

POLITICAL LIBERALISM AND RESENTMENT: A THEOLOGICAL REJOINDER

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There are number of contemporary genealogical accounts of the “modern self” that trace its adverse cultural consequences. The Cartesian quest for pure autonomy remains a principal culprit, the origin, so to speak, of many of our Western ills: the anaemic psychology of loneliness, dysfunctional individualism, and selfishness. Nominalism, too, draws attention in these accounts, especially in its Lutheran incarnation formulated in the wake of the Reformation (John Milbank, Charles Taylor, Brad Gregory, Rémi Brague, etc.). In these genealogies, a fundamental conclusion is drawn: the human condition is alienated from God and dissolves before the acid of a powerful and pervasive *mathesis universalis*. Mathematical efficiency, scientific rationality, and the technocratic economic progress of industrial capitalism, each reconfiguring the self wholly according to the logic of immanence. Well-worn genealogical stories urge us to move away from scientific reductionism to a more holistic understanding of the self, proposed as an anthropological salve. The self, it is argued, is spiritual and elusive, and is therefore impermeable to statistical analysis or objective measurement; obvious examples of holism would be Husserl’s *Crisis of European Sciences* and Michel Henry’s *Barbarism* (they both blame Galileo in particular for the emergence of a *mathesis universalis*), and more recently, Rémi Brague’s several volumes on the cultural analysis, culminating in his *The Kingdom of Man: Genesis and the Failure of the Modern Project*.

Other modes of scholarship recast the post-Cartesian narrative as a forlorn political tragedy, one underwritten by bare hubris. The underlying medium of selfish egoism remains consistent, but the spectacle of critique sets upon liberal democracy. The authors here are too many to name and the literature too diverse to capture. We can behold the mood of this critique, however, in two recent books, both penned by widely-read political commentators: Francis Fukuyama and Patrick Deneen.¹ Each book, prospective readers should know, communicate in accessible prose a free-wheeling interpretation of the contemporary political landscape; both are designed for a more popular, crossover readership. Several movements in their respective narratives will take liberties with academic precision, though the footnotes are generally valuable, even if they could be

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¹ Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), xvii + 218 pp. and Patrick Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), xix + 225 pp.

more comprehensive. While both offer counter-narratives to the Enlightenment story of discovery, technology and progress, each differ in their genealogical accents.

The usual genealogical narrative employed in this political context begins with the names of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant, while it ends with Rawls, Dworkin, and Nussbaum. In this, Fukuyama offers a fresh take on an ancient source. While he does not withdraw from an analysis of these “modern” names, he does restore the importance of Plato’s *Republic*, specifically the timeless discussion of the three elements of the soul. Deneen, in contrast, inflects the tone of the narrative according to what he perceives to be the misguided vision of “progressive” liberty found in the American founding fathers: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, even Thomas Jefferson, with a nod to Richard Rorty and John Rawls (135, 168). These “progressive” theorists of the state *avant la lettre*, have laid the groundwork for a diffuse and democratized, and ultimately promethean, form of self-government. Late modern democracy simply reduces the populace, for Deneen, to a form of rootless citizenship, in which loyalties are displaced from concrete local institutions to a single abstract, centralized state.

The differences between these two books reflect more than a difference in genealogical emphasis (though that is a crucial difference no doubt). Fukuyama, to whom we turn presently, sustains a vision of politics and public dialogue that is what I would call Augustinian in essence (this is paid as a compliment). While not a theologian, Fukuyama’s consistent invocation of the concept of dignity for all resonates with the Christian tradition’s teaching of the *imago Dei*, not least the doctrines of Creation and Incarnation. Deneen, on the other hand, while more overtly Christian, is obligated to recite and reinforce the narrative of liberalism’s decline so often on display in recent communitarian trends of political theology.

Before I discuss Fukuyama, I am inclined to categorize Deneen’s book up front as a strict manifesto of negation of liberal values. As I outlined in my recent volume on political theology,² the negation of liberalism amounts to an (in)direct expression of introverted asceticism. There is nothing at all inappropriate or amiss about practicing asceticism in public life. The ascetic is single-minded and cautious, and yet, it would be a mistake to say she is necessarily inhospitable to otherness and dialogue, not least social action. For, at its base, the practice of asceticism demands not suspicion of otherness, but cultivation of a path of value-laden deliberation.

The ascetic, moreover, cherishes standards of conduct and embodied codes of practice. The ascetic resolves to grasp one’s world in a reflective (or mindful) attitude shaped by a tradition of reasoning. Yet, one can (and should) become an ascetic in an outward facing comportment, that is, in the fashion of a selfless extrovert, if the ascetic intends to account for political themes of citizenship (as Deneen does). A political ascetic (not all ascetics are political) yields an attentive, contemplative, and tolerant regard for others whose worldviews are incommensurable with the ascetic’s.³ Simply put, this type of asceticism would fundamentally eschew identity politics (on the right or the left). Deneen, I suspect, succumbs to the moral psychology of introversion, the identity politics of communitarian theology. My position, to be sketched later, stands squarely in the tradition of a broad version of Christian citizenship that one could find, for example, in Augustine’s political theology. We turn first to Fukuyama, a fruitful and constructive detour from which we can learn much.

To begin his story, Fukuyama summons the anthropology of the *Republic*, book IV. The soul is (famously) tripartite: it is (a) rational, (b) desirous or spirited, and, finally, (c) wilful. The will

² Joseph Rivera, *Political Theology and Pluralism: Renewing Public Dialogue* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), §1.

³ Tolerance, I admit, may be charged with paternalism. Tolerance seems to assume that I already dislike the other since I must “tolerate” their existence, whereas I think tolerance can communicate a relationship of difference in consensus. I wish here to signal the debate: John Bowlin, *Tolerance Among the Virtues* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

is twice as powerful as the other two, but both the rational and the spirited domains can harness the vibrant force of the will. As might be anticipated by readers of Plato, the will is the largest element in the soul because it consists of the most basic appetite to live. The rational is inferential, calculative, and deliberative. The spirited element belongs to the courage a warrior displays in war.⁴ Herein lies the core thesis of Fukuyama's book: the spirited domain of the soul is the soil in which the need for respect and dignity grows deep roots. It signifies a multivalent need, ramified into a constellation of roots. The Greek vocabulary for this infrangible need is *Thymos*. The thesis is put thus:

Thymos is the part of the soul that craves recognition of dignity; *isothymia* is the demand to be respected on an equal basis with other people; while *megalothymia* is the desire to be recognized as superior. Modern liberal democracies promise and largely deliver a minimal degree of equal respect, embodied in individual rights, the rule of law, and the franchise. What this does not guarantee is that people in a democracy will be equally respected in practice, particularly members of groups with a history of marginalization (xiii).

Much of the pages that follow from this introductory statement in Fukuyama's *Identity* fill out this Platonic anthropology. The book, to be sure, traces out the long and murky career of Thymos. However it emerges in and through us, as a silent minimal tremor or a maximal propulsion, Thymos constitutes the medium in which we move, for we can neither ignore nor escape its existential galaxy. Thymos represents a "universal aspect of human nature" (37). How are we supposed to incorporate this crucial information into our lives (if indeed Plato was right)? Can we manage the primitive craving?

So much is clear: the valence of Thymos depends on the level of craving an individual may feel for dignity and respect. Unsurprisingly religion and identity politics feature heavily in the career of Thymos, inasmuch as we do not feel Thymos in a vacuum. The desire for dignity is motivated by our meaning schemes, shaped principally by the gods of war and conquest in Plato's ancient world. But religious identity shapes us moderns too at the most basic level. And religious Thymos cannot help but become political, even today. Fukuyama writes, "One of the striking characteristics of global politics in the second decade of the twenty-first century is that the dynamic new forces shaping it are nationalist or religious parties and politicians, the two faces of identity politics" (74). Why is it that religious Thymos can evolve into identity politics and thus undermine liberal democracy the world over?

Apart from the stark reality that some (maybe too many) religious adherents suffer from a bad case of *megalothymia*, the reason many religious citizens feel the need to enter into the arena of identity politics is that they feel "invisible" (chapter 9). This observation is a truism, but a valuable insight we may echo nonetheless. Certainly public assembly of so many identity groups testifies to this: the Yellow Jackets in Paris or the current protests in Hong Kong, not least the Arab Spring revolutions. Many marginalized groups feel invisible, and so they protest in the most visible way possible.⁵ In late modern democracies, some religious groups, and particularly Christians in Western Europe and North America, do not think their religious convictions receive proper recognition or respect. This appears to me to be untrue, of course. Many Christians hold important posts in politics, industry leadership, and the media. Christian universities, it should go without saying, populate the land everywhere. What is important, however, is "perceived"

⁴ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Tom Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), book 4, 438a-440e, 134-35.

⁵ For more on the connection of public assemblies and protest to the feeling of invisibility, see Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

invisibility. The basic impulse of Thymos grows spiteful precisely because it does not feel it receives its just due. While the violation of Thymos explains some of the moral psychology of identity politics, Fukuyama's thesis does not claim to justify identity politics.

In turning his attention to identity politics as an undertaking as such (implicit in the title of his book), he finds it should enjoy a seat at the table of public life, under certain conditions. We cannot deny our individual (or collective) identities. I am myself, shaped by my own gender, culture, language, and moral experiences. I also participate in my nation-state, which frames my identity, even if only for the important purpose of passport control (I am American, or Irish, or Brazilian, let us say. Some have two or three allegiances). We are who we are and we tend to find validation that is crucial for survival in banding together. "So there is nothing wrong with identity politics as such; it is a natural and inevitable response to injustice" (115). It is also a natural response to the basic need for community that Thymos demands. How can I be recognized or respected, if that is in fact a chief need of my soul, if I am alone? We find and fortify our identity, obviously, within the group dynamic.

However, identity politics, necessary though it is, can be carried out in haste-filled melodrama. If Thymos is left unrestrained and unregulated by the other elements of the soul, then it follows that a resentment will swell. Among the possible excessive manifestations of identity politics that Fukuyama indexes, one resonates with the climate du jour: the extremely narrow version of identity politics we find, especially in North America. The splinter-effect of identity politics, evident on the left, has prompted a reflex on the right, and so Fukuyama observes the unfortunate and dangerous dialectic between left-wing and right-wing identity politics (99).

What is the prescribed response? Fukuyama declares: "If the logic of identity politics is to divide societies into ever smaller, self-regarding groups, it is also possible to create identities that are broader and more integrative" (166). Certainly a Christian perspective could suggest a theology of public life analogous to the pragmatics of integration, voiced in a thicker, more concrete vocabulary. In short, the humility of Christ on the cross forms the basis for a cruciform public life, in which my identity is expanded, even dilated, to account for, and even love, the other. In Christ I can grow in my soul to become more charitable toward, and thus more integrative of, the other, whoever she may be. The dignity of my soul is conjoined fundamentally with the dignity of all souls, since God has created in Christ every soul to be, by way of the Spirit, the image of God.

This kind of theological anthropology envisages change, temporality, language, and plurality as modes of healthy and God-given interchange with others. They embody ciphers of a living conversation, not barometers of fall and decline. As Cyril O'Regan recommends, "Change and plurality need not be the embarrassments that evangelical Protestantism and fundamentalist Catholicism alike claim them to be. Change is a sign of life, as plurality is a sign of riches."⁶ Time, history, cultural particularity, in a word, "pluralism" is a fundamental context in which the elucidation of identity at all can come into view.

One of the most telling demographic lessons I have learned recently can be found in Fukuyama's chapter "We the People." Some of us may think the country we inhabit is homogeneous, and that America (or Italy or Norway) consists of a single, all-encompassing set of cultural, linguistic, and, not least, religious principles. When we imagine Italy or Ireland, we picture a certain kind of "people." This typecasting must change. The demographic chart, "The percentage of foreign-born individuals in a given population," shows otherwise. In other words, immigration challenges lazy "we the people" stories. The OECD, the Organisation for Economic

⁶ Cyril O'Regan, "Balthasar: Between Tübingen and Postmodernity," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (July 1998): 325-53; at 335.

Co-operation and Development, shows the dramatic demographic change in numbers exactly in this way. Ireland, once thought of as a homogeneous enclave of “Irish Catholicism,” now boasts one of the highest percentages of foreign-born inhabitants. Only 2.58% of the population was foreign born in 1960. That number rose to 16.9% in 2015. In Spain, the 1960 benchmark was so low it was well under 1%. In 2015 it has soared to nearly 13%. Sweden today is above 17%. And the United States? In 1990, 7.9% of the population represented the foreign-born segment, and it had increased to 13.4% by 2015. The sea change here resembles similar trends in Austria, Australia, Germany, France, Canada, New Zealand, Italy, Belgium, and the United Kingdom (134-35).

Thymos, in this context, remains a live issue. For Fukuyama, the need for recognition has been democratized, whereas in the ancient world it behooved only the warrior class to demand respect and recognition, in order to fully acknowledge their bravery in times of violent battle. In the modern period, we have been apparently granted an “inner” self that is the universal home of Thymos (34-5). The Christian tradition in part bears responsibility for the universalization of dignity. But I am inclined to ask readers of Fukuyama on this point to test the accuracy of certain plot lines of his narrative. The evolution of Thymos, for Fukuyama, began with Plato (conceptually speaking) and became universalized in the Protestant Reformation. Here the capacity for moral choice resides deep in each individual. How does this only begin with the Protestant tradition? Can we move seamlessly from Plato to Luther? Confession as a sacrament was well under way by the tenth-century, if not much earlier. Shall we go back earlier? What of Augustine’s focus on interiority, or Saint Paul’s in Romans 7? Jean-Jacques Rousseau arrives on the scene and adds an inner depth to the post-Reformation career of Thymos, a self “filled with a plenitude of feelings and personal experiences.” Dignity is “now centred on the recovery of the authentic inner being, and society’s recognition of the potential that resided in each of its members” (92).

Lest we think Christianity in the patristic period conceived a “moral self” devoid of passions and a “plenitude of feelings,” one only need recourse not to Rousseau’s *Confessions*, but to Augustine’s *Confessions*. There was more at stake than a binary choice between good and evil in the incident of the pear theft that Augustine recounts in book 4. In the *City of God*, Augustine cites over and over again Paul in Romans 7, where the agony of the internal struggle with sin is on full display, not because the soul rationally calculates good and evil according to a utilitarian moral code (like a Turing machine), but because the soul desires to commune with God in the face of its own chief sin, pride (*superbia*). In a Pauline and Augustinian context, the role of Thymos is bound up with spiritual feeling, a depth dimension in which conscience, the struggle with pride, the pull of the flesh, and the spirit of love collide with each other in the hope that God’s grace would enable the soul to enjoy a relationship with God, and therefore bring about perseverance, the good race pursued in the Spirit. This aspect of “feeling” is hardly original to Rousseau (even if he may secularize it to a degree).

With the erosion of the shared moral horizon established by demographic homogeneity in the West, it is increasingly difficult to award dignity only to those who belonged to the consensus. Late modern pluralism makes Deneen and other communitarians uncomfortable. Why? Because, most of all, it means that western culture cannot maintain a community of shared beliefs and practices. Deneen remains eager in every chapter of *Why Liberalism Failed* to cast blame for the lack of consensus and its public consequences. This is perhaps the starkest difference between Fukuyama and Deneen. The result? Deneen’s manifesto reads like a fervent denunciation and demonization of individualism, promethean or Herculean-like in its modern guise. Not that individualism does not exist. Of course it does in the West. But does political liberalism, as a polity, encourage – or demand – extreme isolation, making it a pandemic? Why blame a political arrangement that seeks to establish liberty and reciprocity as a basic anthropology?

Deneen does not veer from his chief target: to outline liberalism's failure as a failure of the human condition. Liberalism began this way: "The foundations of liberalism were laid by a series of thinkers whose central aim was to disassemble what they concluded were irrational religious and social norms in the pursuit of civil peace that might in turn foster stability and prosperity, and eventually individual liberty of conscience and action" (24). Apparently the founding motivation of the liberal tradition, embodied in Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Mill and Rawls, communicates a subversive message about religion, namely, that it is irrational and violent. Public reason aspires to rationality (or reasonableness) in that it swings free of religious rationale.

One may lodge sheer interpretive disagreements against Deneen. The early liberal tradition based its political theory on divine moral order. Rawls, however, may be guilty of being suspicious of religious ideology, but his doctrine of overlapping consensus sought to permit citizens to justify liberalism according to their moral or religious doctrine, not to bracket or privatize it. Rawls did not adopt a comprehensive or perfectionist liberalism, a radical type of moral political liberalism that wants to neutralize religion and promote pluralism as relativism.⁷ Deneen may have perfectionist liberalism in mind as his object of critique. I am inclined, with Deneen, to challenge any perfectionist paradigm, and ironically, this includes Deneen's own brand of perfectionism.

In brief, the weakness I find in Deneen's book is more than a matter of tone; he appears not to understand the legal mechanics of political liberalism as such. His narrative alerts us to some excesses of individualism inherent in the political landscape, but he articulates his critique with an excess of his own. Exaggerated and spacious brush strokes are often accompanied by fantastic claims made of the agency on behalf of the liberal tradition. For example (and these are only a few examples), as if by way of widespread compulsion, the liberal tradition, enforced by a liberal state, promotes "hedonic titillation, visceral crudeness, and distraction, all oriented toward promoting consumption, appetite, and detachment" (39). Liberalism "eviscerates" (by defunding) liberal arts education, the deep source of wisdom that affords us the privileged opportunity to learn that there is no such thing as a state of nature or an underlying "autonomous agent" lurking as an unencumbered substructure on which the civil discourse of self-restraint, virtue, and modesty could never develop. The deleterious public effects of liberalism are total:

The active dissolution of traditional human communities and institutions had given rise to a condition in which a basic human need – "the quest for community" – was no longer being met. Statism arose as a violent reaction against this feeling of atomization. As naturally political and social creatures, people require a thick set of constitutive bonds in order to function as fully formed human beings. Shorn of the deepest ties to family (nuclear as well as extended), place, community, region, religion, and culture, and deeply shaped to believe that these forms of association are limits upon their autonomy, deracinated humans see belonging and self-definition through the only legitimate form of organization remaining available to them: the state (60).

Such an uncompromisingly negative view of liberalism and the liberal "self" blinds Deneen to the state's true function: a guardian of autonomy. Instead, his vision of state reduces to statism, whereby

⁷ See John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), §47, "Political and Comprehensive Liberalism: A Contrast." Value pluralism or comprehensive liberalism is typically associated with the work of Isaiah Berlin and Joseph Raz. An excellent review of the difference between the two types of liberalism, and which one sides with Rawls' liberalism, is found in Martha Nussbaum, "Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 39, no.1 (2011): 3-45.

the liberal state enforces a set of atomistic values. How does it accomplish the deracination of values, shared practices, and culturally thick worldviews?

Deneen does not consider the agency or legal purview of such cultural deracination. A citizen living in a liberal regime may have a number of genuine questions for Deneen. I will take my own situation as an example. I have lived in three liberal regimes. I grew up in the United States, have lived in the United Kingdom, and am currently residing in Ireland. Across these three distinct liberal democracies, I would ask: why is the state the only form of organization available to liberal citizens? Why must we give up religion or community or culture? Is religion illegal? Who possesses the power to dissolve these ties? If we are “shorn” or purged of basic sources of community and belonging, how is this achieved in practice? What is the proximate agent of the dissolution of cultural identity? Do all demographics undergo such total and complete deracination, or only those living in dense urban areas? None of these questions are addressed by Deneen in any detail.

Liberalism, in his conclusion, imparts to its residents an insidious way of life that appears on the surface as a virtuous and enlightened way of life. But for Deneen this is nothing more than a “noble lie” (180). Another restoration of Plato’s *Republic*, the noble lie refers more to the state’s capacity to inculcate in its children (and their children) a set of values which reflect the interests of the elite’s attachment to hierarchical power rather than to those of democracy.⁸ Does liberalism tell us a noble lie, deceiving us over and over again, a mechanism only Deneen can unveil for us? If so, I have been bewitched.

The liberal tradition varies from thinker to thinker, and constitution to constitution. But in general, a liberal anthropology frees me to think of myself in whatever moral vocabulary I find that enables me to flourish, and to enact that vocabulary in whatever set of practices I should like to set into operation. In so doing I must not inflict injury or suffering on other individuals or institutions. Appealing to Rawls, one may suggest that political liberalism abstains from assertions about the domain of comprehensive worldviews (religious, moral, metaphysical, or otherwise), except as a necessary intervention when these views reject the basic autonomy granted to all citizens. That is, “The central idea is that political liberalism moves within the category of the political and leaves philosophy as it is. It leaves untouched all kinds of doctrines – religious, metaphysical, and moral – with their long traditions of development and interpretation.”⁹ Agnosticism adopted explicitly by the state, one that expressly “leaves untouched all kinds of doctrines,” may yield a pluralism of worldviews and religious outlooks. Such is the normal and predictable outcome of the culture of free institutions, and of free and equal citizenship. That pluralism may induce moral outrage from some quarters is a real possibility. This is due to the fact, no doubt, that liberalism reduces to laissez-faire morality and thus opens up space for pluralism. But the job description of liberalism is to refrain from moral prescription, and instead, to protect the right of freedom of conscience. This may make some citizens discontented, yearning as they might for a homogeneous culture in which immigration and foreign nationals were exceptions, not the rule.

Deneen may well tell a story that liberalism’s defenders, like myself, need to hear. As a Christian, I am persuaded that liberalism affords me the liberty to worship God in a manner befitting the humility and grace of the Cross. One public consequence of Christian humility is the following: I do not expect the state to sanction Christianity or any other religious worldview. Deneen is keenly aware that other Christians may desire a Christian state, but he downplays it. He writes, “Liberalism’s defenders today regard their discontented countrymen as backward and

⁸ Plato, *Republic*, book 3, 415, a-e, 107-09.

⁹ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 375.

recidivist, often attributing to them the most vicious motivations: racism, narrow sectarianism, or bigotry, depending on the issue at hand” (181). Perhaps those “discontented countrymen” would be capable of looking outward, whatever the issue and whatever their motivation may be for dissent against political liberalism. The mandate of liberty is that they must respect the other citizen’s freedom of conscience (as free and equal persons, as Rawls would say).

Let us be reminded that the call for global citizenship grows louder. Perhaps a cosmopolitan liberalism is in order, which belongs to a style of political practice mindful of the types of political liberalism across sovereign borders (think of the EU); Habermas wants a cosmopolitan politics, a world citizenry in which nation-states band together, but simultaneously maintain sovereignty. A global perspective can challenge the narrow sectarianism that does indeed often go hand in hand with those who are discontented with liberalism (Trump’s major slogan was, after all, America First).¹⁰

A broad vision of the political that Christians could embrace is found in Augustine. I need not rehearse what I have elsewhere advanced in regard to Augustinian political theology, but it is crucial to emphasise that Christian asceticism can prompt reconciliation with pluralism (rather than encourage Christians to regret pluralism). Such is my thesis, and it follows from Augustine’s theological understanding of the saeculum.¹¹

Augustine articulates a public theology rooted in eschatology, such that the saeculum consists of a public order that is fundamentally incomplete. It is, from a Christian point of view, *on the way* to the eschaton. Meanwhile the saeculum’s temporal order is neither evil nor good, but ambiguous. The pluralism of late modernity consists of a “tangled web of human affairs”¹² of many peoples, precisely because we wait for the eschatological light to dawn in all its fullness. Before divine illumination is perfect, God has promised to the Christian forgiveness of sins, not the “perfection of virtue.”¹³ Hence no binary opposition between a purified church and a wicked saeculum can obtain in the present world. The saeculum, simply put, consists of all worlds, all institutions, and therefore, a vast array of expressions of virtue, Christian or otherwise. To use the technical language of Augustine, the saeculum remains suspended between the City of God and the city of earth. The moral ambivalence of this world, this saeculum, frees the Christian to love finite goods both within and outside the church. The parallels with late modern interpretations of political liberalism and Augustinian saeculum should be evident.

The two cities do not have impenetrable borders, not until eschatological judgment is consummated. Until then, the saeculum invites patience to be exercised by the Christian, which in turn cultivates eschatological citizenship. We may inhabit public life as an ascetic vocation, expressed not as a suspicion of otherness, but as endless profession of faith worked out in love, one that is nourished in hope for the Parousia. Both Fukuyama and Deneen claim that our liberal democracies are in trouble, echoing a recent study that says democracies can indeed “die.”¹⁴ Both narratives need to be heard. Christian political theology can marshal resources that affirm the liberties of democracies even while it avoids the polemical tone of Deneen and remains weary of the rumblings of Thymos. Augustinian thought celebrates heartily the religious voice and the community of practice it sustains, part of which is celebrating political liberalism and the dignities it protects.

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Crisis of the European Union*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 58. For more on the idea of global citizenship, see Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, revised edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

¹¹ Rivera, *Political Theology and Pluralism*, §7, “Augustine’s Eschatological Saeculum.”

¹² Augustine, *City of God*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), XVIII, 54.

¹³ Augustine, *City of God*, XIX, 27.

¹⁴ Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2018).