

THE INSTITUTE FOR ANACYCLOSIS

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PROGRAM

Political evolution appears to follow a base sequence. This sequence advances political society through periods of monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy, in that order. The sequence takes centuries to run its full course, and finds fullest expression within the urbanized part of civilization. At least once in history, the sequence has completed a full cycle. Roman civilization emerged among many separate monarchies, passed through oligarchy, approached democracy, and culminated in a single integrated monarchy. Political evolution of course does not rigidly conform to this cycle, and various accidents of history belie the existence of any fixed sequence. Nevertheless, in the long run, the cumulative effects of human ambition may average out the occurrences of chance. Political evolution seems to be advanced primarily by the diffusion and concentration of wealth, with the emergence of an independent middle class the *condicio sine qua non* of the organic development of democracy.

There is a name for the cycle of political revolution: Anacyclosis. The Institute for Anacyclosis is dedicated to the study of Anacyclosis, and all that goes with it. Of this vast field of study, our immediate interest is the development and deterioration of democracy, correlated to the diffusion and concentration of wealth. On that subject, our working conclusions are these: The organic diffusion of wealth creates an independent middle class. If this middle class becomes indispensable, it will force the oligarchy to share power, establishing democracy alongside oligarchy. This middle class will later recede as wealth is concentrated within the upper class, but the democratic institutions created by the middle class will survive. Meanwhile, as money becomes ubiquitous, the oligarchy becomes plutocratic. Society will thus eventually be stratified between few rich and many poor, with all having political rights. This will produce class conflict, which in turn engenders demagoguery.

This course of events brings us to the present, and we have much to do. We must verify, and if necessary, modify the foregoing historical narrative. Have we properly isolated and arranged the key socioeconomic trends which underlie the causality of political evolution? How far we can project the past trajectory of political evolution into the future to anticipate the next stages of political evolution? With Polybius as our guide, we have developed a few conjectures. If democratic institutions remain intact and the middle class becomes fractured, we presume that popular leaders will eventually prevail over plutocrats due to the resulting growth of the proletariat. If this is correct, then demagogues would come to compete chiefly among themselves. Which, in view of history, human nature, and the doctrine of Anacyclosis, requires us to ask this question: Could an intensifying competition for political power among a narrowing field of demagogues once again drag democracy toward monarchy?

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