfather often reminded us that if we didn't work, we didn't eat, and that if we didn't plant, we couldn't harvest. There is always a relationship between responsibilities and benefits. In agrarian societies, that is more obvious. As society becomes more complex and specialized, it is more difficult to discern. But it is equally true. If you continue to run up charges on your credit card, at some point you reach your credit limit. If you continue to make withdrawals from your savings account, you eventually deplete your funds. Likewise, if we continue to consume the benefits of a free society without replenishing or nourishing that society, we will eventually deplete that as well. If we are content to let others do the work of replenishing and defending liberty while we consume the benefits, we will someday run out of other people's willingness to sacrifice—or even out of courageous people willing to make the sacrifice.

He reminded those in attendance that our ancestors understood what was to be earned and preserved.

America's Founders and many successive generations believed in natural rights. To establish a government based on the consent of the governed, as the Declaration of Independence makes clear, they gave up only that portion of their rights necessary to create a limited government of the kind needed to secure all of their rights. The Founders then structured the government so that it could not jeop-

ardize the liberty that flowed from natural rights. Even though this liberty is inherent, it is not guaranteed.

At the risk of understating what is necessary to preserve liberty and our form of government, I think more and more that it depends on good citizens discharging their daily duties and obligations. Here I resist what seems to be the formulaic or standard fare at commencement exercises—a broad complaint about societal injustice and an exhortation to the young graduates to go out and solve the problem and change the world. Having been a young graduate myself, I think it is hard enough to solve your own problems, which can sometimes seem to defy solution. And in addressing your own obligations and responsibilities in the right way, you actually do an important part on behalf of liberty and free government.

It goes without comment that Justice Thomas' views are antithetical to the left and their progressive, socialist, collectivist ideology. When any pretense of socialism's moral authority was demolished some forty years ago, the left switched gears, finding an ideological alternative in identity politics.

The Left found its answer in identity politics that grew out of anti-colonialism. Marx's class struggle was reformulated into an ethno-racial struggle—a ceaseless competition between colonizer and colonized, victimizer and victim, oppressor and oppressed. Instead of presenting collectivism and central planning as the gateway to the realization of genuine freedom, the new multiculturalist Left turned to unmasking the supposed power relations that subordinated minorities and exploited third world nations.

The original battleground was the American university, where, as Bruce Bawer writes in *The Victims' Revolution: The Rise of Identity Politics and the Closing of the Liberal Mind*,

The point [became] simply to "prove"—repetitively, endlessly—certain facile, reductive, and invariably left-wing points about the nature of power and oppression. In this new version of the humanities, all of Western civilization is not analyzed through the use of reason or judged according to aesthetic standards that have been developed over centuries; rather, it is viewed through prisms of race, class, and gender, and is hailed or condemned in accordance with certain political checklists.

Under the new leftist dispensation, the study of English became the application of critical and literary theory to disparate texts so as to uncover the hidden power relations they concealed. The study of history became the study of social history or "peoples' history," the record of Western Civilization's oppression of various groups. And popping up everywhere were new departments of "studies": African-American Studies, Women's Studies, Queer Studies, Chicano Studies, Gender Studies, and so on. "What these radicals blandly call multiculturalism," wrote Irving Kristol,

is as much a "war against the West" as Nazism and Stalinism ever were. Under the guise of multiculturalism, their ideas—whose radical substance often goes beyond the bounds of the political into sheer fantasy—are infiltrating our educational system at all levels.

This revolution in American universities was accomplished swiftly and largely outside the public eye.

What little resistance the radicals met was vanquished with accusations of racism. It was not until the late 1980s, with Jesse Jackson's presidential campaigns, the battle over the Stanford core curriculum, and the publication of Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, that the rise of identity politics on campus and the idea of "political correctness" became a page one story. By that time, however, it was too late. Alumni, trustees, and parents had no recourse. The American university was irrevocably changed.<sup>4</sup>

**A**s Matthew Continetti further notes, it is no accident that identity politics is most rampant today in the academy, in entertainment, in the media, in Silicon Valley, and in corporate boardrooms. Identity politics is a veneer over the class politics that truly defines our society, and education is the best prism through which to view class in America today.

The condescension of liberal elites toward the white working class, evangelical Christians, gun owners, and supporters of immigration control and cultural assimilation is as pronounced as it is repulsive. It is summed up in Hillary Clinton's writing off of so many voters last year [2016] as belonging in a "basket of deplorables"—the converse of Mitt Romney's similarly destructive class-based dismissal of the 47 percent of Americans who do not pay income taxes. (They don't pay income taxes because they don't make enough money to qualify.)

Ensnared in affluent city centers and tony suburbs, liberal elites tell themselves that identity politics will carry them to the progressive future of their dreams. They appear

utterly unaware that the radical cultural transformation they support—not to mention the insulting, dismissive, and self-righteous way they meet opposition to their designs—is seen from outside their bubble as provocative.

As political analyst Sean Trende has written:

Consider that over the course of the past few years, Democrats and liberals have: booed the inclusion of God in their platform at the 2012 convention ... endorsed a regulation that would allow transgendered students to use the bathroom and locker room corresponding to their identity; attempted to force small businesses to cover drugs they believe induce abortions; attempted to force nuns to provide contraceptive coverage; forced Brendan Eich to step down as chief executive officer of Mozilla due to his opposition to marriage equality; fined a small Christian bakery over \$140,000 for refusing to bake a cake for a same-sex wedding; vigorously opposed a law in Indiana that would provide protections against similar regulations—despite having overwhelmingly supported similar laws when they protected Native American religious rights—and then scoured the Indiana countryside trying to find a business that would be affected by the law before settling upon a small pizza place in the middle of nowhere and harassing the owners.

We tend to view these stories as examples of the culture war. They are more than that: they are examples of a coastal, metropolitan, highly-schooled upper class warring against the traditions and freedoms of a middle American, exurban and rural, lower-middle and

working class with some or no college education. In short, examples of a privileged few attempting to impose their will on a recalcitrant majority.

**T**he result of this class conflict has become increasingly obvious: an America that is in serious danger of coming apart.

What has traditionally held Americans together is the idea that each of us is made in the image of our Creator and endowed with certain unalienable rights. But not only that idea. We are also held together by the culture that emanates from the intermingling of dynamic peoples and unchanging principles. To combat identity politics, we must emphasize an American nationalism based on both a commitment to the ideals of the American Founding and a shared love of our nation's history and culture—a history and culture of individual freedom and religious pluralism, resistant to centralized authority and ever expanding into new frontiers and new possibilities.

The Progressive Left, since the 2016 election, has become evermore radicalized and stridently shrill in their push to transform the sovereign constitutional nation-state into a socialist paradise, this in spite of the total abject failure of every attempt to create such a fiction. Historically, nation-states with a constitutional government have succeeded where the people share a common good and are dedicated to the same principles and purposes. As Professor Emeritus Edward Erler has sagely observed:

The homogeneous world-state—the European Union on a global scale—

will not be a constitutional democracy; it will be the administration of “universal personhood” without the consent of the governed. It will be government by unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats, much like the burgeoning administrative state that is today expanding its reach and magnifying its power in the United States. “Universal persons” will not be citizens; they will be clients or subjects. Rights will be superfluous because the collective welfare of the community—determined by the bureaucrats—will have superseded the rights of individuals.

Progressive liberalism no longer views self-preservation as a rational goal of the nation-state. Rather, it insists that self-preservation and national security must be subordinate to openness and diversity. America’s immigration policies, we are told, should demonstrate our commitment to diversity because an important part of the American character is openness, and our commitment to diversity is an affirmation of “who we are as Americans.” If this carries a risk to our security, it is a small price to pay. Indeed, the willing assumption of risk adds authenticity to our commitment.

In support of all this, we are asked to believe something incredible: that the American character is defined only by its unlimited acceptance of diversity. A defined American character—devotion to republican principles, republican virtue, the habits and manners of free citizens, self-reliance—would in that case be impermissibly exclusive, and thus impermissibly American. The homogeneous world-state recognizes only openness, devotion to diversity, and acceptance as virtues. It must therefore condemn exclusivity as its greatest vice. It is the nation-state that insists on exclusive citizenship and immigration

policies that impose various kinds of restrictions.

Greater diversity means inevitably that we have less in common, and the more we encourage diversity the less we honor the common good. Any honest and clear-sighted observer should be able to see that diversity is a solvent that dissolves the unity and cohesiveness of a nation—and we should not be deceived into believing that its proponents do not understand the full impact of their advocacy.

Diversity marches under the banner of tolerance, but as Professor Erler resolutely observes, it

is a bastion of intolerance. It enforces its ideological liberalism with an iron fist that is driven by political correctness, the most ingenious (and insidious) device for suppressing freedom of speech and political dissent ever invented.<sup>5</sup>

**T**his essay has focused primarily on the increasing threat to our democracy and our constitutional republic. But, this is but a preface to a much larger threat, the concerted, deliberate intent to extinguish the soul of man. Until next week.

1. Charles R. Kesler, Editor, *Claremont Review of Books*, “*America’s Cold Civil War*”, a lecture delivered at Hillsdale College on September 27, 2018, adapted for *Imprimus*, October 2018.
2. Edward J. Erler, Ph.D., “The Second Amendment as an Expression of First Principles”, a lecture delivered at Hillsdale College on February 13, 2013, adapted for *Imprimus*, March 2013.
3. Victor Davis Hanson, “*Dueling Populisms*,” Hoover Institution, Stanford University, 2018.
4. Matthew Continetti, Editor-in chief of the *Washington Free Beacon*, “*The Problem of Identity Politics and Its Solution*”, a lecture delivered at Hillsdale College on October 24, 2017, adapted for *Imprimus*, November 2017.
5. Edward J. Erler, Professor Emeritus of political science at California State University, “*Does Diversity Really Unite Us? Citizenship and Immigration*”, a lecture delivered at Hillsdale College on April 11, 2018, adapted for *Imprimus*, July/August 2018.

## Deacon’s Diner

*Food for a restless mind*

**F**or those restless minds that hunger and thirst for more. Each week this space will offer a menu of interesting and provocative titles, written by Catholic authors, in addition to those referenced in the articles, for you to feed your restless mind.

### BOOKS

#### Thoughtful Theism

*Fr. Andrew Younan*

Emmaus Road Publishing  
2017, 200 pages.

#### To Change the Church

*Ross Gregory Douthat*

Simon & Schuster  
2018, 256 pages.

#### Strangers in a Strange Land

*Charles J. Chaput*

Henry Holt and Co.  
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

### PERIODICALS

#### First Things

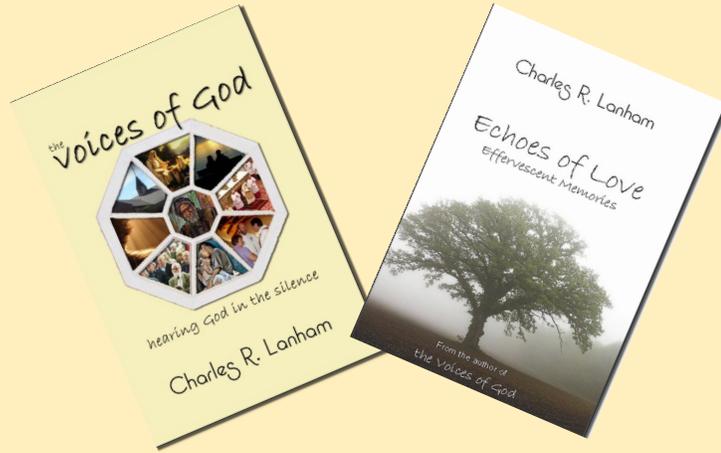
Institute on Religion and Public Life  
Editor: R. R. Reno  
Ten Issues per year.  
[www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com)

#### Touchstone

A Journal of Mere Christianity  
Editor: James M. Kushiner  
Bi-Monthly.  
[www.touchstonemag.com](http://www.touchstonemag.com)

#### Catholic Answers Magazine

Share the Faith, Defend the Faith  
Editor: Tim Ryland  
Bi-Monthly.  
[www.catholic.com](http://www.catholic.com)



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