

THE INSTITUTE FOR ANACYCLOSIS

EXCERPT FROM
THE NEW SCIENCE
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1725 A.D.

Note: This text describes a sequence of historical evolution that is in form essentially consistent with Anacyclosis. Vico also made the important point that political evolution is an accretive process: each new phase in the sequence does not obliterate all vestiges of preceding phases. This observation applies to Anacyclosis, especially with respect to the arrival of democracy alongside oligarchy. The description of the imperative of monarchy is also worth noting. Internal cross-references have been omitted.

Book IV. The Course of Nations. Section XIII. Chapter I. Other Proofs Taken From [Mixed Commonwealths, That is From] the Tempering of the State of a Succeeding Commonwealth by the Government of a Preceding One

All that we have had to say in this [fourth] book is so much evidence to prove that in the course of the entire lifetime of nations they follow this order through these three kinds of commonwealths or civil states, and no more. They all have their roots in the first, which were the divine governments, and from this beginning all nations ... must proceed [*sic*] through this sequence of human things: first becoming commonwealths of optimates, later free popular commonwealths, and finally monarchies. Hence Tacitus, though he does not see them in this order, affirms ... that, outside of these three forms of public states, ordained by the nature of peoples, the others compounded of these three by human design are more to be desired of heaven than ever to be attained by effort, and if by chance any such exist they are not enduring. But, to leave no point of doubt concerning this natural succession of political or civil states, we shall find that the succession naturally admits of mixtures, not of form with form (for such mixtures would be monsters), but of a succeeding form with a preceding government. Such mixtures are founded on the axiom above, that when men change they retain for some time the impression of their previous customs.

Hence we say that the first gentile fathers, passing from the bestial life to the human, retained, in the religious times in the state of nature under the divine governments, much of the savagery and cruelty of their recent origins ... and that likewise in the formation of the first aristocratic commonwealths the private sovereign powers remained intact in the hands of the family fathers, just as they had held them in the previous state of nature. And because they were intensely proud and there was no reason for one to yield to another when all were equal, they made themselves subject in aristocratic form to the public sovereignty of their own reigning orders. Thus the high private dominion of each family father went to make up the superior high public dominion of the senates, just as out of the private sovereignties which they had over their families they composed the civil sovereignties of their orders themselves. In no other way is it possible to conceive how the cities were composed of the families. The cities must therefore have originated as aristocratic commonwealths with a natural admixture of family sovereignties.

The commonwealths remained aristocratic as long as the fathers preserved this authority of ownership within their reigning orders, and until the plebs of the heroic peoples had obtained from the fathers themselves laws extending to them the certain ownership of the fields, the right to solemn nuptials, the sovereign powers, the priesthoods and thereby the science of the laws. But as soon as the plebs of the heroic cities became numerous and inured to war (to the alarm of the fathers, who in the oligarchic commonwealths must have been few), and, with force on their side (the force of their numbers), began to enact laws without the authority of the senates, then the commonwealths changed from aristocratic to

popular. For no one of them could have lived for a moment with two supreme legislative powers without distinction of subjects, times and territories, concerning which, during which and within which their laws were to be enacted. Hence the dictator Philo declared by the Publilian law that the Roman commonwealth had already become popular by nature. In this revolution, in order that the authority of ownership might retain what it could of the form that had suffered change, it naturally became the authority of guardianship (just as the power that fathers have over their minor children is transferred, on the death of the fathers, to others in the form of the authority of guardians). In virtue of this authority, the free peoples, masters of their sovereignties, as it were reigning wards, being weak in public counsel, naturally allow themselves to be governed by their guardians, the senates. Thus they were by nature free commonwealths, governed aristocratically. But when the powerful in the popular commonwealths directed this public counsel to the private interests of their power, and the free peoples, for the sake of private utilities, let themselves be seduced by the powerful to subject their public liberty to the ambition of the latter, then factions, seditions and civil wars, ruinous to their very nations, brought on the monarchical form.

Id. Chapter II. An Eternal Natural Royal Law by Which the Nations Come to Rest Under Monarchies.

The monarchical form was introduced in accordance with this eternal natural royal law, felt by all the nations which recognize in Augustus the founder of the Roman monarchy. . . . Pomponius, in his brief history of Roman law, discussing the royal law of which we speak, described it for us in the well-considered phrase: *rebus ipsis dictantibus, regna condita* “kingdoms were founded at the dictation of things themselves.”

This natural royal law is conceived under this natural formula of eternal utility: Since in the free commonwealths all look out for their own private interests, into the service of which they press their public arms at the risk of ruin to their nations, to preserve the latter from destruction a single man must arise, as Augustus did at Rome, and take all public concerns by force of arms into his own hands, leaving his subjects free to look after their private affairs and after just so much public business, and of just such kinds, as the monarch may entrust to them. Thus are the peoples saved when they would otherwise rush to their own destruction. In this truth the professors of modern law concur when they say that *universitates sub rege habentur loco privatorum*—“corporations are treated as private persons under the king”—because the majority of the citizens no longer concern themselves with the public welfare. Tacitus, most learned in the natural law of nations, points out as much in his *Annals* within the family of the Caesars itself, by this order of human civil ideas: As the death of Augustus became imminent, *pauci bona libertatis incassum disserere*—“a few spoke in vain of the blessings of liberty”; as soon as Tiberius came, *omnes principis iussa ad spectare*—“all looked to the commands of the emperor”; under the three subsequent Caesars first came *incuria* or indifference and finally *ignorantia reipublicae tanquam alienae*, ignorance of public affairs as something foreign. Thus, as the citizens have become aliens in their own nations, it becomes necessary for the monarchs to sustain and represent the latter in their own persons. Now in free commonwealths if a powerful man is to become monarch the people must take his side, and for that reason monarchies are by nature popularly governed: first through the laws by which the monarchs seek to make their subjects all equal; then by that property of monarchies whereby sovereigns humble the powerful and thus keep the masses safe and free from their oppressions; further by that other property of keeping the multitude satisfied and content as regards the necessities of life and the enjoyment of natural liberty; and finally by the privileges conceded by monarchs to entire classes (called privileges of liberty) or to particular persons by awarding extraordinary civil honors to men of exceptional merit (these being singular laws dictated by natural equity). Hence monarchy is the form of government best adapted to human nature when reason is fully developed, as we have said before.

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