

THE INSTITUTE FOR ANACYCLOSIS

EXCERPT FROM
THE MEDIEVAL TOWN
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Note: This text summarizes a process of political evolution that correlates to Anacyclosis in some towns in the middle ages. The context in which the process is presented reinforces the reality that Anacyclosis is most, if not only, fully expressed and completed within the urbanized part of civilization.

8. Conclusion

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The history of the town, however, has more positive uses than simply correcting mistaken notions about the past. It lends perspective to our historical thought. Like church history, it obliges us to go behind our immediate origins and to look back toward the source of our civilization, to the Mediterranean. There, we find the beginnings of a movement, a movement of countless millions of men lasting for upwards of five thousand years. Often interrupted, counter-attacked, and altered by local circumstance, this movement is that of an urban civilization that progressed from the eastern Mediterranean to Europe, and from Europe to the world.

Each age in this long history has its own unique interest and message. Along the shores of the Mediterranean in the middle ages, for example, we perceive a society generally more mature—that is to say, more populous, more complex, more urbanized—than that of northern Europe. Comparison of the Mediterranean with northern regions shows that the experience of man in mature societies is more complete and more extreme, although perhaps less happy, than that of those who inhabit barely settled peripheries or open frontiers. As an instance of this, we may compare the political experience of the Lombard town-dweller with his counterpart in northern Europe. During the middle ages, the Lombards' journey led them from Roman monarchy to aristocratic republic, even to democracy, and back again to princely government. The burghers of northern Europe followed the same general course. But in the north, none of these types of government ever developed in quite as clear-cut a form as it did in Italy. Dealing with northern Europe alone, an unwary historian might almost speak only of monarchy.

These perspectives can aid us to prepare for our lives. Like other peoples, we Americans often use history as though it were a shallow mirror, to look in it only for ourselves, our present institutions, and our immediate origins. ...

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