God-Emperor Trump: Masculinity, Suffering, and Sovereignty

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Abstract

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The following reflects on the 2016 election victory of Donald Trump. Most mainstream media accounts and a number of qualitative, Americanist studies propose a working-class "resentment" narrative to explain Trump's popularity. In contrast, I suggest that political theology and understanding western notions of "sovereignty" are more important for making sense of Trump's popularity. In what follows, I first provide a theoretical critique of genealogies of sovereignty in order to claim that identifying and intervening in situations of suffering are acts endemic to western sovereignty. My theoretical account expands notions of political theology to encompass the affective and the corporeal in order to claim that masculinity and sovereignty are co-constitutive forces in western cultural history. Have illustrated this claim in our canonical sources of political theory, I then return to the theological context of political 'theology' in order to locate the importance of suffering. Generally speaking, identifying situations of suffering, intervening within these situations, and causing situations of suffering are all sovereign acts. The popularity of Donald Trump and the unwavering support of his base comes not from a place of political ignorance or a need to irrationally resent others, but from the embodied notions of western politics that conceives of political order anchored on a masculine, sovereign individual who bears and distributes suffering.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

God-Emperor Trump: this extravagant honorific is not a facetious descriptor of the sitting president, but the title of a number of Facebook meme accounts devoted toward extolling, unironically, the authoritarian virtues of Donald Trump. Since the presidential primaries began in 2015, those candidates who evoked popular enthusiasm were able to supplement their online presence with organic meme accounts independent of their campaign directives. Bernie Sanders and Jill Stein had a "Dank Meme Stash." Not surprisingly, Hillary Clinton's group – much like Joe Biden's currently in 2019 – had much less creative energy and persisted as little more than superficial knockoffs of her opponents to the left's memes. And Donald Trump, long before his nomination was secure, won the meme epithet "God-Emperor."

A cursory glance across the many God-Emperor pages reveals an inter-generational alliance of conservative, libertarian, and far right groups that cannot be explained as a single coalition with reference to the content of their political positions. A Joe Rogan-loving, libertarian-leaning, male millennial whose entire personality consists of marijuana and glorifying the biographies of tech innovators occupies the same political space in these forums as anti-elitist, rural-precariat populists and religiously conservative, exurban white women. Different explanations have emphasized, with some contradiction, the dynamics of race, gender, and class as determinative factors in unifying the Trump demographic. But how do these dynamics result in a "God-Emperor" epithet? How do these groups overlook their different political agendas and ideologies to similarly support a candidate who in many ways seemingly opposes the substantive values of his supporters? Why are so many groups willing to abandon either their moral or libertarian commitments – to risk the possibility of enacting the political change they want to see in the world – in order to support a man without a coherent, sustained platform?

The most immediate, and enticing, response to these questions is the "resentment" narrative. This narrative presumes that a number of different groups share a feeling of resentment toward different demographics within the center-left coalition that manifests itself in Trump's strongman aesthetics. At the heart of this argument is the belief that certain voters are voting against their own socio-economic interests in order to secure a sense of emotional satisfaction. For example, this narrative depicts the white-working

class as having fundamentally misunderstood its socio-economic situation and consequently projected their anger onto various racial minorities, especially immigrants and black welfare recipients. Likewise, this narrative depicts white women as similarly sharing this racial resentment or otherwise subscribing to the ideologies of their (presumably white and conservative) husbands. In both cases, this narrative simplifies the cognitive and imaginative capacities of these actors. What if the conservative white precariat is not projecting its anger out of ignorance, but is reasonably aware of their embeddedness in global economic circumstances? What if they have a positive or substantial commitment toward borders both physical and metaphorical that takes moral precedence over class mobility? What if their sense of self is rooted in a set of circumstances that *does not want* socio-economic mobility? As I will demonstrate in the pages that follow, various sociologists and anthropologists have described rural and white-working class values as suggesting this possibility. Similarly, what if conservative white women are not idle followers of their masculine counterparts, but rather have an independent attachment to certain moral commitments that animate a politics of race and resentment? What if their awareness of their gender as they imagine it – a conservative ontology of gender – is the necessary precondition for a kind of pessimistic politics that disputes the leftist and liberal conflation of sexual inequality with injustice? While the 'resentment' narrative has usefully identified multiple correlations within Donald Trump's coalition that need explaining, it cannot satisfactorily answer its mobilization without assuming some kind of irrationality or false consciousness. I, instead, presume that Trump's supporters are both rational, aware, and coherently navigating politics. They simply understand politics to be something antithetical to the procedural virtues necessary for liberal parliamentarianism's functioning.

Within this project, I want to critically reflect on the conceptual dynamics that make the "God-Emperor" epithet make sense as a key to understanding Trump's coalition. In what way could someone reasonably deploy this descriptor of the president without exaggeration? What are the substantive commitments that might align different demographics in such a way that they fervently support the God-emperor? Answering these questions requires reflecting on the 'prior' to ideology. By ideology, I here mean the content of one's political commitments which is not always at the forefront of one's

social and political consciousness but nonetheless guides how one attempts to resolve socio-political questions. Ideology is not always able to resolve questions precisely because political subjects are not singular, unified, coherent actors. We are all located at the intersection of contradictions, ambiguity, and the non-rational. Prior to the conscious effort to think through a system by which to evaluate the world are those conditions of relationality that place us in the world. Ideology is the consequence of having a relation to the world; phenomenology is the first condition of this relation. Ideology makes sense of conceptual material at hand; phenomenology is the sifting through that material and the orientation within which a 'making sense' occurs. Donald Trump's coalition cannot be said to share an ideology if only because the political goals, values, and morals of the diverse groups within it are diverse and contradictory. On the other hand, Trump's coalition shares a phenomenology of the political. They are not united by the thick content of their beliefs but in their moralizing and politicizing the way by which we relate to social and political reality.

Herein, I identify Trump's coalition as sharing a phenomenology of politics which is itself a political theology of masculinity and suffering. Returning to classical debates within politics, I argue that the conceptual anchors of Western politics since Aristotle share an ontology that conflates political authority with masculinity. The development of Western "sovereignty" derives from the same genealogy as western 'masculinity.' Masculinity and sovereignty are, therefore, co-constitutive in Western politics: both are defined in relation to each other as autonomous and materially bounded loci of political agency which are further made possibly by the very inability of others to intrude or partake of this agency. The hegemony Aristotle wields over western politics and the ways by which this genealogy is political-theological is consequent of Christian – specifically, Catholic and Protestant – notions of corporeal suffering. The political contradictions between classical ontology and Christian ontology are resolved by a reading of the Aristotelian terms of politics through the lens of original sin and the ontologizing of suffering. Suffering becomes the means through which reality becomes possible as well as the material through which subjects condition themselves as moral and political agents. Trump's conservative coalition is a response to perceived liberal and leftist disruptions of this scheme. Insofar as utopically minded agents are attempting to abuse

state authority to remedy social and political disparities which are themselves justified as 'natural,' various groups have aligned in support of a masculinist figure who will anchor the return to a sovereign relation to suffering. Trump is the God-Emperor precisely because his masculinist and authoritarian aesthetics allow his coalition to manifest their opposition to domestic and global social change by defeating the utopic, disciplining the utopians, and emulating God's sovereign authority on earth. While not all of Trump's supporters are religious or invested in theological disputes, they nonetheless operate in a conceptual field which is saturated with Christian meaning. Utopic, democratically minded politics are seen as both an attempt to usurp or overcome sovereignty-masculinity while also subverting the eschatological logic of suffering: that the material world must remain fallen until the end time, and the (church) state exists only to manage this suffering until that point.

In the rest of this introduction, I define the key terms and methods that animate this project. I first begin with an explanation of my methodological terms: what is political theology and what is phenomenology? What do I privilege these methods against others in answering the questions I set out for myself? Here I note the key figure animating my own analysis: Giorgio Agamben. Both my descriptions of phenomenology and political theology will be guided by the way that Agamben deploys both. I then turn toward the foundations of my argument: what is Western masculinity, and what is Western sovereignty? What do they have in common and how are they co-constitutive? In this introduction I am only answering these questions insofar as I can provide a brief sketch of what I mean by both terms. The substance of my claims, my negotiations of their contingencies, will occur in light of both Agamben and Aristotle in my first two theoretical chapters. I explain and introduce the dynamic of corporeal suffering in my third.

These discussions will allow me to explain and defend by central claim: namely, that Donald Trump's coalition is united by a conservative phenomenology rather than ideology and that this consists of a specifically political-theological relationship between masculinity, sovereignty, and suffering. I accomplish this task by critically interrogating the empirical literature on Donald Trump's campaign and victory since 2015. What is common to the contradictory, values, ideology, and motivations of his disparate

supporters is a political theological foreground that not only perceives corporeal suffering as a natural and necessary part of the world, but further insists that masculinity and sovereignty is the dynamic that both sustains and makes navigating the world possible. I thus take Agamben's method beyond the discursive, pairing it with queer and feminist theorists of affect and materiality in order to think through political theological genealogies as also entailing bodily practices and the disciplining of our affects. But like Agamben, I share a commitment toward making evident the fact that our very orientations toward the world prior to our conscious engagement with this world have been politicized, to detriment of think democratic possibilities.

Political Theology

Of the two methodologies at work guiding my critique of masculinity and sovereignty, the first is political theology. Political theology is at once both a methodological rejection of liberal secularism and a historical-critical means of interrogating the ways that our conceptual horizons become politically stable. In this sense, it differs from other kinds of theology and is not properly located within religious studies. And yet, as a niche field, it is neither truly at home in political theory. Political theology uncomfortably straddles the boundary between both religious studies and political theory while questioning to what ends this boundary directs out attention toward. My own use of political theology is more specifically to appropriate Giorgio Agamben's political theology as a critical extension of itself.

Political theology is not proper 'theology,' nor is it public theology or a critical interrogation of civil religion. Public theology is "religiously informed perspective produced or publicly advocated by a political/religious institution or authority," a theology that operates in the world as a means to establish communitarian boundaries and negotiate the differences between these boundaries usually in relation to a shared political community.[1] Public theology interacts with and alters the political, but it is not a precondition for the political or otherwise inflects political ontology. I admit here that I privilege politics as the domain of power which precedes any notion of 'public,' an

[1] Nukhet A. Sandal, "Solidarity theologies and the (re)definition of ethnoreligious identities: the case of Alevis of Turkey and Alawites of Syria," in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (Sept 2019) DOI: 10.1080/13530194.2019.1651632. 4.

ontological point that places me in disagreement with liberal critics of political theology.[2] Civil religion is the shared, religiously inspired sentiments and orientations toward one's national political community, a means by which the particular symbols of specific religions become infused with a public character that make possible national solidarity through their transcending communitarian lines. Robert Bellah, foremost American sociologist of civil religion, characterizes it as the "public religious dimension…expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals" that share "certain common elements of religious orientation…[and] played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life."[3] Theology itself is both a discipline of constructive thinking within religiously communitarian boundaries as well as a schematic approach to the epistemology, ontology, and ethics of a specific religious community. Political theology is encompassed by none of these three approaches despite the recognition that their theological dimensions often conflict with whatever we could define as the political.

Rather, political theology is a methodology that can broadly be understood to have three major iterations. The first iteration is the traditional North Atlantic-Protestant foreground, which include thinkers like Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, and Karl Barth. This tradition became dominant in the middle of the twentieth century in the Anglo-American world up until the turn of the century. The second is Carl Schmitt's political theology, the Nazi jurist and critic of political liberalism who succeeded the Niebuhr tradition after 9/11 in the Anglophone world. The third and emergent tradition is that of the post-structuralists, most notably Giorgio Agamben, who connect both Schmitt and the Weimar Protestants to the critical impulses of twentieth and twenty-first century continental philosophy. All three traditions share a key ontological opposition toward liberal divisions between the secular and profane and operate with the assumption that the conceptual horizons of politics are always somewhat inflected by theology. Their distinct historical moments and the way they reconfigure one another, however, reveals a second – and under-narrated – concern with global 'power politics' that suggests a more coherent

[2] Stackhouse, 288-289.
[3] Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* (1998) Vol. 117, No. 3, pp. 97; 100-104.

and singular tradition of Western 'political theology' than most contemporary discussions recognize.

What I identity as the first modern tradition of political theology is a nexus of European and North American thinkers who share a shared, Protestant commitment toward political critique. To this end, much of their work easily collapses the distinction between political theology and public theology. I consider thinkers like Niebuhr, Tillich, and Barth to be political theologians insofar as their approach to politics concerned itself with a Christian anthropology operating as a political ontology and their critiques of sovereignty animate their public theology. Karl Barth's negative theology disputes the centrality of sovereignty and, as such, leads to an eschatologically oriented division between "nation" and "state" predicated on man's absolute distance from the divine.[4] Paul Tillich's similar emphasis on eschatology privileged politics as the animus of history and approached the unfolding of politics as sharing eschatology's (and therefore theology's) unfolding structure.[5] Admittedly, neither Barth nor Tillich have a systematic political theology; rather, their comments on politics enable later critics to derive political theological critiques. This contrasts with Niebuhr, whose "Christian realism" offers a clear refusal to separate the political from the theological (and theology's metaphysics).[6] Despite their differences, these thinkers were in frequent contact. Niebuhr and Tillich not only knew each other through their time at Union seminary, but Niebuhr also engaged Hans Morgenthau at the first wave of international Realists.[7] In fact, Niebuhr "seems too much at home in the Cold War realism" era precisely because "he built the house."[8] The fact that we now imagine realism within international relations to exist independent of political theology is itself a historical accident soliciting the need to reengage its theological dimensions.[9] Niebuhr and Morgenthau's disagreements were ultimately disagreements about ontology by way of theological anthropology.[10] And the political theology of both the realists and European theologians was itself a response to the horrors

[4] Myers, 345, 348; Couenhoven, 182, 189-190.
[5] Stone, "The Correlation," 500, 502-503.
[6] Richie, 248; Howell, 79-80.
[7] Stone, "Tillich and Neibuhr," 505-506; 509-510.
[8] Lovin, 464.
[9] Guilhot, "American Katechon," 224-225.
[10] Rice, 266-267, 269.

of both world wars, a fact that refuses to allow us to simply divide different dimensions of their thought neatly between politics and religious studies. Despite this dormant dimension of their relationships, this tradition is important for contemporary political theology largely for the way it has been politically subdued by late twentieth century liberalism. Niebuhr, Barth, and Tillich are key thinkers for liberals inclined toward religion who see humanity as so depraved that radical social change is impossible. Barack Obama's appreciation of Niebuhr[11] exemplifies this pacifying legacy.

The second, and more notorious, tradition of political theology is Carl Schmitt's. Schmitt's oft-cited dictum that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts" is followed by a less-cited addendum as clarifying methodological boundaries: "because of their historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state…but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these conceptions."[12] Schmitt's understanding is an explicit rejection of any western iteration of secularism by proposing that the seemingly neutral (with respect to religion) concepts of liberal politics are themselves derived from lineages and understood within conceptual horizons that are religious. Hence, political theology gestures toward both genealogical critique and phenomenology by way of how Schmitt is here using "historical development" and "sociological consideration." Political theology is further an inquiry into what makes politics generally legitimate, as liberal secularism and liberal proceduralism are both connected for Schmitt by way of an ontology of neutrality that is fundamentally contradictory and incoherent.[13] In this way, Schmitt's political theology and critique of liberalism cannot be separated from his commitment to the Third Reich, despite the contingencies of his disagreements with Nazi authorities. There persists a relatively unified approach to politics across the corpus of Schmitt's work that disavows easy separation between his legal theory, international theory, and use of religion. Schmitt makes political theology a "polemical concept" against political liberalism that allows him to reconfigure a romantic notion of people underpinning his

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[11] Richie, 247-248.
[12] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36.
[13] Schmitt, *Political Theology* II, 118-121; Carlo Galli, *Janus's Gaze*, 33-34; Bradley and Cerella, "The future of political theology," 211.

friend-enemy distinction.[14] This antagonism is precisely what situates Carl Schmitt in the realist tradition besides Niebuhr and Morgenthau, but in an opposite fashion: not in support of tempered change and skepticism of the world at large, but as a theological imperative toward dominance. Both the North Atlantic Protestant tradition and Carl Schmitt co-emerge as a response to Nazism and leverage political theology as a cipher of power politics;[15] but only Schmitt considers his critique a project in support of power's expansion. For these latter reasons, the resurgence of Schmitt over the past three decades has occurred largely among leftists critical of the liberal project insofar as liberalism preserves the terms that sustains the contradictions Schmitt identifies in order to elsewhere celebrate the 'people.'[16]

The concern with power politics and the end of the second World War likewise situates the poststructuralist approach to political theology. While different poststructuralists engage different forebearers of political theology, they warrant a separate category from both Schmitt and the North Atlantic political theologians insofar as they embrace continental philosophy and Jewish critiques as a necessary context for responding to Schmitt's Nazism and the ethnic antagonisms at the heart of power politics. Political theology is no longer about unmasking the neutrality of liberal secularism or support political liberalism's taming irreconcilable conflicts endemic to human nature, but rather about destabilizing these guiding norms by calling attention to their flawed ontological assumptions. Thus, beginning with Walter Benjamin's "theological-political fragment," continental philosophy embraces an ontological division between the "kingdom of god" and temporal history that correlates with a further division between the political "quest of free humanity" and the eschatological, over-determined "messianic direction."[17] Benjamin himself extends this critique to capitalism, describing it as both "a formation conditioned by religion" as well as a "parasite" of Christianity that inculcates religious "sensitivities" despite lacking a coherent "dogma."[18] William Connolly's

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[14] Flynn, "Political Theology and Its Viscissitudes," 190-191.
[15] Guilhot, "American Katechon," 226-227; Paipais, "Overcoming 'Gnosticism'? Realism as political theology," 1612-1613.
[16] 8 Books, need cited.
[17] Benjamin, Walter. "Theological-Political Fragment." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 3 1935-1938*. 305.
[18] Benjamin, Walter. "Capitalism as Religion." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 1 1913-1926*. 288-289.

"evangelical-capitalist resonance machine" is a similar kind of political-theological critique (while not explicitly embracing those methodological terms) in that Connolly's "machine" recognizes the mutually constitutive dynamics of both Christianity and Capitalism in ways that cannot be reduced to vulgar isomorphism.[19] Jacques Derrida takes a different critique, bridging the gap between religion and Marxism in order to bring the "theological-political" to bear on radical democratic politics. Derrida's critique of Carl Schmitt[20] as well as his questioning the "atheological" possibility of radical eschatology[21] find their similar methodological thrust in the recognition that "the theological-political, like all the concepts plastered over these questions, beginning with that of democracy or of secularization, even of the right to literature, is not merely European, but Graeco-Christian, Graeco-Roman."[22] J Kameron Carter takes this kind of "theopolitical" critique further in his identifying "the problem of race (and, relatedly, of the Jewish question) …[as] a discourse [that] is bound to the nature and practice of modern politics and thereby indelibly tied to what is religious about modernity and the way it parodies theology at the same time that it cloaks this fact."[23]

My own preference among the poststructuralist political theologians, and the one whom most contextualizes the argument within this text, is Giorgio Agamben. Agamben works at the intersection of Heidegger, Derrida, and classical political theory in order to identify and critique the political theology fundamentally animating western concepts of "power." I will explicate his core political-theological argument in the first chapter. Here, I want to illustrate why Agamben is more important than other strands of political theology for my project. Why is his political theology preferable to a different reading of Schmitt or the Realists on power? What unique insight does he bear on contemporary politics that other poststructuralists lack? Answering first question is simple: the poststructuralist emphasis on de-centered discourse, the conceptual fields which we inhabit which constitute out constantly incoherent and negative subjectivities, assumes

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[19] Connolly, William E. *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. 8, 13.
[20] Derrida, Jacques. *The Politics of Friendship*. Xi; 18-19.
[21] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 209.
[22] Derrida, Derrida, Jacques. "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," 6.
[23] Carter, J. Kameron. *Race: A Theological Account*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 1-2.

the same ontology of personhood that I do. We are political agents only by way of our act*ing* and have no substance other than that structure of substance manifested through our reactions within and against the world. Answering the second question is more complex. Agamben shares many similarities with Derrida and their approaches to both Marx and Schmitt might be understood as different expressions of the same project. Where they diverge is their reception of Heidegger and, therefore, through their ontology:

> Agamben views the fundamental – and largely unacknowledged – structured of Western philosophical thought to be that of negativity, the presupposition of a negative and unappropriable other to every positivity, a structure exemplified…in the divided nature of the linguistic sign…In this diagnosis, Agamben's thesis meets with but runs precisely counter to Derrida's view that Western thought is a logocentric metaphysics of presence. For both thinkers, the negative structure of metaphysics renders immediacy and presence impossible, but when faced with this aporetic structure they adopt radically different strategies…for Agamben, the task of thought is…to ask…'how can an impasse be turned into an exit?'[24]

Hence, Agamben turns toward modal ontology, a celebration of contingency and possibility instead of substance and permanence, as a means to reconfigure the negative as an always-implicit positive. This method inspires his rereading of classical political theory and the theological debates of Christian antiquity in ways that conceive of disagreement as concealing latent alternatives which further allow him to identify tradition as a contingent vehicle or medium of power. What matters less is making a text understood in historical context than identifying how it circulates and remains appropriated within orthodox conventions that only exist to suppress more radical alternatives. History functions as a critique of the present – an archive to excavate dormant *phenomenological* possibilities – rather than as a lost temporal moment in a linear series that exists only in the present through accidental consequences. Adam Kotsko, a translator of Agamben's, describes political theology as seeking "not to document the past, but to make it available as a tool to think with. It does not aim merely

[24] Kevin Attell, *Beyond the Threshold of Deconstruction*, 6.

to interpret the present moment, but to defamiliarize it by exposing its contingency."[25] Derrida's political theology might also open these possibilities if read against Agamben; but within Agamben, this methodology is explicit and ready for use.

In light of these discussions, I can offer my own definition of political theology and explain how I use it within these pages. Political theology, unlike other dimensions of political theory, calls attention to power in ways that deny the boundaries within political science between domestic political theory and international political theory. While other discussions of power make uses of social identity and macro-communitarian agents to situate how it manifests historically and materially, political theology suggests looking toward the ontological foreground of phenomenology, the ways by which power inflects both the local and global circumstances of our agency. The complicated boundaries established to divide religion from the political and the domestic from the global transmogrify into principles of power themselves liable to critical inquiry. Rather than start from a theoretical tradition that works within these boundaries, political theology begins from the recognition that they are themselves divisions which only make sense in a specific ontological context.

The productive boundaries of political theology are located, instead, in the genealogical and phenomenological horizons of power's specific iterations. More specifically, political theology exchanges the (politicized) disciplinary boundaries of religious studies, political theory, and international relations theory for those that resemble area studies. Power is the means by which agents legitimate and enforce agreement between themselves, whether vertical or horizontal, implicitly or explicitly, and with meaningful consent or an utter lack thereof. The strategies that make this possible and meaningful cannot be subsumed into a totalizing or universal set of laws but can be identified as a meta-epistemic process through political theological inquiry. Thus, power in the United States emerges from and circulates within hybrid genealogies of Christianity, classical thought, early modern political theory, and the material forces that shaped Westward moves across the North Atlantic. This same concept of power cannot be equated with more made equal to the way that legitimacy and authority coalesce and

[25] Kotsko, Adam. *Neoliberalism's Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018. 8-9.

manifest themselves in, say, contemporary Iran or Japan, precisely because the genealogical foregrounds are both build upon different traditions. Political theology is not about reifying something essential about cultural difference; difference is always contingent. A political-theological excavation of power in the Middle East might share with Europe an examination of the classical Greeks, which both inherit. But it would also need to attend to the different traditions of Islam and Christianity and their mutual interaction, the social and cultural remnants of pre-Islamic communities, and the legacies of colonialism. Thomas Aquinas and Averroes are both Aristotelian; but they work in different epistemic conditions of legitimating knowledge and disseminate Aristotle within different religious traditions. Political theology places weight on the genealogical fields that persist in tradition and traditions are changing institutions that exist prior to and beside any active agent. Political theology, in this sense, is a work of opposing essentialism: it makes explicit the contingent, co-eval, co-temporal nature of power in the West as it might be compared to a different set of circumstances without suggesting that global dynamics of power are themselves ultimately reducible to the diffusion of norms and practices emergent from within this space. Political theology exchanges nation, state, empire, and identity as the units of power analysis for epistemic and ontological traditions as they might diverge and intersect, a complicated process obscured by political theory's continued insistence upon privileging the conventionally communitarian.

In offering my own explanation of political theology and how I deploy it, I hope to have demonstrated two different arguments. The first is that political theology as we understand it has emerged as a self-reflective discipline within the North Atlantic "West" regarding political power both domestic and international. The second is that this reflexivity is itself the precondition for provincializing this region, which allows me to make further claims. First, that Western traditions of power critiqued by political theology are themselves engaged in a phenomenological dialectic with masculinity that does not necessarily correlate with the way that gender functions elsewhere in place and history. In fact, nearly all of the scholars I have cited within my discussion of political theology thus far have not incidentally identified as 'men' and are concerned with identifying the spaces for both their own autonomy and its concrete possibilities of historically manifesting. Second, we can recognize that the methods and concerns of

political theology are themselves iterations of a masculinist phenomenology which in the political traditions of the North Atlantic comes to obscure dormant possibilities for freedom and the ways it might unfold through different configurations of the political. These latter two arguments form the foundation that guides my critique of the history of Western political theory in the first two chapters.

Phenomenology

My second methodology, and one that cannot be divided from the ways I deploy political theology, is *phenomenology*. Both phenomenology and political theology recur in Agamben's thought in ways that make easily identifying their difference impossible. Phenomenology is a reflexive method meant to identify and contest the ways subjects relate to objects in the world. In other words, it is both the pursuit of the ontological as well as the meta-epistemological. When paired with political theology, phenomenology is the means of excavating traditions in order to identify the conceptual horizons within which politics operates as well as to make accessible alternative trajectories. For the task at hand, phenomenology functions as a kind of translation: a way of making the ways subjects relate to concepts and objects concrete so that they can be compared with others who relate to these same concepts in seemingly irreconcilable ways.

The immediate foreground of Agamben's phenomenology is Heidegger. Heidegger defines his phenomenological approach in *Being and Time* with reference to a specific object of study: ontology. Ontology is that which precedes "positive science" and occurs through the reflexive interrogation of our immanence: "insofar as Being constitutes what is asked about, and insofar as Being means the Being of beings, beings themselves turn out to be what is interrogated in the question of Being."[26] Heidegger's interest in ontology is to excavate the "ontic-ontological," the foundation of ontology or that from "which alone all other ontologies can originate" which he refers to as *Dasein*.[27] What matters for Heidegger's pursuit of Dasein is that some concrete reality exists – or persists – which is accessible only by a kind of specific reflexivity. "The treatment of this question is phenomenological," he writes, which is not merely a "standpoint" or

[26] Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 47; 51-52.
[27] Heidegger, 55-56.

"direction" but a methodology which coordinates a "science of phenomena."[28] "Phenomena" he further defines as "the self-showing in itself…a distinctive way that something can be encountered."[29] Elsewhere, he summarizes this as "ontology."[30] Thus, phenomenology is a practice of understanding how subjects relate to phenomena in ways irreducible to the experiences of one person, necessarily interrogating the form of the relation rather than its specific contingencies. Two major problems derive from Heidegger's phenomenology that are taken up by later thinkers. The first is Heidegger's commitment to Nazism. The seemingly neutral, universal impetus of his phenomenology cannot be neatly separated from his deeply anti-Semitic commitments. Rather, their correlation reveals a second major problem: Heidegger's conflating his contingencies for transcendence and articulating a theory that confuses accessing the ontological with power. His phenomenology is driven by a rejection of the "[modern] philosophical tradition, in particular the modern philosophy of the subject" in order to identify the "objective" spirit of life which conveniently emulates German romanticism.[31] Heidegger's constructive impulse, his discussions of "technology," reflect an implicit desire to see ontology as an object of mastery or as something to conquer. He appropriates phenomenology as a means to dominate life.[32]

Emmanuel Levinas, another one of Agamben's major influences, works against the constraints of Heidegger's phenomenology by prioritizing the ethical over the ontological. Levinas chastises Heidegger for affirming "the priority of Being over existents" in ways that "already decide[s] the essence of philosophy; it is to subordinate the relation with someone, who is an existent…to a relation of the Being of existences…the domination of existents…subordinat[ing] justice to freedom."[33] Here Levinas critiques Heidegger's Nazism as endemic to his metaphysics and methodology. Levinas resolves this dilemma by thinking against phenomenology's limits: defined as

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[28] Heidegger, 72-73.
[29] Heidegger, 76.
[30] Heidegger, 84.
[31] Fritsche, Johannes. "From National Socialism to Postmodernism: Lowith on Heidegger," *Constellations: An International Journal of Political & Democratic Theory.* 16(9), p. 86.
[32] Gillespie, Michael Allen. "Martin Heidegger's Aristotelian National Socialism," *Political Theory* 28(2), 141-144.
[33] Emmanuel Levinas. *Totality And Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquense University Press, 1969. 45.

"the comprehension effected through a bringing to light," Levinas denies that this disclosure "constitute[s] the ultimate event of being in itself" by instead postulating that "the relation between the same and the other is not always reducible to knowledge of the other by the same."[34] In simpler terms, Heidegger's phenomenology too quickly ignores the dynamics of the social world. He emphasizes subject-object relations in ways that collapse social relations into worldly objects. Heidegger's driven by a concern for freedom which reduces the terms of the game to subjective autonomy and the hindrances of the world, which consequently locate others in the position of objects or hindrances that get in the way. His ontology is "a philosophy of power" and thus "a philosophy of injustice."[35] Levinas instead begins thinking through social dynamics. He recognizes a distance between subjects and others which is itself the ground that constitutes those dimensions of ontology worth interrogating.[36] After all, the ontic-ontological in itself is a pre-social place and, therefore, rather uninteresting. This metaphysics of difference – the insurmountable exteriority that precedes activity in the world – is the boundaries within which our thought proceeds, and thus truth and falsity are both constrained and made possible by it.

These moves by Levinas are picked up by Agamben's final, major phenomenological influence, Jacques Derrida. For Derrida, Levinas's disagreement with Heidegger reveals a formal limitation to metaphysics. Both retain the impetus toward transcendence and a metaphysical directionality which prioritizes the reflexive subject. But this emphasis is ultimately driven by something beyond the subject which both limits and elicits the reflexive need for transcendence. Derrida's critique reconfigures Levinas "by insisting on a different route it not to exteriority then at least to intersubjectivity and thus to a break with totality."[37] The relationship between subjects and the world and the ethical relations between subjects both become supplanted by the subject's inscription within chains of signification, resulting in *difference* and thus "the possibility of conceptuality."[38] What Heidegger mistakes for transcendent disclosure of the world is

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[34] Levinas, 28.
[35] Levinas, 46.
[36] Levinas, 291.
[37] Hammerschlag, 89.
[38] Derrida, Margains, 11.

nothing more than the subjective encounter with the "simulacrum of presence" and the "trace," a kind of nothingness which locates itself in erasure.[39] In very simple terms, Derrida critiques phenomenology as denying the power that our discursive situations hold over us as subjects. By denying that there is any strict presence of absoluteness to what we imagine the world to be through our relationship to it, Derrida inaugurates a meta-discursive focus on the forms that intersect to elicit our phenomenological attention. Phenomenology considers "a thought of Being as form" wherein "the living present" becomes "the ultimate, universal, absolute form of transcendental experience in general" despite the fact that there persists no actual substance to the presence of either the reflective self or the world that is encountered and conceived.[40] Historical and social activity derives instead from filling those hollow spaces carved out for presence by the discursive chains of signification that orient our ontology toward presence and substance.[41] Contra Levinas, the difference and otherness supplied by signification is prior to ethical and social difference and is itself the market that elicits subjective reaction.

The ways by which Levinas and Derrida respond to Heidegger illustrates both the political and methodological context within which Agamben intervenes by deploying his own variation of phenomenology. Like Levinas, Agamben opposes the implicit, totalitarian politics of mastery at work in Heidegger's phenomenology. Like Derrida, Agamben conceives of discursive fields and the meta-epistemic as a necessary medium occurring prior to both relations to each other and the world. But Agamben is committed to reclaiming Heidegger's emphasis on agency while affirming the limits of freedom within both Levinas and Derrida's critiques. Agamben thus begins by rethinking the relationship between subjects and language. Whereas Derrida considers agents limited by the way that discourse orients our attention toward presence, Agamben considers this fact a means of agency: the "apparent paradox" of language testifying to its presence by simultaneously inaugurating the need for this presence is itself an "ontological structure of presupposition" which is the foundation for the possibility of writing itself.[42] What for

[39] Derrida, 24.
[40] Derrida, 158; 172-173.
[41] Derrida, 11.
[42] Agamben, Potentialities, 31; 38.

Derrida is a metaphysical limit is for Agamben "the possibility of a reflection" endemic to Indo-European languages, the "relation of the thing to itself."[43] Agamben implicitly accuses Derrida of having not gone far enough in his critique. Western metaphysics is itself concerned with presence, substance, and wholeness, and Derrida denies that self-reflection is anything more than limitation precisely because our self-relations would always be discursively fragmented and missing the mark. We cannot achieve the logocentric moment because there is no presence to be obtained. For Agamben, this fact is liberating. The "relation of the thing to itself" is, in fact, "immediately affected…by division and multiplicity,"[44] but this is precisely the moment that historical and social change occurs; our agency is not a negative threshold between our encounter with the world's glaring lack, but the very fact that our multiplicity means that this encounter is always totally and wholly undetermined: "this abandonment of the self to itself is precisely what destines humankind to tradition and history."[45]

When I deploy phenomenology in this project, I am specifically deploying it in an Agambenian sense. All subjects are discontinuous, divided, and incoherent, but nonetheless recognizable as entities through their persisting in an ontological field that demarcates them as different from other agents. Phenomenology is the means by which we identify their relationship to this field. This claim is not to say or insist that one can wholly identify how a subject is relating to the world at large, or completely capture some understanding of interiority. Rather, we are all circumscribed by various traditions and discursive fields – among other structural hindrances – that limit the conceptual field which mediates our relationship to reality. Phenomenology is the act of identifying shared characteristics of how these relationships become standardized and mobilized by power in hegemonic ways. I do not care for how a subject might whole understand the world so much as I am interested in how subjects use the mediations available to them to make sense of the world. This requires interrogating what concepts are available, how they relate to one another, and locating alternative possibilities that remain dormant in order to show what possibilities – counterfactually – remain hegemonic. Macro-level

[43] Agamben, 119.
[44] Agamben, 120.
[45] Agamben, 131.

critiques, especially critical and Marxist critiques, can only ever identify how these fields of mediation are limited or shaped; they cannot determine or intervene within subjects' relatations toward and through them, because there is no possible means by which to wholly pre-determine this relationship. I earlier referred to this method as a kind of translation precisely because it offers a way of making communication possible between different communities who act in the world in ways irreducible to ideological differences. As both Derrida and Agamben recognize, politics has in some way shaped our relation to the mediums that offer us the world prior to shaping our ideology and prior to limiting the material from which we construct our worldviews.

I supplement Agamben's methodology with recent turns toward the affective and corporeal in feminist and queer theory because I do not consider the phenomenological field to be a strictly discursive field or a purely ideational limit on our subject-object relations. Linda Martin Alcoff uses phenomenology as a means to think through rape culture, defining the method as that which is "about the constitutive conditions that make experience possible."[46] Her definition is not limited to the ideational because what she means by "experience" contains affective and corporeal dimensions as much as it does the discursive and purely mental. Sarah Ahmed likewise embraces an expansive definition that includes the non-ideational. For Ahmed, phenomenology is a "turning toward objects" in order to "[apprehend] what is given to consciousness."[47] But to make this apprehension meaningful, Ahmed notes that our "orientation of objects is shaped by what objects allow [us] to do."[48] The materiality of our spatial engagement as well as the corporeal and affective constrains thrust upon us by our locations are as constitutive of our inclination towards reality as much as they furnish the limits of that reality. Various queer and feminist theorists have likewise embraced a phenomenological method, if even implicitly, as a means to reject a rigid material-ideational dichotomy while also bringing attention to the way that our subjective apprehensions of reality occur prior to the formations of ideology or content that guide these apprehensions.[49] Toward these ends,

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[46] Alcoff, *Rape and Resistance,* 69.
[47] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 25.
[48] Ahmed, 52.
[49] Stevens, *Reproducing the State*, 24-27; Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, 20, 98-99; Cavarero, *Inclinations*, 3-5; Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 2, 5-7.

my use of Agamben might be considered an Agambenian critique of Agamben. I intend to use his own phenomenology and political theology against his text in order to identify the affective and corporeal aporias of his thought and, consequently, demonstrate how these aporias constrain the democratic potentials of his thought. If we take up some of his key political concepts in light of affectivity, embodiment, and the material dimensions of phenomenology, then we are more able to redress the notable absence of women and racial minorities within his work and appropriate his critique of sovereignty as also a critique of masculinity.

Political Theology of Masculinity and Suffering

What, of course, do such claims have to bear on Donald Trump? I propose this understanding of masculinity, suffering, and sovereignty in order to demonstrate how these methodological dynamics not only inhibit scholarly attention to the ways that those outside of our community imagine themselves, but also to outline the conceptual field of the 'political' within which Trump's coalition situates themselves. I do not believe that any part of this project aspires toward totality or complete description; rather, I am identifying one specific, hegemonic genealogy of power in a specific region (the West) and demonstrating how one major political event, Donald Trump's election victory and consequent support, illustrates this politicizing of phenomenology. I cannot explain why suffering is not merely a value but mobilized as an ontological precondition for the political without first excavating its relation to the masculinity-sovereignty dialectic.

My first three chapters elaborate on my theoretical claim. My first chapter engages the literatures on 'masculinity' and 'sovereignty' in order to explicate their similarities. Turning toward poststructural critiques of 'sovereignty,' I suggest that understanding sovereignty as engaged in mutual constitution with masculinity redresses some of its theoretical aporias. I rely on this dialectic as I read Giorgio Agamben as both a political theorist and phenomenologist of 'sovereignty.' Agamben's account, like other poststructuralist accounts, does not sufficiently attend to the gendered dynamic of sovereignty. But redressing this gap allows me to better articulate how sovereignty and masculinity are co-constitutive. I then use this to re-read western political theory in my second chapter. I demonstrate how Aristotle's predominance across political theory maintains the structure of the conceptual field within which masculinity and sovereignty

are co-constitutive. At the heart of this rereading is the insistence that the vision between domestic and international theory cannot be anachronistically imposed onto classical and early modern theorists for whom the masculine individual, the family, state power, and God's authority ontologically blur in substance and delineate one another's boundaries in practice. The fundamental political questions that classical and modern western political theory attempt to resolve cannot be removed from their masculinist contexts. I then turn toward the specifically theological in order to identify the place of corporeality and suffering in this dynamic. Suffering becomes the way that sovereignty and masculinity's co-constitution becomes legitimated and perpetuates. Understanding suffering as a normative good, not simply as political value but as disciplinary practice, reveals how its operation sustains a phenomenology of the world where masculinity and sovereignty coordinate to define both one another and limit the horizons of the western political imagination.

I take this theoretical thesis as my basis for understanding Donald Trump's coalition in the second half of this project. My substantive political critique begins with the fourth chapter. Therein I survey the literatures published since 2015 regarding right-populist surges and empirical explanations of Donald Trump's victory. I supplement these analyses with related ethnographic and sociological inquiries: rural-urban moral divides, the construction of the religious right's values, and the political worldview of white labor. Despite their wide demographic differences and my acknowledge that they cannot be collapsed into one another as a coherent unit, I make the case that these different groups constitute a coalition around a shared set of under-theorized values: a moral economy of suffering. Wide scholarly consensus recognizes the raced, gendered, and even authoritarian undertones of the values that unite the religious and white working class; but no one has sufficiently theorized why the 'values' espoused by these different groups resemble one another so closely and, furthermore, how racism, misogyny, and authoritarian leanings coalesce into a coherent and appealing moral system. I accept as a given various Marxist and post-Marxist critiques that situate the global and structural precedents of "resentment" as neoliberalism thrusts against domestic sovereignty, but these descriptions remain insufficient for explaining why, at the level of a reasonable agent, one is drawn toward voting for what seemingly opposes their own interests.

Moreover, empirical analyses often confront a tension when determining what precisely is more causal in maintain this allegiance: racial resentment, a desire to return to mid-twentieth century relations of gender and sex, or the general conservative impetus for discipline that wants centralized executive authority. I argue that these conflicts can be resolved at the phenomenological level by recognizing a shared cultivation and circulation of a moral economy of suffering wherein fascist aesthetics become a means to not only cultivate one's own moral and political worth but sufficiently evaluate that worth of others. If it within this moral economy of suffering that the dialectic between Western masculinity and Western sovereignty most explicitly unfolds.

The chapters that follow similarly critique empirical literatures of different facets of the contemporary American conservative coalition, but in ways that attend to the demographic differences that inflect their relation to suffering. The fifth chapter examines conservative, anti-feminist white women – one of Donald Trump's major electoral demographics. I contrast the way that the academy and second-wave feminists have understood the antifeminist woman with the moral values of these women themselves, offering a ideal case study through the work of Phyllis Schlafly. Schlafly herself not only spearheaded the exile of liberal feminists from the Republican party in the 1970s, but further took the formative role in the contemporary antifeminist movement and was herself an avid supporter of Donald Trump. Most scholars retreat into a 'false consciousness' narrative where antifeminist women are driven either by anxiety or limited knowledge to turn toward conservative male values as a means to understand themselves. To the contrary, I argue that notions of freedom and security – especially as articulated by Schlafly, but as suggested by scholarly accounts into those women who supported Trump – again gesture toward the corporeal medium of suffering as the ground of political reality. These women reject feminist liberation in all of its iterations, reformist and radical, precisely because it challenges not merely the ideology but the very way by which they imagine reality to necessarily function. The turn toward right populism is not a means to secure themselves or make limited social gains but rather an antidote for social challenges perceived to infringe on the fabric of reality – the seemingly incoherent and nonsensical desires of liberals and radicals for a chaotic albeit (derogatorily) utopic socio-political order. The conceptual boundaries between these

women and liberal and left feminists are not merely ones of conceptual disagreement but rooted in radically divergent ontologies and, therefore, of orientations toward the world. My final focus is on white men. The bulk of the chapter focuses on the novelty of the virtual as a field for masculine play. Masculinity and sovereignty reconfigure themselves by conceiving of the virtual as a space for conquest and unlimited extension. Relations to the internet make explicit how these exceptional relations can only exist against a prior medium of corporeal suffering that sees masculinity and sovereignty finally and fully manifesting themselves as a purely mental, disembodied, totally free agent. For these men, their inability to manifest autonomy in the world locates a new – and in some ways, superior – field for its expression. Hence, groups like the alt-right and gamers are drawn toward a figure like Donald Trump and leverage the internet in support of Trump's persona.

In all of these cases, a political theology of suffering as practice constitutive of one's worth anchors an ontological tension between western masculinity and western sovereignty. The way the west inherits political authority by way of Christian sovereignty enshrines certain capacities we recognize as 'masculine' as necessary for the political community. We have difficulties imagining what a horizontal politics, especially one that is vulnerable, consciously insecure, and apathetic about boundaries, might look like precisely because the vertical, upright, fatherly authority of the sovereign is continually re-animated by the masculinist scheme that we inhabit. Donald Trump's coalition not only recognizes this scheme but embraces it as a normative good.

Chapter One:

Gender and Agamben: An Antimasculinist Critique of Sovereignty

"Souverän ist, wer den Ausnahmezustand entscheidet" opens the first chapter of Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology*.[50] More often translated in English as "He is sovereign who decides," the German original privileges the gender neutral: "[the] Sovereign is who decides." But given the illustration of various sovereigns elsewhere in the text – God, emperor, prince, the people[51] – we can forgive translators who render explicit the masculine implication. In fact, by making evident the "he" who "decides," translators suggest Schmitt's definition of sovereignty is at once both gender neutral and masculine. This gendered ambivalence which has been lost (or more generously, this gendered ambivalence remains uninteresting) to those who continue to critique sovereignty as a political and theological concept.

While not often considered among critics of sovereignty, Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* excavates the "he" of the sovereign decision. "Human is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being."[52] Here the ambivalence between the gender-neutral universal and masculine contingency is anchored by the sovereign capacity to define oneself and the other. Man represents, like the sovereign, "humanity" and therefore bears no responsibility for "positioning himself as the individual of a certain sex."[53] Beauvoir herself later links this decision to the sovereign one, but in ways that attempt to salvage the possibility of a sovereign capacity not bound by masculine constraints. The "two human categories fine themselves face-to-face" and "each one wants to impose its sovereignty on the other."[54] But man succeeds in "positing himself as sovereign."[55] Here, Beauvoir reveals something about sovereignty which is left undeveloped: that masculinity and sovereignty both align as tautologies which refer to one another. Man is

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[50] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by George Schwab, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985, 4; Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapital zur Lehre con der Souveränität*, Munich, DE: Verlag Von Duncker & Humboldt, <http://www.bard.edu/library/arendt/pdfs/Schmitt-Politische.pdf>, 4.
[51] Schmitt, 10.
[52] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, New York: Vintage Books, 2011, 5.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Beauvoir, 71; in French, "Nous avons posé déjà que lorsque deux catégories humaines se trouvent en présence, chacune veut imposer à l'autre sa **souveraineté**."
[55] Beauvoir, 74.

sovereign by claiming sovereignty through the act which designates himself "man" and other "woman." Sovereignty and masculinity proceeded from the position of aspirational authority. Beauvoir does not develop this line of thinking any further, however. Her concern in *Second Sex* is to think the possibilities for "woman" to find her own conditions of sovereignty independent of man. To suggest that sovereignty and masculinity might be co-constitutive, that man's simultaneous gendered contingency and universality both proceed because of the logic of sovereignty, is to suggest that something is problematic about the notion of sovereignty itself. Maybe we need not find the sovereign capacity of "woman" but deny it to "man."

By thinking along these lines, I want to emphasize that there is something masculinist about the western metaphysical impulse toward mastery that dominates the formal structure of how we conceive of politics and knowledge. We are not merely subjects to the need for a center that does not actually exist, per Derrida; the way that our discursive structures elicit this need is itself through its continuing to value mastery, control, and absoluteness in ways that cannot be disentangled from Western political theory's genealogy of the masculine. What diverges and becomes 'sovereignty' and 'masculinity' in modernity shares an Aristotelian political genealogy that, despite the seemingly democratizing impulses of social contract theory, retains fundamental conceptual limits that constraint the horizons of our political imaginations while also restricting the field of normative values. Western politics has attempted to stabilize the phenomenological field, if even accidentally, to the masculine by furnishing structures that continually re-animate an absent masculine and sovereign center. Western sovereignty is always masculinist; and Western masculinity is tied to sovereignty. The two mutually constitute one another in ways obscured by disciplinary limits that project them into different fields of analysis.

A key thinker who helps articulate this dynamic is Giorgio Agamben. In what follows, I first provide an overview of literatures pertaining to both masculinity and sovereignty. What do I mean by Western masculinity? What do I mean by sovereignty? Where are their moments of similarity, and how do these moments suggest something more than mere correlation? After putting these two concepts in relation to each other I turn toward a close reading of Agamben's critique of western politics and its implicit

metaphysics. Admittedly, Agamben largely ignores the dynamic of gender. But by focusing on his methodology, I reveal the places where we can begin to rethink the gendered dynamic that exists concurrent to his genealogy of sovereignty, governance, and power.

Masculinity

Traditional literatures on masculinity share a commitment toward de-naturalizing masculinity and severing it's presumed link to phallic corporeality. Critical masculinity studies accomplished this de-naturalization by demonstrating the performance of (hegemonic) masculinity as assertive, active, and dominating.[56] But within this recognition rests an implicit relationship between masculinity as a gendered orientation toward the world and notions of social and political control. In fact, R. W. Connell describes hegemonic masculinity as being "virtually equated with the exercise of power in its most naked forms."[57] These two claims however often obscure each other in methodological practice. In other words, we do not ask what masculinity might look like apart from its hegemonic iterations but rather attempt to make its conceptual field accessible or less dominating in the gendered world. Jack Halberstam, for example, denies that masculinity is reducible to the "male body and its effects" but, in making masculinity available to women and girls, retains an understanding of the masculine as penetrative, assertive, and dominant.[58] More recent literatures on masculinity likewise confirm a shared understanding of hegemonic masculinity consisting of an active and public orientation in the world that is individualist, autonomous, aggressive, and concerned with balancing dominance in the world with self-restraint and self-discipline.[59] Even hybrid and alternative masculinities that attempt to subvert these constructions nonetheless reify hegemonic masculinity as that which sets the terms of engagement and

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[56] Pasco and Bridges, *Exploring Masculinities*, 2-4, 17, 23; Kimmel, *Guyland*, 55-59, 69; Pascoe, *Dude You're a Fag*, 59, 86, 112; Connell, *Masculinities*, 185, 194.
[57] Connell, 44.
[58] Halberstam, Female Masculinity, 268-269, 1, 87, 104, 123-124.
[59] Gill, Henwood, McLean, "Body Projects," 44, 46, 48, 51, 55; Clark, "Vulnerability of the Penis," 780, 782, 786; Messerschmidt, "The Salience of Hegemonic Masculinity," 91; Duckworth, "Defining Masculinity," 800-801; Schwab, et. Al., "Silence and Invisibility," 293, 295, 297; Matthews, "The Tyranny of the Male Preserve," 3250326, 328; Galea and Gaweda, "(De)constructing the Masculine Blueprint," 277-278; Thomas, "Men's Anger," 168, 171.

furnishes gendered social reasoning.[60] Recognizing that the masculine is performative is not the same as recognizing that the conceptual assemblages constituting the masculine are contingent and, thus, susceptible to change. Why is it that power is imagined as masculine? Why is it that discussions of femininity and masculine are presumed to occur in relation to one another? The mere fact that the conceptual relationship between masculinity, femininity, and power has unfolded the way that it has remains insufficient for explaining why the relationship between these concepts retains value at the level of our personal decisions, reflections, and engagement with the world. We cannot explain away the relationship between masculinity and power merely by acknowledging that this relationship is one that is historically resilient.

Instead, I propose we treat masculinity as a phenomenology; it is a way of relating to the world prior to organizing the world into gendered objects. In other words, it is the 'first' gender, an aspiration toward gender, which consequently demarcates the world into being gendered. Such an approach is able to better explain an ontological difference between gender in Western antiquity and gender in modernity. In the classical world, woman was the failed iteration of 'man' insofar as man is the highest manifestation of the 'human.' In modernity, femininity is a dichotomous opposite that is also hierarchically subordinate as something strictly other than – instead of less than – the masculine. In both cases, the primacy of the male remains inseparable from the male as observer and writer. The material and structural locations of masculinity are able to justify masculinity's aspiration toward the universal and announce itself as 'first' gender. Besides better attending toward an ontology of gender, recognizing masculinity as fundamentally phenomenological also denies that there is a strict content to what constitutes either 'masculine' or 'feminine.' The gendering of aesthetics, leisure, and social roles is historically contingent, but this content proceeds within phenomenological forms which are themselves gendered a priori. Toward these ends, I phenomenology rejects a gendered determinism; there is no standardized directionality toward gendered relations, but rather an orientation that opens up diverse possibilities of relating to the world. Too often, theoretical reflections upon gender conflate the facticity of social embeddedness with

[60] Eisen and Yamashita, "Borrowing from Femininity," 803-805, 816; Randles, "Manning Up to be a Good Father," 520, 535; Pascoe and Hollanders, "Good Guys Don't Rape," 69, 71, 74.

phenomenological determinism. Thinking "man" as a source of origin in order to critically interrogate the position of woman and leaving the man/woman duality as fundamental as an anchor of global or universal patriarchy epistemically reiterates "woman" as a category determined wholly and firstly by "man." In critiquing the reception of Connell's "hegemonic" masculinity thesis, James Messerschmidt notes how the dynamic that renders a conceptual scheme "hegemonic" becomes lost in this reductive, dichotomous thinking. Hegemonic masculinity is "relational" but not a "pattern of simple domination." It is, rather, a field that is "expansively distributed as culturally ascendant prototypes of gender relations" that "produce" gendered relations and meanings.[61] Prior to the specific interactions of social embeddedness that construct gender – say, a specifically dichotomous notion of gender, which is itself not universally applicable – there persists something endemic to hegemonic masculinity that furnishes a specific form of relating to the world as a gendered field. This commonality is the form of aspiration, the aggressive and assertive inclination toward the world which might manifest in historically different ways but nonetheless persists as the first condition for the masculine.

In rejecting the primacy of a dichotomy and emphasizing the aspirational dimensions of masculinity, I want to open up masculinity's relationship toward authority and power as both contingent and hollow. If we begin from the proposition that woman can only exist as a subject or conceptual field in relation to man, then we give "man" a disproportionate authority that obscures the always present creative capacities of those who have "woman"-hood thrust upon them. We legitimate masculinity's relationship to power by naturalizing its claim to ontological primacy. For me, masculinity is the phenomenological facticity of this *claim*. The claim itself remains without substance. Consequently, I am not interested in these pages in offering a substantive understanding of 'woman' or the 'not-male,' insofar as gendered order itself is the consequence of a masculinist logic toward order and stability that only obscures the hollow contingencies of its aspiration. Gender is nothing but the putting into motion a set of conceptual operations that secure masculinity. Its structural operations have historical and material force but they are, essentially, lacking in substance. Here, Agamben's notion of

[61] Messerschmidt, "The Salience of Hegemonic Masculinity," 88, 90-81.

"glorification" is useful and will be contextualized as an indictment of masculinity in my first chapter.

The divergence between masculinity's aspiration toward ontological primacy – what we might also refer to, in light of Agamben, as 'sovereignty' – and masculinity's (lack of) substance is confirmed, if even implicitly, by Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler. In asking "what is woman?," Simone de Beauvoir explains that "woman is the negative, to such a point that any determination is imputed to her as a limitation, without reciprocity."[62] Woman is a category of phenomenological "other" where this status obtains from the social fields we inhabit. Man *makes* woman other; woman is not the 'other' prior toward this masculine act. Nonetheless, those singular agents deemed 'woman' exist prior toward this form of relation. The woman's "point of view" is "offered" to her.[63] The dynamics of these relations intentionally obscure this fact in demarcating the masculine as primary. Alterity only "appears" to be "absolute."[64] Beauvoir's project proceeds to reflect on her situation as 'woman' and its structural and phenomenological limits, but we can think counterfactually to deduce her implicit indictment of the 'masculine.'

Masculinity constitutes itself as subject – its claims an ontological primacy – in order to set and constrain a gendered field that sustains the possibilities of its own freedom and agency. Regardless of gender, however, singular capacities for agency remain existent independent of this totalizing move. Beauvoir interprets the conflict between man and woman is a conflict between the self and other wherein two "transcendences" meet in hierarchical relations that are ultimately contingent and determines neither subject wholly.[65] The first is a masculine claim for transcendence which is mobilized to established a gendered field of relations; the second is a transcendence endemic to all singularities, but here in particular those deemed 'women,' consequent of an agency that remains unconsumed by the first transcendent claim. The discontinuity between these two actors, that which inaugurates conflict, proceeds from the fact that masculinity's aspirational claim toward ontological primacy cannot usurp

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[62] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 5.
[63] Beauvoir, 17.
[64] Beauvoir, 8.
[65] Beauvoir, 754.

singular agency precisely because gender's claim toward ontology is only ever a claim that cannot intrude on a singular agency that will always necessarily persist independent of ontology. Judith Butler more concretely leverages Derrida in order to explicate this dynamic. For Butler, there is no "I" or self-conceiving subject prior to our being thrust into "citational chains," the economies of discourse that pre-exist and situate us in social reality.[66] But while these chains limit the conceptual material available for our subjective thinking, they never violate our capacity to react and appropriate this material. We cannot fully master language by the very same fact that the limit language places on agency is the "enabling condition" of this discursive economy.[67] The difference between language as it exists beyond us and language as we deploy it, however miniscule, is always the active opportunity for the redeployment of and necessary divergence from the pre-existing citational chain. Of course, for Butler, the thick content of these chains is gender, sex, and gender performance. Butler does not make any claims about masculinity's self-claim for primacy but nonetheless divides the ontology of gender from our agential capacities within this field. To this end, Beauvoir's phenomenology and Butler's poststructuralist ontology share an operative assumption that the singular capacity to act is prior to the material available for us to work with and act within. Masculinist hegemony is a limitation of the conceptual field, but not an intrusion upon subjective capacity. The fact that gender is furnished to us by our structural circumstances does not also imply that we must understand our relationship to this ontological medium in a determined way. Masculinity as a phenomenology is the transcendent *claim* to furnish these limitations.

Throughout this project, I engage masculinity as a phenomenological orientation toward the world which is embedded in a specifically political-theological genealogy. I accept conventional approaches to masculinity that conceive of it as somehow related to power, assertiveness, domination, confidence, penetration, autonomy, rationality, and coherence. What I claim is that these conceptual associations are not accidental to history nor a series of responses made by actors with a shared sense of masculine solidarity.

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[66] Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer." In *Routledge Queer Studies Reader* edited by Donald E. Hall and Annamarie Jagose. New York: Routledge, 2013. 19.
[67] Butler, 21.

Rather, I claim that masculinity in the western metaphysical and epistemic tradition – which I define as Greco-Roman genealogies having been inflected by Christianity, and in particular, the Western Christian tradition which begins with Augustine – is a phenomenological orientation over and against the world. This orientation privileges the lack of external impediments, confusing the historical material conditions of the bodies that have narrated for a normative good that can only persist insofar as others take up the work of mitigating these impediments. Masculinity is thus also the active suppression of alternative orientations such as inclinations toward the world, positions of openness regarding the world, and orientations of service and obedience. While the contingencies and ideal virtues of masculinity differ between Aristotle's political gentleman and contemporary "Incels" who become mass shooters, they both share a position where man alone is the protagonist of reality which exists to be dominated, subdued, and used. This sweeping claim is not meant to repeat what much feminist work has brought to obvious light regarding the implicit (and explicit) biases of western tradition, but to emphasize two important facts: first, that this orientation toward the world is by no means the only one available to men, but the one that has remained 'operative' in an Agambenian sense; and second, that this orientation persists insofar as others are restricted to inhabiting its alternatives, alternatives which are valued and less despite their necessity.

This same masculinist orientation, however, derives from discussions of political freedom and authority which also coalesce in early modernity around the notion of sovereignty. While not usually defined in this way, sovereignty too is an orientation over and against the world; an anchor to epistemic, social, and political order that can only sustain its unity, seeming timelessness, and absolute authority by a concurrent move toward using power over and against those beneath sovereign authority. Through inheriting Christian metaphysics and the classical conditions of politics, sovereignty and masculinity are co-constitutive concepts in the west. Their active orientation over and against the world posits themselves as primary agents which allows them to set the terms of engagement. 'Woman,' then, is not man's opposite, but that which is constituted by man; to operate within a binary that assumes femininity and woman are opposite man and masculinity is to accept this sovereign division and be captured by what Agamben refers to as the process of 'glorification' that obscures the more fundamental reality: all people

can do otherwise, no phenomenological orientation is essential to our bodies, and instead of seeking out a substantive, unique woman we need to take up the more critical work of opposing man's insistence that he cannot and should not also virtually inhabit the spaces of Aristotle's woman, slave, and mechanic. Before elaborating on this point, however, I need to contextualize what I mean by 'sovereignty.'

Agamben's Critique of Sovereignty

Sovereignty remains an ambiguous concept within both domestic and international political theory. Consensus within both disciplines recognizes sovereignty as an inherited source of legitimacy that bridges pre-modern political authority with the modern nation-state. Within domestic political theory, sovereignty is an ontological problem that erupts at the threshold between political belonging and the popular will, wherein the 'sovereign' people often will various forms of exclusion.[68] Sovereignty here is 'internal' sovereignty, or the foundations of authority and legitimacy within a bounded entity. Who has the right to embody sovereignty? Who wields the authority to construct political boundaries? While these issues are also issues in international relations theory, sovereignty further prompts a number of 'international' dilemmas consequent of its ambiguity: it's externality buffers (or enhances) cosmopolitanism and human rights[69]; it anchors and disrupts the international system[70]; it sustains a Eurocentric conceptual field[71] while also flexibility adapting to the interests of postcolonial nations.[72] The diverse approaches to sovereignty as both an analytic and as a normative force are able to persist largely because the concept's ambiguity elides simple division between its

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[68] Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, New York: Zone Books, 2010, 17; Derrida, Jacques. *The Politics of Friendship*. New York: Verso, 2005 (1994), 124, 306; Eric Santer, "The Royal Remains," in *Sovereignty in Ruins: A Politics of Crisis*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017, 206.

[69] Benhabib, Seyla. "Carl Schmitt's Critique of Kant: Sovereignty and International Law," *Political Theory* 705-706; Radice, Henry. "The Responsibility to Protect as Humanitarian Negotiation: a space for the 'politics of humanity'? *International Politics*, 106; Papamichail, Andreas and Hannah Partis-Jennings, "Why common humanity? Framing the responsibility to protect as a common response," 85, 89; Cohen, Jean L. "Rethinking Human Rights, Democracy, and Sovereignty in the Age of Globalization" 588-589, 594;

[70] Cunliffe, Philip. "The doctrine of the 'responsibility to protect' as a practice of political exceptionalism," *European Journal of International Relations,* 480; Werner, Wouter G. and Jaap D. De Wilde. "The Endurance of Sovereignty." 289, 292;

[71] Pitts, Jennifer. *Boundaries of the International*: *Law and Empire*. 2, 191; Grovogui, Siba. "Regimes of Sovereignty: international morality and the African condition," 328; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001, 83-87, 95

[72] Acharya, Amitav. *Constructing Global Order: Agency and Change in World Politics*. 24-26, 78, 97-101.

institutional, historical development and the normative ends towards which state's leverage it. For the sake of simplicity, we can define sovereignty as he normative anchor of political legitimacy which must also retain the possibility of forceful application.

The fact that legitimacy, force, and politics thus proceed from a Christian legacy forces us to recognize that theology in some way constraints our political imaginations. This recognition is fundamental to Giorgio Agamben's critique of western politics. Agamben's nine-volume *Homo Sacer* project identifies modern political debates as the consequence of classical, both Christian and Greco-Roman, debates about ontology. Christianity is the medium through which we receive Aristotle's political theory and also the means by which Aristotle remains hegemonic in furnishing our political thought. For my own inquiry I do not need to summarize the entirety of *Homo Sacer*. Rather, the key arguments about sovereignty's metaphysics occur in the first and fourth volumes. Agamben first develops a democratic and anti-liberal critique of sovereignty in *Homo Sacer* (HS) and then disentangles sovereignty from governance in order to demonstrate the "hollow" and tautological nature of power in *The Kingdom and the Glory* (KG). In what follows, I overview the terms by which Agamben arrives at the nature of sovereignty and how this relates more broadly to political power.

Agamben's *HS* responds to the absence in Foucault's work of a clear, substantive definition of "power." Foucault discusses the practices and techniques which "the State assumes and integrates" and the "processes of subjectivation" in the lives of individuals, but leaves untouched the moment at which these two different modes of power converge.[73] Agamben wants to locate this "zone of indistinction," the "point at which the voluntary servitude of individuals comes into contact with objective power…this hidden point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power."[74] This inquiry results in two different lines of thinking that will ultimately converge throughout Agamben's work: that of the metaphysical, ontological problem of politicizing the unpolitical; and the democratic problem of sovereignty's reconciling with popular will and the apparatus of the state.

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[73] Agamben, Homo Sacer, 5.
[74] Agamben, HS, 6.

Taking up Aristotle and Arendt, Agamben begins *HS* with the claim that antiquity conceived of two different kinds of life: *zoe* or natural life, "the simple fact of living in common to all living beings," and *bios* or qualified life, the "way of living proper to an individual or group."[75] Most readers familiar with Agamben will recognize *zoe* as "bare" or "naked" life. Insofar as qualified life or *bios* occurs within the *polis* bare life is the unqualified, neutral, and uninteresting foreground of everyday existence. The fundamental issue at the heart of modern politics is the way we have received and politicized this bare life. "Western politics first constitutes itself through an exclusion (which is simultaneously an inclusion) of bare life."[76] Politics and metaphysics converge when politics constitutes itself through a delineation of the boundaries across both kinds of life regarding what properly constitutes the political.[77] But while "bare" life is implicitly politicized in antiquity through its exclusion as being un-qualified, modernity – by way of biopolitics – activates this distinction and qualifies un-qualified life. From this, Agamben reasons that "the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power."[78] Democracy inflects this process, resulting in man's "present[ing] himself no longer as an object but as the subject of political power" while the State simultaneously positions man as an "object."[79] In sum, Agamben critically interrogates the conceptual field of the Western liberal nation-state, asking why contemporary politics is so distant from the conceptual field of antiquity from which it claims to derive. Asking this question opens a phenomenological field that blurs the distinctions between politics and metaphysics and ultimately suggests that political "man" has lost his capacity for autonomy, being at once both subject and object of the State rather than an autonomous being sensitive to his own capacities.

Sovereignty guides Agamben's critique. Taking up Carl Schmitt, Agamben presents sovereignty paradoxically: "the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside juridical order" and can be the one who existing "outside the law" and nonetheless "declare" that "there is nothing outside the law."[80] From this paradox Schmitt derives the

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[75] Agamben, HS, 1.
[76] Agamben, HS, 7.
[77] Agamben, HS, 8.
[78] Agamben, HS, 6.
[79] Agamben, HS, 9.
[80] Agamben, HS, 15.

"state of exception" which Agamben identifies not as a temporal "prior" to the law but rather as a possibility endemic to the law: "the situation that results from its suspension."[81] Here, again, is the political metaphysics of inclusion-exclusion: of a politics that defines and constitutes itself through the act of identifying and excluding something else. Agamben's notorious concentration camp claim, that which metonymically disseminates *Homo Sacer*, is only a brief comment meant to illustrate this ontological conundrum. The "concentration camp" is what happens when a totalitarian politics attempts to "make visible" the exceptional and inherently un-visible; to actualize the politics of exclusion through totalitarian inclusion. "The exception is what cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which it is always already included" and, as such, reveals "the radical crisis of every possibility of clearly distinguishing between membership and inclusion, between what is outside and what is inside, between exception and rule."[82] Agamben reminds readers of the metaphysical implications at work in the text, making an aside to the nature of "language's sovereign claim" as an attempt to stabilize that which can never be stabilized.[83]The impetus for ontological stability in politics and epistemology is an impossible task animated by a dialectic of inclusion-exclusion. Sovereignty inaugurates its own problems by first aspiring toward its own self-conception; sovereignty sets the terms of engagement precisely through it's persistence as a *claim*.

Having shown that sovereignty is a paradox related to the state of exception, Agamben connects modern sovereignty to the classical terms of politics in order to articulate its latent issues. As an attempt to exclude by inclusion and delineate its own boundaries while nonetheless existing apart from them, sovereignty "presents itself as an incorporation of the state of nature in society…as a state of indistinction between nature and culture, between violence and law."[84] The classical distinction between *zoe* and *bios*, not yet a clear operation of sovereignty, constitutes the foundational act of sovereignty in modernity. By designating one space "nature" and another the "city" and allocating politics to the latter, the sovereign act mobilizes both politically. The aspiration to

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[81] Agamben, HS, 18.
[82] Agamben, HS, 20-25.
[83] Agamben, HS, 25.
[84] Agamben, HS, 35.

delineate and anchor separate spheres is that which constitutes sovereignty and by being subject of the sovereign both the political and natural spheres are themselves mobilized politically. What seems counterintuitive and mystical is a rather straightforward claim: that a separate state of nature, so important for Western political thinking, was never an actual space nor a benign political myth but an ontological declaration of the sovereign which in itself acts to constitute sovereignty. Here Agamben more clearly defines sovereignty as that which "realizes itself by simply taking away its own potentiality not to be, letting itself be, giving itself to itself."[85] Western-liberal subjects are all concurrently *bios* and *zoe*, and the facticity of our *zoe* makes the modal dimension of *bios* possible: we can qualify ourselves in any possible socio-political configuration precisely because none are natural to us. We are unqualified life to our core. Politics, initially about qualifying life toward its highest end, has been taken up in the western political heritage as a totalitarian project, as defining and delineating all possible ends. In this respect, Agamben inverts Aristotle: human nature is not the essential project of reflection toward a single end, but the essential fact that our nature is so radically undetermined that through reflection we can inhabit a range of modal ends. We have lost our modal contingency as subjects through submitting to the sovereign impulse for stability and the political need for determined ends.

Agamben leverages the suppression of our modal contingencies, "the radical transformations of politics into the realm of bare life,"[86] as a method for re-theorizing western political concepts. Because modernity and biopolitics have politicized bare life, we have lost the "intelligibility" of the classical concepts that foreground our political thinking.[87] The very concepts that operated within a field prior to totalitarian sovereign aspirations now secure the possibility of the totalitarian impulse. Western liberal democratic "declarations of rights" are not an enumeration of values or principles but the "originary figure of the inscription of natural life in the juridico-political order of the nation-state."[88] Natural rights only solidify the politicization of bare life by reaching out toward something fundamentally and essentially "man" and tethering politics to said

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[85] Agamben, HS, 46.
[86] Agamben, HS, 120.
[87] Agamben, ibid.
[88] Agamben, HS, 127.

figure. Nazism's "redefinitions of the relations between man and citizen" make coherent conceptual sense in this new order, whereas Agamben suggests that such an essential notion of citizenship and political belonging would be unintelligible to a classical distinction between *bios* and *zoe* where politics is only about the former.[89] Moreover, the political need for human rights is another iteration of the dialectic whereby our subjectivity because circumscribed by politics for determined ends. Our undetermined nature becomes represented in the language of *natural* or *human* rights whose existence are fundamentally predicated on a sovereign for both justification and defense. Our selves become represented not as radically open but as existing only in relation to a political sovereign as a being defined through its rights. Contemporary politics, that of the diffusion of western liberal democracy and the modern nation-state, is now "literally the decision concerning the unpolitical (that is, concerning bare life)."[90] Hence the need to stabilize racial and ethnic difference onto something genetic; the increasing concern with rigid border policing and avoidance of responsible refugee policies; the intense polarization of access to health care and social welfare which in some ways has become more exclusionary that early modern poor laws; and a host of other political issues bearing on Agamben's conscience as he makes such a melodramatic leap from classical law toward global politics. Natural and human rights-talk inaugurates a discourse of continually limiting the human, necessitating their subjection to the sovereign, and the constant deferral of our ability to think and do otherwise.

Homo Sacer is only the first of nine volumes in the broader Homo Sacer project, and it can be read as an introduction to the themes Agamben pursues in more detail in the other eight volumes. Agamben reconsiders and turns away from sovereignty in *KG* where he revives Foucault's notion of "governance" and pursues it as having a conceptual force distinct from, and more nefarious than, sovereignty. The text asks why "power" in the "west" has taken the form of *oikonomia*, which Agamben defines as "government of men," and has moreover turned toward a "society of the spectacle" in its democratic iteration.[91] Much like *HS*, *KG* illustrates Agamben's close reading of ancient texts and

[89] Agamben, HS, 130.
[90] Agamben, HS, 173.
[91] Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, xi-xii.

encourages us to broaden what we consider political theory. Agamben's first line of inquiry in *KG* moves from sovereignty toward governance and establishes a genealogical difference between "kingdom," the substance of rule, and "government," the activity of rule. This distinction derives from two different legacies: that of Christianity's negotiating politics as it found itself in the position to rule, and that of Christianity's receiving and reconfiguring the classical terms of politics prior to its imperial ascension. Thus, Agamben asks how the early church managed to justify its relationship to imperial rule despite emerging as a nonpolitical religion and how such discussions conceptually frame what we now recognize as medieval political theology. For the sake of brevity, I will not herein rehearse the theological intricacies of the debates Agamben summarizes, but rather provide the major conceptual steps Agamben traces in order to highlight a fundamental political division between kingdom and governance, substance and activity.

The Greek *oikonomia* refers to the unpoliticzed space of the home, or that which is domestic to the city but beyond the *polis* proper: the "administration of the home" which constitutes more than what moderns refer to as the "family" and includes "heterogeneous" private relations.[92]From Aristotle, Agamben notes that reflections on the *oikonomia* did "not constitute a science in the proper sense." The early church took up this semantic field in order to make sense of itself in the world. Such embrace of the economic was meant to intentionally contrast with participation in the worldly life of politics. Thus, Christians privileged the use of *Kyrios* (lord, with an administrative connotation) rather than *anax* (military ruler) or *archon* (ruler of a kingdom), the latter of which the Gnostics preferred.[93] This emphasis on seemingly unpolitical terms, however, exposes theological problems which ultimately become political problems. Claiming to adhere to a worldly administration despite obedience to a sovereign Godhead introduces the problem of legitimacy for said institution or otherwise suggests something deficient in an otherwise omnipotent, omnipresent God. By what means are earthly institutions justified in relation to divine sovereignty? Initially, the patriarchs resolve *oikonomia*'s implications through ontology: they form a theological "mystery," that is, "the very concept of the divine and its relations with all creation" is accepted as an arrangement of

[92] Agamben, KG, 17.
[93] Agamben, KG, 24.

providence.[94] But this resolution disrupts classical ontology and the way most of antiquity would have understood themselves in the social world. For Aristotle, God is the unmoved mover of the perfect celestial spheres and the "fate" that governs the cosmos is the "perfect unity of being and praxis."[95] To suggest a mysterious arrangement with providence that we freely participate in is to not only "fracture" substance from "activity" by way of "free will," but further to initiate a divide between "unity in being and plurality of actions" and "ontology and history."[96] The aspiration toward autonomy and the belief that God is an autonomous sovereign necessarily leads to a rethinking of the conceptual field of the cosmos. Christians resolve this dilemma by "reconciling God's transcendence with the creation of the world, as well as his noninvolvement in it with the Stoic and Judaic idea of a God who takes care of the world and governs it providentially."[97] The thinking from *oikonomia*, then, results in disruptions which are not resolved by displaced by questions of legitimacy[98] and, ultimately, sovereignty.

Power is that which holds together the division between substance and practicing, that which makes a government legitimate and enables its activities of governance. It operates as a "bipolar system" where "power – every power, both human and divine" hold "kingdom and government, transcendent norm and immanent order" together.[99] But this initial resolution only displaces an "ontological fracture between transcendence and immanence" by "paradoxical coincidence" rather than resolving it.[100] "The god that reigns, yet does not govern" makes government "possible" without giving it legitimacy,[101] and the sovereignty which constitutes legitimacy always refers back to itself. This paradox is initially resolved by the "mystery" of the oikonomia, or relations of administration. The Kingdom and the Government are separate and correlate with the difference between substance and action, ontology and ethics. God cannot intervene in the kingdom or on substance except "that his action always already coincides with the

[94] Agamben, KG, 50.
[95] Agamben, KG, 54.
[96] Agamben, KG, 51; 54-56.
[97] Agamben, KG, 65.
[98] Agamben, KG, 67.
[99] Agamben, KG, 82.
[100] Agamben, KG, 89.
[101] Agamben, KG, 118.

nature of things." But God can intervene in "government," and does so by proxy.[102] The "machine" of sovereign governance therefore relies on an intrinsically hollow ("anarchic")[103] set of relations between ontological foundations, ends, and the means meant to achieve those ends. This theoretical move is fundamental for Agamben's argument. The relationship between substance and practice is introduced by Christianity but becomes problematized by Christianity's political impulse. This problem is resolved through a reviving of *oikonomia*, by emphasizing the relations between the management of earthly affairs and the source of legitimacy in a distant God. Unlike various other kinds of rule which, across various historical instances practice administration by proxy, Christianity rendered proxy rule an ontological unstable concept. It stabilizes proxy rule not by a rethinking of the ontological disruptions it inaugurates in late antiquity, but through a more intense, legitimizing focus on the bureaucratic activity of the "machine of governance." Here, Agamben's critique of classical politics doubles as a critique of political liberalism. The procedures of liberal institutions themselves substitute for any clear legitimacy that might anchor an institution; the 'people' of a sovereign government exist only insofar as liberal institutions might circulate the concept and not in reference to a clearly delineated demographic. Administration's operations exist in lieu of power's substance.

The way that administration's operations obscure the lack of power's substance is further explained by Agambenian "glorification." Christianity reconciles proxy rule theologically carries it into to modernity as a political-theological concept by way of the glorification of sovereignty. Agamben asks why, if activity ("operativity") becomes an end in itself through the machine of governance, "why does it need to receive ritual acclamations and hymns of praise"?[104] Answering this question more coherently summarizes the thesis of *KG* and returns him to the critical interrogations of sovereignty first posed in *HS*:

> government glorifies the Kingdom, and the Kingdom glorifies the government. But the center of the machine is empty, and glory is

[102] Agamben, KG, 134.
[103] Agamben, KG, 138.
[104] Agamben, KG, 195.

> nothing but the splendor that emanates from this emptiness, the inexhaustible *kabhod* that at once reveals an veils the central vacuity of the machine.[105]

"Sovereignty" and "government" are not synonymous, although they relate to one another. These relations are fundamentally relations of active participation, reciprocation, and mutual reference. It is the activity of government that convinces us that government has a substance or center when, to Agamben, there is no such wellspring of legitimacy; rather, there exists only governance, with nothing at the center (in other words, sovereignty is hollow). Power is meant to reconcile us as subjects to the macro techniques of governance through the moment of capturing our ability to recognize our own capacities and autonomy. National sovereignty can only exist at the expense of personal sovereignty.

Glorification is the process whereby governance and sovereignty mutually refer to one another in a way that suppresses human modal contingency. Glorification is a kind of Albilene paradox. We make decisions about power presuming that power both exists and can only manifest in certain ways, thereby refusing our ability to think from within a broader imaginative horizon. Our orientation is toward the current and ongoing activity of power and governance to the point that we cannot imagine that it might behave in another way. We become subjects co-opted by power in thinking that power has its own wants, trajectories, and possibilities. These then become our own wants, trajectories, and possibilities as we imagine our own power as a means of accessing power generally. Whereas glory in Christianity is the process of worship, a seemingly nonpolitical concept, Agamben's secular glory takes the form of the active participation in governance, the insistence that as liberal subjects our political mode of being is dependent on rights and participation that require an engagement with governance at the expense of our ability to do or think otherwise. Whether we embrace and participate in institutions of governance or subject ourselves to the power they hold over us, through both we qualify ourselves as political subjects in ways that negate our thinking more creatively or democratically about the political. Agamben suggests, counterintuitively, that we should not act at all: the opposite of the spectrum consisting of liberal governance and totalitarianism is not

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[105] Agamben, KG, 211.

revolution but rest. We are "the sabbatical animal par excellence."[106] Agamben concludes turning away from sovereignty, suggesting that it is not God but the administration which constitutes our major political challenge. "The central mystery of politics is not sovereignty, but government...not the king, but ministry; it is not the law, but the police – that is to say, the governmental machine that they form and support."[107]

Masculinity and Sovereignty

Agamben's theorizing of sovereignty and power contextualizes both concepts within classical genealogies while broadening their conceptual foreground. If we accept – as I do – that sovereignty is a political theological concept, that it remains insufficient to begin historical inquiry with medieval Europe. Agamben details sovereignty's incipient theological debates that allow us to more fully critique the phenomenology of the concept. What Agamben lacks, however, is any consideration of gender.

Agamben fails to identify sovereignty's operative gender dynamic despite tracing numerous examples where the law and power are anchored *exclusively* on and through the male. *Zoe* is "reproductive" life and part of the "oikos" which itself remains outside the regulation of the "polis," but that those deemed women are restricted to this area of life in Western social history is never mentioned. Rather, Agamben reiterates in both *Stasis* and *The Use of Bodies* (UoB) that the "oikos" is an unpolitical, but hierarchically organized, and a space of conflict between masters and slaves.[108] In *KG*, *oikonomia* is defined as "government of men" and itself derives from a theological economy where the male Son explicitly glorifies the Father and is glorified by the Father. Homo Sacer is himself derived from the male citizen and the classical polis is noted as a space restricted to male citizens, but with not attendant discussion of what this means for those not male.[109] More abruptly, Agamben details the legal force of the law with a discussion of the explicitly gendered *pater familias* in *State of Exception* and even ruminates on the sexual life of Foucault, among other men, without interrogating the gendered dimensions of his inquiry.[110] If "sovereignty" in "modern biopolitics" is deciding "on the value or

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[106] Agamben, KG, 246.
[107] Agamben, KG, 276.
[108] Agamben, HS, 2, Stasis, 259-260; Use of Bodies, 3-6, 198.
[109] Agamben, Homo Sacer, 80-83, 90.
[110] Agamben, *State of Exception*, 76-80; *The Use of Bodies*, 34, 226-227.

nonvalue of life as such,"[111] then might the resurgence of hypermasculine populists suggest that gender is more than incidental to sovereignty? If the "production of the biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power,"[112] then what are we to make of the fact that bodies are sexed in ways that western metaphysics has consistently appropriated through gender? Can a political theology of sovereignty and governance sufficiently critique politics if it leaves uninterrogated the essentially masculine nature of the trinitarian godhead from which it derives? I accept Agamben's claim that politics is the "fundamental metaphysical structure" of the West but with a significant caveat: that the foundational act of western politics, the including through exclusion, occurs through a masculine medium. The production of a biopolitical body should not be separated or thought apart from the fact that sovereignty since Christianity must also produce its body as male. Man constitutes himself through the sovereign act of claiming masculinity and his masculinity is only valid so long as it is sovereign. And the sovereign male can only constitute himself as such by excluding that from his masculinity which is nonetheless included beneath his sovereignty. Woman, the feminine, the effeminate male, transfolk, and queer bodies are, prior to their differences, interchangeable as the non-male; they are the excluded by inclusion, the member which can never represent the whole, the heterogeneity of the *oikos*, and the material and psychic facticity of *zoe* of which Agamben remains silent.

Like Agamben, international relations theorists gesture toward historical facts that correlate masculinity and sovereignty but fail to substantially engage this correlation. Sovereignty is a locus of agency, even if only in ontological reference and not in substance[113]; sovereignty is autonomous and indivisible[114]; sovereignty is bounded, requiring borders as much as it might constitute those borders, and controls violence within these borders[115]; sovereignty is the highest or foundational principle of authority

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[111] Agamben, HS, 142.
[112] Agamben, HS, 6.
[113] Olson, 19; Suganami, Hidemi. "Understanding Sovereignty through Kelsen/Schmitt," *Review of International Studies* 525; Reus-Smit, Christian. "Human rights and the social construction of sovereignty" *Review of International Studies* 521;
[114] Suganami, 528;
[115] Reus-Smit, 521; Philpott, Daniel. "Westphalia, Authority, and International Society." *Political Studies* 570; Suganami, 529.

and legitimacy[116]; sovereignty is both the practice of wielding power and the state of being legitimate.[117] These diverse qualities are only organized in the twentieth century and largely as a historical projection backwards toward a mythical Westphalian ideal.[118] Moreover, recent international practices have deduced a further quality: that sovereignty might have responsibilities consequent of its authority.[119] In reflecting on the origins of sovereignty, however, these qualities can be recognized as the international diffusion of a specifically domestic conceptual field. What constitutes sovereignty as an international institution is the thrusting outward toward the global of a specific theological practice that tied agency, political authority (legitimacy and power), and the will to act on the pro-modern masculine body.[120] Sovereignty in international relations retains this "anthropomorphic" form[121] even if its content as an "archaic tradition of theologically-based royal privilege"[122] is not immediately recognizable without its "securing the flesh."[123] Sovereignty's boundedness is the remnant of its need for corporeality; it's legitimacy as successive is the remnant of patrilineal inheritances that structured pre-modern dynasties; its international operations require a kind of mutual recognition between state actors[124] which first emerges as a domestic or regional dynamic between (male) kings and subjects or male citizens. Moreover, we can deduce that recent innovations in external sovereignty – the freedom from foreign influence[125] – are

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[116] Cohen, Jean L. "Whose Sovereignty? Empire Versus International Law" *Ethics & International Affairs* 14; Reus-Smit, 528; Cronin, Bruce. "The Tension between Sovereignty and Intervention in the Prevention of Genocide" *Human Rights Review* 293-294;

[117] Thompson, Helen. "The Case for External Sovereignty." *European Journal of International Relations 253-255;* Reus-Smit, 521; Philpott, 570

[118] Olson, Kevin. *Imagined Sovereignties: The Power of the People and Other Myths of the Modern Age*. 12-13; Stirk, Peter R. "The Westphalian model and sovereign equality." *Review of International Studies* 646; Osiander, Andreas. "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth" *International Organization 251;*

[119] ICISS "The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty" 7-8;

[120] Debrix, Francois. "Katechontic Sovereignty: Security Politics and the Overcoming of Time" *International Political Sociology* 145;

[121] Luoma-Aho, Mika. "Political Theology, Anthropomorphism, and Person-hood of the State: The Religion of IR" *International Political Sociology* 301, 305.

[122] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism,* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011, 96.

[123] Santer*, The Royal Remains*, xv.

[124] Jean L. Cohen. "Sovereignty in the Context of Globalization: A Constitutional Pluralist Perspective*." The Philosophy of International Law*, 268; Epstein, Charlotte, Thomas Lindemann, Ole Jacob Sending, "Frustrated sovereigns: the agency that makes the world go around" 794.

[125] Glanville, "Myth of the Traditional Sovereign," 81.

themselves values resultant of male autonomy and freedom from penetration, not merely as psychoanalytic metaphor, but as the domestic preconditions that first operationalized these concepts before projecting them outward toward the global. The similarities between sovereignty as an institution and masculinity – aggressiveness, mastery of violence, totality, material boundedness, autonomy, even rational agency – are not accidents, but share qualities that refer to a shared genealogy, one in which masculinity and sovereignty constitute themselves in relation to one another in the West.

In this regard, I turn toward the corporeality of masculinity and the emergence of sovereignty as a domestic political dynamic in order to respond to certain aporias first raised by deconstructions in international relations theory. R. B. J. Walker and Cynthia Weber have both identified how the ambiguities of sovereignty on the international plane result in the need to focus on what's at stake in the divergence between its observable practice – it's simulation – and lack of substance.[126] Walker, in fact, calls for a "feminist critique" that responds to sovereignty's operation after being dislodged from the pre-modern (and masculinist) Great Chain of Being.[127] Jen Bartelson comes close to pushing back on the gendered dynamic of sovereignty in his own deconstructive approach, but misses the mark. Bartelson describes the sovereign as a "rational and impartial spectator" who is "he himself situated within" a system of representation and mutual recognition but "blind" to the constitutive conditions of sovereignty.[128] Elsewhere, Bartelson alludes to the structural and historical precedents for modern sovereignty, describing the transition from the pre-modern, "primordial subject"[129] to the international system of nation-states through social contract innovations and European warfare.[130] Between this theoretical critique and historical observation is his mobilizing a "language-man-nation" heuristic to read early modern political theory.[131] At no point, however, are these divergent strategies reconciled around their gendered operation.

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[126] Walker, R. B. J. *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. 172, 174; Weber, Cynthia. *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State, and Symbolic Exchange*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 3, 10, 16.
[127] Walker, 179, 181.
[128] Bartelson, *Geneaology of Sovereignty*, 35.
[129] Bartelson, 40.
[130] Bartelson, 191.
[131] Bartelson, 206.

The disciplinary boundaries between international political theory and domestic political theory methodologically foreclose thinking of international sovereignty as in some way conceptually related to masculinity and corporeality precisely because the demand for something intrinsically international or global presumes the need for something unconstrainted by concepts that are local and interpersonal like 'gender.' But this boundary formation in itself is simply another iteration of a push toward something great: not transcendence or universality, but in a direction nonetheless of the 'not'-local. This dynamic allows the obfuscation of the ways by which these concepts operate within a masculinist ontology. It is not merely that men ascribe to themselves a gendered ontological primacy, but that the very move that accomplishes this ascription is a phenomenological orientation toward and over the world that becomes the predicate for agency and rational, ideational reflection. Sovereignty's lack of substance, it's hollow but vulnerable core, is the need mandated by external structures both discursive and material which are located themselves in political debates and relations between men *qua* men. Likewise, masculinity's primacy, a claim toward transcendence that mobilizes the act of claiming instead of substantively embodying transcendence (which, of course, is an impossibility), is sustained by political and social structures which are themselves located and predicated upon sovereignty. To put masculinity and sovereignty into conceptual relation to one another is to reveal how both not only lack substance but persist only as the active consequences of a specific phenomenological approach to the world, an approach that is enticing precisely because it's obscured relation gives value to western notions of autonomy, freedom, and agency.

Return to Aristotle

Aristotle inaugurates the conflation of political authority with masculinity. To make sense of what is missing in Agamben's un-gendered account of sovereignty, and to redress the gender gap in theories of sovereignty, requires examining Agamben's appropriation of Aristotle. Agamben's modal ontological method[132] derives from his reading key passages in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*. But Agamben's reading of these texts commits a key error with respect to gender that truncates both his

[132] Agamben intends Decreation to be a corollary and critique of Deconstruction. See Kevin Attell, *Beyond the Threshold of Deconstruction*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2015.

methodology and eventual turn toward *Homo Sacer*: it presupposes that Aristotle's ideas can be disentangled from his social context, an error all the more damning given Aristotle's insistence on welding his political philosophy to masculinity. I here retrace Agamben's reading of Aristotle as he develops his method before turning to the essentially gendered nature of Aristotle's philosophy. Such allows me to return to Agamben's method to more further highlight what gender brings to his critique of sovereignty.

Agamben begins forming his method through a reading of book Theta of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Agamben re-defines Aristotle's *dynamis* as "potentiality" which "maintains itself in relation to its own privation" and therefore to have potential or *dynamia* "means to be one's own lack, to be in relation to one's own incapacity."[133] Traditional reception of Aristotle on action perceives *dynamis* consumed in *energia*, or, the move from passivity to activity as a permeant shift away from prior passivity according to a linear teleology.[134] Agamben rejects this teleology. He proposes instead that the *dynamis* passivity be understood as not-acting where acting, *energia*, is a state corollary to non-acting, *dynamis.* Subjects do not consume their potential in activity, moving from point A to point B, but rather have continual access to both by shifting the mode of their operation, moving from mode $A^{Passive}$ to A^{Active}, where activity is always simultaneously inoperativity or impotentiality and potential is always dormant activity. Western metaphysics presumes a linear movement at the heart of activity that forbids the recognition of our modal "contingency." Means-end and deontological reasoning necessarily sublimate the potential/impotential/actual relationship of modal ontology into a dichotomous ontology between what is and what is not.[135] Rather than seeing potentiality and actuality as always simultaneously occurring forces, Western metaphysics insists on an either/or mode of being.

Agamben's modal ontology privileges capacity instead of substance as a way to avoid the politicizing of ontology.[136] His method is therefore both normative and

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[133] Agamben, "On Potentiality," *Potentialities*, 182.
[134] Agamben, ibid, 177.
[135] Agamben, "Bartleby, or On Contingency," *Potentialities*, 263.
[136] What animates his opposition to sovereignty, which is Agamben's methodological corollary to Derrida's critique of the logocentric and Deleuze and Guattari's opposition to the Arboreal.

analytic: he sees the normative implications of Western ontology concealed within their analytical presuppositions. He thus reconfigures the way we think about subjects and action. All subjects who possess a potentiality "can both actualize it and not actualize it" where it "is essentially defined by the possibility of its non-implementation."[137] Impotentiality "is not another potentiality juxtaposed to the potentiality-to" insofar as such reasoning would give both substance; rather, "it is its inoperativity," an operative lack.[138] Summarizing his method with respect to singing, Agamben explains that

> There is no potentiality not to sing that precedes the potentiality to sing and that should thus be annulled for potentiality to be realized in singing: the potentiality-not-to is a resistance internal to potentiality, which prevents the latter from simply being exhausted in the act and pushes it to turn onto itself, to become potential potentiae, that is, to be capable of its own Impotentiality.[139]

Through normatively privileging possibility and what-might-be over actuality and presence, Agamben reorients the way we refer to the components of everyday phenomena. Thus, "painting is the suspension and exposition of the potentiality of the gaze, just as poetry is the suspension and exposition of language."[140] In asking what is possible we should not constrain ourselves to what is immediate but rather examine the possibilities dormant in the situation where all situations are the interplay between ourselves and the world. Painting is a mode that exists with reference to the gaze rather than being a self-contained actuality. We cannot ask a canvas to be otherwise although we are confronted with possibility by way of its immanent lack. Our movement always exists first and foremost in engaging reality and our engagements with reality are only "first" insofar as they are the precondition for possibilities. "First" things are "first" for their primacy in becom*ing* and unbecom*ing* rather than as things that exist in substance prior to what is. Agamben thinks of "true human praxis" as "that which, rendering inoperative the specific works and functions of the living being, makes them, so to speak,

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[137] Agamben, *The Fire and the Tale*, Stanford University Press 2017, 37.
[138] Agamben, ibid, 47.
[139] Ibid, 48.
[140] Ibid.

run around in circles and, in this way, opens them as possibilities."[141] And the human subject is not an absence discursively inscribed within citational chains but "a vortex in the flow of becoming."[142]

At stake in this reading of Aristotle, however, is the fact that Aristotle thought of activity as an essentially *masculine* act. Agamben's human, free to create, is simply the universalizing of this masculine subject. Men, and only certain men, were granted the potential capacity for self-reflection and political activity in the public sphere. But this social and political capacity is further circumscribed by the general active orientation of man that contrasted with both the passive positions of the woman, effeminate man, and obedient slave as well as the over-active and unrestrained position of the excessive man. Aristotle's politics and metaphysics ultimately rely on an essentially masculine concept of activity that cannot be gender-neutrally mobilized without anachronism. What is "impotential" for the Agambenian subject is, within its Aristotelian origins, a possibility sustained by material horizons constructed on those excluded from modal living. The slave, the laborer, and the woman must remain the "active" forms of the polis in order for men to have the modal freedom to oscillate between potentiality and impotentiality.

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* only briefly touches on gender but in ways that make clear the text's gendered consistency with Aristotle's broader corpus. The tenth chapter of book iota declares woman and man different in matter (body) but not different in species, positioning this opposition as a "contrary" endemic to species reproduction.[143] Earlier in book theta, which Agamben cites, Aristotle notes that "the habit of passivity" is that which "tends towards a condition which is worse, and the habit of corruption, which arises from the instrumentality of another body, so far forth as it is another." In this regard Aristotle establishes a spectrum of passivity, that which inclines toward the worse can incline toward the extreme "instrumentality" of one's body as opposed to the more simple inactive passivity of one's body, that is valued as less than the active spectrum of those who have "reason" and can effect concrete changes in the world.[144] Free will in this

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[141] Ibid, 54.
[142] Ibid, 61.
[143] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. Translated by John H. McMahon. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2018.
[144] Aristotle, ibid., 188-189.

scenario, the "will that propension authoritatively or rightfully" commands in passive objects, is therefore confined to those who are able to self-reflect and press upon the world actively against passive objects.[145] Within relation only to the text of *Metaphysics*, Agamben's appropriation of Aristotle's explanations of active force and passivity is a possible reading. But given what Aristotle says elsewhere – that women are the passive and defective end of the contraries only necessary as passive objects to aid in the reproduction of humans and, in particular, men[146]; and Aristotle's appeals and reconfiguration of the classical Pythagorean table of "contraries" where woman correlates with the more sinister dimensions of human existence,[147] even though Pythagoras himself associated women with motion – there is little reason to presume that Aristotle imagined free will, activity in the world, and the capacity to change the world as anything other than qualities belonging exclusively to aristocratic men.

Recognizing the essentially gendered notion of Aristotle's framework, we can rethink Agamben's modal ontology in light of masculinity that only opens up further questions about sovereignty. If Agamben proceeds to privilege both activity and the classical categories of politics as the boundaries of the classical tradition, then we can move a gendered critique of Agamben away from the simple "women are absent." The modal ontological capacity to do otherwise that we reclaim as political subjects in light of sovereignty and governance is normatively problematic for two reasons with respect to gender. The first is that while such a theory is broad in scope and technically accessible to everyone, it presumes to operate within the Masculinist constraints of Aristotle that remain uninterrogated and ultimately limit any genuine capacity to do otherwise. By focusing on the political and operationalizing *oikos* in an ungendered capacity, Agamben refuses to interrogate the roles of the slave, mechanic, and woman in classical thought that necessarily perform the productive and reproductive labor of upholding society that makes possible the moment of leisure that grants aristocratic men the self-reflection necessary to do otherwise. Western freedom takes the metaphysical form of vertical

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[145] Aristotle, ibid., 194.
[146] Gareth B. Mathews, "Gender and Essence in Aristotle," *Australian Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 64, supplement 1 (1986), pp. 16-25. Page 21-23.
[147] Okin, Susan Moller. *Women in Western Political Thought.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979. 15, 62.

assimilation into hierarchies where equality consists of accessing the freedom restricted to the upper echelons of this hierarchy. Normative value remains at the top of this hierarchy with unfettered agency which can only persist insofar as others take up the roles that require submission and hinderances. The second critique of Agamben is that his modal ontology itself does not clearly intervene into differences between vertical and horizontal structures of equality in capacity. To privilege freedom as the absence of hinderances and external impediments necessarily evaluates impediments as normatively bad. In practice, the pursuit of freedom leads to our under-valuing the un-free rather than recognizing in these positions different, and perhaps more valuable, alternatives to political life. The move from Aristotle through social contract theorists and liberalism in the western tradition is one continues move of emphasizing total freedom to the expense of these other modes, and this genealogical trajectory illustrates how masculinity and sovereignty mutually constitute each other by excluding and de-valuing other possibilities. To bring everyone into the 'active' life of modality means abandoning the material work necessary to sustain the polis within which we live.

This historical unfolding is where "glorification" usefully interrogates both masculinity and sovereignty. Both post themselves first and prior to other social conditions as the authority over others. As masculinity shifts it nonetheless projects itself and identifies by the concept of sovereignty; most western men, as men, desire something akin to independence, freedom, self-sufficiency, and authority over and in the world. Sovereignty is not merely a hollow concept that captures our authority through governance but is specifically a masculine concept that maintains our attention in its gendered dynamics. Man as well as 'sovereign' demand glorification in western political theory. Agamben's focus on the political restricts itself too heavily by classical delineations which themselves operate within a rigidly gendered scheme. To encompass the work of the home and the ignored labor of those denied full citizenship, where can identify processes at work besides that of becoming *homo sacer* which continue to sustain the dynamics of glorification between sovereign and governance. Masculinity as an assertion to power is the fundamental means of severing the classical *polis* from *oikos.* In positing themselves as subjects first and then defining the terms of participation, masculinity is as much an epistemic and ontological mode of being as it is a kind of

gendered aesthetic. Masculinity glorifies sovereignty by way of its dialectical, relation to sovereignty. To recognize and understand this process requires yet another return to Aristotle.

In the next chapter, I use this dialectic – masculinity and sovereignty – to reread core theorists in Western political theory. I reject that disciplinary boundaries that confines these theorists anachronistically into what we deem the 'political,' instead emphasizing how masculinity, authority, and power animate a core concern across their texts. I read them in these ways in order to show that a specific conception of freedom and agency results from the recognition of masculinity and sovereignty as co-constitutive, one that limits the horizons of what we think is both politically good and politically possible. I then turn toward the corporeal in order to supplement a notable lacuna in western political theory: that the aspiration toward the rational, autonomous, and free agent consciously suppresses the corporeal embodiment of politics. Masculinity does not merely devalue the body, but its ontological structure discourages our attending to the ways that corporeal and affective practices challenge the primacy of masculinist claims – the way that such dynamics refuse transcendence and universality not as some essential reification of the non-masculine particular, but in the ways they reveal the particularity of everything. I employ political theology in order to show how western political theory mobilizes Christianity in its construction of the world in order to neutralize this fact: to masculine certain dimensions of the body, to mobilize suffering as a masculinist value par excellence as well as an anchor of reality. Suffering becomes the corporeal and affective anchor of masculinity and sovereignty's mutual constitution precisely because it's moral primacy continually defers our attention away from the facticity of sovereignty's and masculinity's vacuity.

Chapter Two:
Masculinity and Sovereignty in Western Political Theory

Among his descriptions of "woman" in his *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas invokes the "Philosopher" (Aristotle) in order to resolve a seemingly minor theological conundrum: who did God make first in the garden, man or woman? Aquinas thinks first from two givens: that woman is clearly defective; and that woman is also necessary for procreation. Thus, Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that woman is a "misbegotten" male but further suggests that this defect is the result of the "passive" force of the male "seed."[148] God uses nature's defects productively. Woman is a necessary defect. As such, woman was produced after man as a helper to man.

What seems like an arcane theological question is much more important for the question at hand. Aquinas cannot be merely passed over as a pre-modern theorist of gender. Why was it necessary to establish historical primacy between man and woman? While the corporeality of Jesus is gendered and masculinity is central to Catholic theology, such concerns seem reasonably addressed without negotiating the historicity of Eden's details. We also cannot anachronistically read psychanalytic anxiety about man's social place into Aquinas, either, insofar as this implies a specifically modern kind of self-reflexivity. What, then, is at stake in parsing out this small detail? I want to suggest that Aquinas's concern is less the causality of historical events and more an argument about nature. To assert that woman is consequent of man by way of natural necessity is to 'gender' ontology. Historical causality here operates metonymically for ontological primacy: man is not merely created first but the standard of evaluation for the human. And as the prime human, man alone is able to manifest a quintessentially human capacity: activity, or, impassivity.

In order to recognize why woman's ontological subordinance *makes sense* to Aquinas is to go back to the conceptual field of 'humanity' first defined by Aristotle. For Aristotle, humans are political animals; our humanity only renders us distinct from other animals precisely because we have some additional capacity for the 'political.' But this understanding is essentially masculine. It is not merely that men, alone, deserve to access

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[148] Thomas Aquinas. *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*. Translated and Edited by Paul E. Sigmund. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988. 37-40.

the political, or that the political is defined in structural ways as to preclude others. Rather, As the ideal human, man is also the ideal politician. Certain capacities we assume are shared across all people become manifested most perfectly in man and, therefore, begin to operate as masculinist qualities. Woman is not simply passive because she is the opposite and subordinate counterpart to man; woman is endemically passive because she is the iteration of humanity meant to be the recipient of history, causality, and social activity. The very act of act*ing*, and consequent theories of freedom and agency built on the Aristotelian model, are masculinist ontologically.

In what follows, I trace the genealogy of politics and political authority as iterations of the masculine, beginning with Aristotle. I herein hope to show that masculinity and authority are not simply correlations resultant of accidental structures collapsible within patriarchy, but rather than the conceptual fields of the political are themselves centered around values and traits which are, initially (via Aristotle), masculinist. The very ways by which we negotiate politics and think of freedom, agency, and political activity occur within a scope limited by the masculine gender. For these reasons, masculinity and modern sovereignty – the heir to various different discussions of political authority in the West – should be understood as mutually constitutive.

Aristotle's Fourfold Conditions of Freedom and Authority

Aristotle provides the most foundational conceptual foreground for contemporary political thinking. His theory of politics is not simply conservative in its approach to sustaining a patriarchal society from observation – contra Plato, who theorizes an ideal – but also masculinist in the sense that the concepts that operate within the Aristotelian polis rely on productive and reproductive labor occurring in non-political spheres. Put another way, Aristotle's separation of spheres and subsequent political theory provides a framework wherein individual freedom and the activity it preconditions are both essentially masculinist. Contrary to approaches which simply highlight the masculinist nature of Aristotle's politics, I want to re-read Aristotle in light of a modal contingency that presents the operations of the city in such a way as to situate the very conceptual *operation* of freedom and political authority as *masculine*. This is not only to claim that the concepts themselves are gendered but to further emphasize that they cannot be severed from a gendered context and still retain coherence without also totally rethinking

webs of relations that constitute them. Political authority and masculinity are two separate concepts in Aristotle that have exclusive correlation with one another. They are both orientations over and against the world, but masculinity in Aristotle is a static substance which retains the possibility of the activity of political authority. Authority, importantly, has no substance in Aristotle but is a mode of being in the polis.

The political sphere, or *polis*, is by definition a space restricted to certain men. It is the association whereby men direct their activity toward the most "lordly" (*kyrios*) of all goods, the art of civic management.[149] Aristotle distinguishes this from monarchical and fatherly authority because political authority is a kind of authority that can only exist between those with equal capacity.[150]The female (θῆλυς or *thelus*, the one with nursing breasts) does not properly belong to the polis but is exclusively the passive recipient of reproduction and confined to the household.[151] Both the man of the polis and the female are distinguished from the slave (δοῦλος or doulos) who remains an ungendered figure because the slave's sole purpose is, like oxen, to serve material needs.[152] The fact that Aristotle specifies that slaves cannot be females is not to deny that ancient Greece did not enslave women, but to recognize that, for Aristotle, the slave and the female are modes of being with respect to the city who strongly correlate with material, bodily features. Slaves are intended by "nature" not for reproduction but material service under the will of another, and hence have the contingencies of the conditions of gender and sex rendered irrelevant; whereas females are made by nature toward the sole purpose of reproductive care in the home, mattering solely for the conditions of their bodily sex.[153] Against both the slave and the female is the civic man. The "Free" man is the "upright" one who is "useful in civic life" which is only made possibly by the slave devoting his "strength" for menial duties.[154] These men are further freed to devote themselves to civic life because laborers or "mechanics" do the labor of the city (as opposed to the labor of the home

[149] Aristotle, *Politics*. Translated by Ernest Barker. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009 [1995]. 1.
[150] Aristotle, *Politics*, 7.
[151] Ibid., 8.
[152] Ibid., 9.
[153] Ibid., 9; 13-14.
[154] Ibid., 17.

performed by the slave). The laborer is he who cannot achieve excellence with respect to the good life because he naturally lacks the capacity of self-cultivation.[155]

Within this fourfold mode of the *polis* – citizen, female, slave, and mechanic – is an argument about both freedom and political authority where both emerge only within masculine conditions while the ideal man himself emerges only by conditions of freedom and exercising authority. Freedom and authority are not restricted to the male by definition (although Aristotle defines them in such a way as to impose this limit), but are rendered masculine by occurring only in situations where a male subject is freed from other orientations toward the world to pursue his own orientation over and against the world. The man is both the pinnacle of the human and the proper citizen of the city. The citizen is "he" who "shares in the administration of justice and in holding of office" in order to sustain the "self-sufficient existence" of the polis.[156] Simultaneously, he is the master of slaves, the ruler over his wife, and the father over his children. We thus have two different kinds of relationships at work in the city that both proceed from the male subject: one of horizontal equality between men and that of man's vertical authority over everyone else. But this authority is truncated into two different kinds: the absolute and monarchical authority wielded over children, slaves, and kingdoms; and the male's authority over the woman, like that of the "statesman over the citizen."[157] The former might be considered a kind of proper tyranny or unrestrained vertical authority where the latter is more complicated. Aristotle notes that statemen and citizen are temporary modes accessible to all men: "rule of the statesman's sort is exercised" by "an interchange of ruling and being ruled" and otherwise "being equal and differing in nothing."[158] But man's relationship to woman is not situational but "permanent" because he is "naturally fitter to rule" except in deviation by nature.[159] Why not simply collapse man's rule over woman as another kind of monarchical authority? Because Aristotle must deal with real instances of women's rule, all of which he describes as spectacular failures.[160] Women's capacity to reason through experience is similar in substance to man's but inhibited by

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[155] Ibid., 95.
[156] Ibid., 85-87.
[157] Ibid., 7, 33.
[158] Ibid., 33.
[159] Ibid., 33.
[160] Ibid., 68-70.

natural law toward emotional and bodily pursuits in addition to their sexed inability to reflect abstractly on money, defense, and policy (a prejudice with remarkable historical longevity).[161] Children lack any developed reason, slaves exist only for brute force, and monarchical subjects are irrelevant to a king's reasoning. We might consider that women share with mechanics a kind of truncated adult reason evidenced by history that warrants Aristotle's ontological distinction.

Nonetheless, this fourfold scheme provides the boundaries within which authority makes sense. The female, slave, and mechanic are subject to the wills of male citizens; the male citizen alone has the interiority necessary to make the free choices to change the world by effecting their will onto these three others, which is only made possible because these others do the work making his status possible. Freedom, then, is the ability to actively change the world which can only occur if the constraints of the *oikos* and laborious tasks of the *polis* are addressed by others. The obedience the male citizens offer to others, the only limits imposed on their freedom by the polis, is a temporary or modal situation rather than a permanent status of submission. In *Metaphysics*, *Nikomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*, and *Politics* action is defined as exclusively the domain of men because men in Aristotle's natural ideal are alone the agents performing free activity in the world.[162] Man is constituted as a distinct sex by his capacity for action as much as action denotes a verb available only for exercise by male subjects. Hence, the masculine orientation is rendered one looking outward with the intent of effecting and changing reality. Aristotle derives his understanding from observing other men as a man and thus defines freedom according to an image of the world that can only be sustained by a male perspective. Free activity in Aristotle is not merely masculine by definition, but also through conceptual operation. Aristotle's appeals to the naturalness of women's passivity and the slave's brute force are only meant to explain why these genres of the human are rendered permanent, rather than modal, subjects in the foreground of man's activity in the world. This social and political freedom is a necessary precondition for social and political authority: it is not only the capacity to have the will to effect change against

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[161] Ibid.

[162] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by David Ross. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 3-4, 23-24, 97-102; *Eudemian Ethics*. Translated by Anthony Kenny. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 4-5, 10, 26-27.

passive reality, but the ability to exercise this capacity. Freedom in Aristotle is a way of obscuring the operation between masculinity and political authority while founding masculinity as a glorification of power. Aristotle's thinking as a man in a patriarchal socio-political context allows him to theorize the dynamics he observes as a normative ideal, a form of theorizing that collapses his individual perspective with universal ideal only by means of centering masculinity. Politics is for men and men are for politics. Masculinity, by way of Aristotle, announces itself as the first and only political subject. But this announcement is simultaneously the subsequent demarcation of others as subordinate and passive subjects.

With Aristotle, then, the western political tradition first posits authority as necessarily, rather than incidentally, masculine. He is among the first to insist not only on rigid occupations for the possibility and reproduction of the *polis* but also to insist that these modes must be inhabited permanently by static subjects whose place is, paradoxically, defined by their occupation. Female is she who biologically reproduces and therefore the subject of reproduction in the home. The female cannot be citizen because she is defined by the *oikos* tautologically by having the qualities necessary for the *oikos*. The slave is the one whose body is conditioned for natural labor and therefore allocated to the position of the laborer. The allocation of social positions in Aristotle's society only masks itself as tautology because, as is essential to masculinity, his text allows readers to inhabit the mode of the male authority that designates. We allow appeals to nature and the insistence on observation to override the formal fact that both obscure the phenomenology at work in the form of Aristotle's narration. By way of a masculine orientation, Aristotle enshrines the lack of external impediments as a quality that should be unique to men. And this unique freedom is the necessary precondition for participation in the life of the polis: freedom grants political authority. Not only are static subjects allocated to their proper place by reference to the places where they belong, but Aristotle's fourfold scheme identifies the necessity of these other modes for the life of the polis. We cannot simply move women from the home to public life because there is no moral or natural burden on men to participate in the work of care; the domain of Aristotle's female – and slave and menial laborer - remains even if no subject inhabits it. In this sense, contemporary politics genuinely remains man's domain, insofar as it

operates according to a logic of vertical authority that inculcates an orientation over and against the world's impediments. To be political is to see oneself as an active agent and agency is the exclusive domain of certain men.

Recognizing the productive component of the fourfold scheme is necessary in order to situate how freedom and political authority, anchored after Christianity by the notion of political sovereignty, is an essentially masculinist operation. Aristotle's polis is not yet a sovereign entity because sovereignty could not exist without the theological conditions that synthesized freedom and authority – through a masculine body – into the metaphysical notion of the sovereign. This masculinist orientation, that of existing over and against the world, first sets the terms of politics that the western tradition will follow, through Christianity, into national sovereignty. By way of sovereignty, the masculinist orientation – being over and against the world – will reconcile with political authority not by way of correlation but by constituting one and the same orientation and substance.

Masculinity and Authority in Modernity's Foreground

Aristotle is the inescapable foreground of western political theory. The western political tradition recovers its Aristotelian origins through Christianity. Importantly, medieval theologians only recover Aristotle by way of the Muslims who preserved him.[163] Christian thinkers, most importantly Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, think with and against classical political theory in constructing their images of an ideal worldly authority. Both, however, rely on a concept of God that renders authority something more substantive than mere modal activity.

Early Christian political philosophy sought to abandon the profane city and focus attention exclusively on the sacred Kingdom of God. This orientation toward the sacred over profane, not reducible to a modern division between secular and religious, is one key step toward Agamben's notion of "glorification": that we must perform earthly activity and maintain devotion to the abstractions of the elsewhere and eschatological future unless we risk our salvific status by a turn toward the less-valuable profane Such logic animates Augustine's division between the City of God and City of Man. Augustine's concern for the polis or City of Man is always one of moral counsel in which he

[163] For Islam and political sovereignty, see the work of Idris Murad, Roxanne Euben, and Andrew March. Euben has specifically identified a masculinist process of 'humiliation' at work in Islamic sovereignty.

encourages earthly authorities to submit to the norms established by God so as to earn a more privileged place in the City of God.[164] Interestingly, political authority is less important for Augustine than *masculine authority*. Augustine posits a dichotomous and essential division of sex and gender roles that is the ontological precondition for all other kinds of authority. God made woman to be man's subordinate helper in matters of reproduction and is always second in matters of reason.[165] Augustine's hierarchy between the sexes is the foundation of social, and ultimately civic, belonging.[166]Women are potential equals to man only insofar as their souls will lose the bodily condition of womanhood in the City of God, where they can emerge as properly masculine citizens.[167] Other, early theologians sustained the Christian consensus whereby a gender-sex division dominated by masculine authority is a necessary earthly condition of social life and prior to political belonging.[168] In fact, Maximus the Confessor, nearly three hundred years after Augustine, writes that Christ's perfection is further validated by his overcoming sexual division by taking the form of a perfect *man*.[169] Aristotle's gendered polis needed appeals to natural law in order to prescribe his observations and normative ideals; the early Christians took such conditions as metaphysical givens prior to and constitutive of nature. Here, the masculinist phenomenology implicitly at work in Aristotle reveals itself as an explicit metaphysics of gender in theology. The sovereignty that emerges out of Christianity as the metaphysical precondition for political community also necessarily emerges from a God whose perfection comes from embodying the perfect male. (This metaphysical, sovereign male is also the doctrinal basis for restricting priesthood to cisgendered men in the Catholic and Orthodox churches to this day).

Thomas Aquinas takes this theological dynamic as means to reinterpret Aristotle. Aquinas accepts Aristotle's initial claims that the highest end of man is leisurely devotion to philosophy (which, to Aquinas, includes a necessary devotion to God) and that

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[164] Augustine: *Augustine Political Writings*, edited by E. M. Atkins and R. J. Dodaro. New York, NY: Cambrdige University Press, 2001. 63, 73, 120-123.
[165] Louth, Andrew and Marco Conti. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament I, Genesis I-11*. General Editor Thomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001. 39; 68.
[166] Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought*. 70-71.
[167] Saxonhouse, Arlene W. *Women in the History of Political Thought*: *Ancient Greece to Machiavelli*. 137-140.
[168] Louth and Conti, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 68-670, 76, 92-93.
[169] Ibid., 38.

achieving such ends requires that those other than free men must pursue the labor necessary to sustaining the conditions of freedom.[170] Man's devotion therefore requires the woman and the slave. Woman is the "helpmate" in "procreation" who is subservient to man not only by nature – as in Aristotle – but also metaphysically: "This subjection existed before men sinned" and existed in the "state of innocence."[171] Aquinas thus retains the normative emphasis on activity and life in the polis and their circumscription by masculinity, but presents the Aristotelian polis in light of Christianity's metaphysical masculinity that makes woman's insubordination a pre-ordained given and precedent for social life. Both Aquinas and Augustine considered political authority to be a capacity granted by God.[172] Aquinas, however, expresses this capacity in terms of what we now understand to be proper sovereignty: that earthly, political rule mimics in kind the rule of God in heaven, and hence is best suited to a single King over subjects "like God's rule."[173] By locating political authority in God, sovereign authority and masculinity both constitute metaphysical first conditions for socio-political order: both are orientation over and against the world; both are self-constituting claims to wholeness and power that defensively navigate social reality; both are absolute, indivisible, and aggressively express their anxiety against penetration and passivity. Political authority is no longer a capacity better suited to men, as in Aristotle, but emerges as a substance belonging to man's substance through the concept of sovereignty.

Machiavelli's political theory marks the first modern rejection of the rigid hierarchies of the medieval period by emphasizing the standpoint of political rulers prior to deontological principles. The classical period and the Church remain formative backdrops against which Machiavelli theorizes and his appropriation of both reveal how gender inflects the conceptual field of Machivelli's 'political.' Machiavelli synthesizes Aristotle and the church when it comes to positing the fundamentals of 'man.' Where Aristotle sees man as having an end rather an essential nature, and thus in need of constant practice in order to refine oneself; and whereas the church posits man's

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[170] Thomas Aquinas. *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*. Translated and Edited by Paul E. Sigmund. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988. 4, 14-15.
[171] Aquinas, 38.
[172] Augustine, 63; Aquinas, 17.
[173] Aquinas, 25.

fundamental fallenness; Machiavelli sees man as an active force in the world inclined toward their fallenness. He replaces Aristotle's call for self-mastery for the sovereign's need to institute laws to curtail "corruptible" man's "appetites."[174] He replaces the church's emphasis on depravity with an inclination toward idiocy: like Giovampagolo's failure to kill the pope, men are incapable of the "grandeur" of true evil because they lack the reflection and foresight necessary for such extremes.[175] What Machiavelli retains from the origins of western political theory is the need for some external restraint – a vertical political authority – to guide the essentially active orientation of men toward stability. He rejects the normative hierarchies that posit species-ends (Aristotle) and absolute moral conditions (the Church) and instead thinks within a binary of submission and dominance, one that continues to code political activity as masculine. The origin of the city consists in "free men" building it either by will or by force rather than some natural and metaphysical inclination toward sociability through the reproductive family.[176] In fact, Machiavelli properly politicizes the family in an Aristotelian sense by seeing it as an impediment to political actions: the family is an object to be destroyed, conquered, or used for one's own ends.[177] Values, virtues, and the seemingly womanly qualities of compassion – associated with both the mother of the home and, to Machiavelli, Christianity – are little more than additional impediments, like Fortuna, to be conquered.[178] Unlike Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas, Machiavelli narrates female characters into his political, historical, and theatrical texts that privileges them with active capacities in the political world; but these are usually in contrast with submissive, effeminate men who have taken up the female mode of passivity.[179] Machiavelli thinks that "men can be women"[180] but this inversion is only made possible in his text by the acceptance of the classical and medieval hierarchical de-valuation of the domestic roles

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[174] Machiavelli, Nico. "The Discourses." *Selected Political Writings*. Selected and Edited by David Wootton. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1994. 39.
[175] Machiavellii, ibid., 132.
[176] Ibid, 84-85.
[177] Machiavelli, Nico. *The Prince*. Australia: Planet E-Book. PDF. < https://www.planetebook.com/free-ebooks/the-prince.pdf>. 35-38.
[178] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 101, 144;
[179] Saxonhouse, Arlene. "Niccolo Machiavelli: Women as Men, Men as Women, and the Ambiguity of Sex." *Feminist Interpretations of Niccolo Mavhiavelli.* Edited by Maria J. Falco. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2004. 97-98, 101.
[180] Saxonhouse, 114.

of woman and worker. The gendered coding of political activity and political authority, their operation within a masculinist orientation over and against the world, remains a normative underpinning which Machiavelli shares with Aristotle and the church despite his abandoning or inverting their additional normative foundations. After all, Machiavelli's gendered inversions would be less shocking and meaningful if they did not operate against a contemporary backdrop where politics and authority are presumed to be the domain of men.

In sum, to Aristotle, Christianity, and Machiavelli constitute the inflection through which early modern and modern political theorists conceived of political authority, activity, and belonging. In this regard, certain key traits remain essential to the conceptual boundaries of modern theorists. Entering the modern period, man as a sexed, material subject is the sole locus of political authority; queens are seen as accidents or temporary aberrations in what is otherwise considered to be the male descent of authority. As will be shown, even those contract theorists who emphasize the seemingly ungendered domain of interiority maintain the masculinist preconditions of authority. The rejection of biological patriarchy is little more than a return to the Aristotelian polis where men can share a horizontal equality between them predicated on their modal oscillation between ruler and subject. Because of this, Agamben's "glorification" returns as a description not merely of political authority but of the dialectic between masculinity and sovereignty. Men, those whose orientation is over and against the world, constitute themselves in light of sovereignty by constituting sovereignty in light of masculinity. This phenomenological process is not sustained by incidental tautology but through the ways that the material world and dissemination of ideas are constrained through the acceptance of the classical and theological boundaries of politics. *Modernity's Sovereign Male*

Modern political theory wrestles political authority away from kings but retains the male body as the locus of political authority. Women are also occasionally admitted as potential bearers of sovereignty, but only insofar as they perform as virtual men while retaining the performance of femininity. Much of these shifts respond to historical realities. In England, just prior to Hobbes, Henry VIII instituted his own schism with the Catholic Church partially out of desire for a male heir. None of his wives bearing him

one, Henry's throne passed to his daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, who embraced the "virtual" masculinity of Kingship in order secure their own sovereign legitimacy.[181] The liberalization of authority through consent does little but revive Aristotle's horizontal equality between men which was only an equality dependent on the modal oscillation between citizen and ruler; even Locke's move toward individual rights still denies a theory of political authority that operationalizes women as full political actors except where, as property inheritors or laborers, they might take up the task of masculinity. Early theorists of the international likewise posit sovereignty in ways that resemble their images of man, continuing the western analectic between masculinity and sovereignty. Modernity abandons birthright as a basis of hierarchy but its move toward rational subjects preserves the masculinist operation of power. Reason rather than blood becomes the medium through which the structure of masculinist vertical authority persists. The modern project of emancipation and equality is thus only a linear move from the spheres of female, slave, and servant to that of the *virtually* male while obscuring the work necessary for genuinely egalitarian situations: the corollary or reverse moves from the male to the other spheres.

Jean Bodin and Hugo Grotius both consider the family to be the foundational unit of civil society because of it natural role in reproduction, and they both insist that man is entitled by nature to authority over women and children.[182] Man, rather than woman, alone retains the classical capacity for self-mastery and self-reflection as well as public belonging that are preconditions for politics.[183] This reasoning at first seems tautological: they only have the need for self-mastery because of conditions justified through appeal to themselves, namely, their already acting publicly and politically. But their moves from familiar to political authority are more than tautological if we presume an active, externally focused orientation operative within their invocations of 'man' that is

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[181] Herrup, Cynthia. "The King's Two Genders." *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 45 No. 3 (2006), 504. [493-510]; McLaren, Anne, "Gender, Religion, and Early Modern Nationalism: Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots and the Genesis of Anti-Catholic Nationalism" *American Historical Review* Vol 107. No 3. (2002), 742-743 [739-767]; Mueller, Jane, "Virtue and Virulity: Gender in the Self-Representations of Queen Elizabeth I," 10-11 http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/777777122145/2848_virtuevirtuality.pdf

[182] Bodin, Jean. *Six Books of the Commonwealth*. Abridged and Translated by M. J. Tooley. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Oxford, 1967. PDF. 10; Grotius, Hugo. *The Rights of War and Peace, In Three Books*. Translated into English by J. Barbeyrac. Edited by Richard Tuck. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund Publishers, 2005. 137, 520, 632.

[183] Bodin, 10; Grotius, 40.

prohibited to women and slaves because of their presumed passivity and receptiveness. Because the male perspective is one of being over and against the world, Bodin and Grotius make a substantive argument in calling for man to cultivate self-awareness to the extreme of this orientation, particularly tyranny. To argue that someone whose position is presumed to be one of familiar inclination or total subservience to the world practice self-mastery or self-restraint seems unnecessary; these subjects would have no need for the capacity. The essential masculinity of political subjects further allows them to move from the position of the father to the position of the sovereign: for Bodin, domestic authority is akin to political authority and the father, as head of household, is the locus between private and public belonging; for Grotius, the right of "superiority" is that Kings over subjects, God over man, Father over children, and Master over servant.[184] Here we against see Aristotle's fourfold relations at work in how both figures constitute politics. They not only make comparisons to but insist on the need for wives, laboring servants, and slaves. Bodin even states that "authority in the family rests on the fourfold relationship between husband and wife, father and child, master and servant, owner and slave."[185] Politics can only occur because those denied an active capacity in the world are restricted to the non-political spaces of passivity, a social condition that reiterates the masculinist perspective that sees itself as protagonist in the world while theorizing what is properly political. Bodin's sovereignty, important for being the first systematic definitions of the sovereign, is therefore constituted under conditions where man as gendered being is positing himself in the world and ultimately relating to that sense of masculine sovereignty in order to understand himself. In other words, Bodin's sovereign is a self-justifying dialectic between the particularity of man and a universal sovereignty that is masculine. The sovereign is the anchor of political society in the same way the father is anchor to the family; the man's right to command women, children, servants, and slaves is mimicked in the sovereign's exclusive right to command men; man becomes "citizen" insofar as he is obedient only to the sovereign and no other external authority; and the unity of the sovereign subject mimics the rational, self-contained

[184]Bodin, 6; Grotius, 137, 140, 162.
[185] Bodin, 9.

subjectivity of man.[186] The "power" of the sovereign over men and the "power" men hold over others is not a substance but a capacity for activity which in both cases is the same: one's orientation over and against the world commanding the world and expecting it's receptivity.

Thomas Hobbes represents one important variation of early modern sovereignty because he alone insists on the equality between men and women in the family. Much like Bodin and Machiavelli, Hobbes' sovereign is total and all-encompassing, the necessary anchor to political society and the sole adjudicator between men wherein their being over and against the world inevitably leads to conflict between them. Hobbes perceives the fundamental political issue as mankind's "perpetual and restless desire of Power after power, that ceseth only in Death" which, once power becomes that desired by "two men," renders both "enemies."[187] This problem, however, is only the first domain of politics; like Aquinas, Hobbes sees politics as ultimately about leading man toward God and thus requires obedience to the sovereign in order to sustain a Christian commonwealth.[188] Because belief is something internal to Hobbes, he argues that one should even obey an "infidel" sovereign while retaining private beliefs because one will be rewarded "for having true faith" in the hereafter.[189] The religious and political tensions at work in Hobbes result in a seemingly novel approach to gender. On the one hand, God anchors natural law and, like most Christians, Hobbes sees the sovereign as representing Christ who is the "vicar" of God.[190] But where his contemporaries see these as necessitating a male form to political authority, Hobbes admits the possibilities of a "Sovereign Queen" and makes mothers equal to fathers in household authority over children.[191] Man's precedence as the "more excellent sex" becomes a "misrecognized" tradition where nature allows for women to occasionally exceed men in "strength or prudence."[192] Here, the historical conditions of the English monarchy weigh down on Hobbes. The reigns of Elizabeth I and Mary I have already made evident the occasional

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[186] Bodin, 8-10, 19, 24-26.
[187] Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by C. B. MacPherson. New York: Penguin Books, 1985. 161, 184.
[188] Hobbes, 478-484.
[189] Hobbes, 625.
[190] Hobbes, 227, 484.
[191] 253-254.
[192] 253.

need for sovereign queens. Hence, Hobbes's statement of equality in the family is less an endorsement of political equality and more the recognition that nature results in aberrations. Sovereignty remains "virtually" male in that it requires an active orientation over and against the world, one of an aggressive but prudent military ruler, where queens are forced to perform both this virtual masculinity and ideal femininity. Hobbes's totally depraved society, one where man constantly war against all, is projecting this male perspective onto all people while foreclosing the alternative approaches we might have for one another. Hobbes's concession to female queens is not an endorsement of genuine equality so much as the recognition that sometimes politics needs women to rule when men aren't available. Consider the counterfactual: women, here, can perform virtual masculinity in taking on the militant embodiment of the sovereign; but at no time does Hobbes counsel men toward the virtually feminine, the compassionate and vulnerable.

Samuel Pufendorf and John Locke both represent a turn toward the subjective interior by theorizing politics as a domain of reason and consent. They both allow for a kind of equality in the family but only because woman's submission to her husband is predicated on "consent."[193] Like the other early modern theorists, they consider the family the predicate for political authority where the father is the locus between the personal politics of the home and the public politics of political city. And yet, the way both thinkers conceive of political authority remains essentially masculine. Locke rejects the male inheritance that necessitates monarchy in Filmer's political theory, but only to the ends that Locke revives Aristotle's horizontal equality between male citizens in the aristocratic polis; the rejection of biology as a basis for inheritance becomes functionally replaced by a mental inheritance, another sort of reproduction between the interiority of men where they can gestate without the need for woman. Locke allows for the possibility for female inheritance but relies on such a constrained definition of reason that within the terms of his text as well as the historical circumstances of his writing there remains no reasonable possibility that he sought to include women as political actors. Pufendorf also theorizes sovereignty against the metaphysical and religious anchors that bound it within

[193] Pufendorf, Samuel. *The Political Writings of Samuel Pufendorf*. Edited by Craif L. Carr. Translated by Michael J. Seidler. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. 198-199; Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. Edited by C. B. Macpherson. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing 1980. 32.

kingly inheritance, but like Locke finds himself embracing a functional correlate in the interior engagement between men. In both instances, politics is not democratized by having become more accessible to those previously excluded, but rather made to re-encompass men denied authority by the monarchy who in classical terms would have had some say in their governance. Neither embody a truly liberal direction in the equality between individuals so much as a return to the masculinist politics of Aristotle where perfect, horizontal equality can only persist between men of the same status who can temporarily engage the modes of subject and ruler. As for political authority itself, both continue to insist that it proceeds from God, is like that of God over men, and resembles the father's rule over his family. What they innovate is denying the form of fatherly rule – a singular, total ruler – by privileging an Aristotelian polis where authority remains open to men as a class.

With respect to the international, the traits various theorists use to describe sovereignty likewise describe an idealized male subject. For Bodin and Pufendorf, sovereignty is a unitary, indivisible, all-powerful entity whose authority is justified by God.[194] Pufendorf, like Hobbes, considers sovereignty to be necessary to protect men from their natural vulnerabilities from the aggression of other men.[195] Despite their abstract and seemingly disembodied nature, these conventional attributes of sovereignty remain essentially gendered in their conceptual operation. The unitary subject, whether restrained through the body of a single king by way of inheritance or to a group of men through rational consensus, requires the initial Aristotelian move of positing a specific kind of man against other humans as having the right to self-constitution and access to mental reflection in lieu of other social reproduction. Man has to be engaged in the political activity of thought and public recognition in order to constitute himself as a single political subject; the sovereign as a single, undivided subject is in this light also the phenomenological projection of men as much as it is also a concept only sustained by men. The international characteristics of the sovereign, the necessity for a sovereign power to constitute its boundaries and defend itself, is likewise the macro projection of the male orientation that sees itself as constantly wrestling against the world. This claim

[194] Bodin, 8, 24-27, 42; Pufendorf, 218-220.
[195] Pufendorf, 80-81, 206; Hobbes, 227.

is meant to not only reiterate the relatively common sense among more critical political theorists that the realist approach of war against all is a masculinist ideology made concrete through its performance, but also to address the lack of alternatives: it is conceptual as well as pragmatic reasons that we cannot conceive of an international sovereign that has fluid or open borders by choice or theorize a kind of orientation from Aristotle's female or slave, rather than man, as the foundation for a sovereign state.

Western political theory since Aquinas remains confined to operating within Aristotle's fourfold scheme of the polis where political authority, despite its oscillation between single ruler and many rulers, remains a masculinist activity. This claim is not to say that the models of political society herein discussed always restrict political authority to the body of the male – even though most do – but that the male form remains a privileged subject in imagining the sovereign. My rehearsing what is largely common sense to most feminist political theorists is also not meant to merely repeat but to situate the operative activity of authority as masculinist in itself rather than insist that authority was restricted to men by the incident of accidental historical structures or traditions whose foundation has long been forgotten. From Aristotle through Locke and Pufendorf, political authority is always imagined from a perspective where the subject orients himself over and against the world, an orientation that necessarily relies on the work of others to mitigate or manage the obstacles that would prevent one from having the self-conception of total freedom. Theorizing form within this perspective, however, means that the sovereign is also always constituted as male even if only virtually male: the supreme locus of authority to whom all men submit in authority, whether permanently or temporarily, is the man or collecting of men par excellence; perfectly unitary, total in power, oriented over and against the world. When projected onto the nation-state, the aggressive impetus of the male orientation because reimagined as a pre-emptive defensiveness and the need to rigidly police authority within and the stability of national boundaries. Just as man is the bodily locus of authority in the state between the private domain of the father within the family and the public domain of citizens, man further remains the locus between domestic authority and the authority between others in the international sphere.

The Contemporary Sovereign Male

I have thus far attempted to reread western political theory's notion of political authority and sovereignty as an essentially masculine concept. While much of my discussion seems redundant in terms of what is commonly recognized by both postcolonial and feminist theorists, I hope in what follows to revive certain dynamics of feminist theory in light of Agamben to demonstrate how contemporary global politics is perceived as an intrusion by the masculinist persons who coalesce into populist coalitions. The perceived threat at the loss of masculinist power is not a simple matter of emasculation by gendered subjects but a phenomenological anxiety about the relationship between authority and ontology. The west has few alternatives for imagining a different kind of political belonging and, for the extremes of right-populism, the anxious tensions about sovereignty's combatting global shifts results in the desire for manifesting sovereignty in a masculinist personality much like the sovereign decision itself needs to manifest in the concentration camp.

If we return to Agamben's theory, the concentration camp is the attempt to manifest the sovereign's state of exception.[196] Sovereignty delineates the boundaries of the polis and is the fundamental source of qualifying political life as 'political,' separating not only *bios* from *zoe* but, with the advent of the nation-state and turn toward sovereign peoplehood, turning the boundaries of the polis back onto the exclusion of the *zoe*. Through the attempt to clearly demonstrate the sovereignty of a constituted people the nation-state turns toward the biopolitical policing of those who do not belong. The sovereign people necessarily turn inward to their own boundaries of *bios*/*zoe* as well as politicize the fundamentals of life of those deemed not to belong, ironically including them in the politics of peoplehood in the absolute worst way. The concentration camp is therefore the attempt to resolve this paradox and achieve the impossible ideal of manifesting the sovereign state of exception.

In recognizing the essentially masculinist nature of western sovereignty, I claim that there is a further gendered dynamic to this issue: politics itself is conceptually anchored in a male space and the medium of the state of exception, the body through which the activity of attempting to realize it occurs, is realized through masculinity.

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[196] Agamben, HS, 20-25.

Masculinity is an orientation over and against the world and the attempt to make actual and impossibility is the masculine drive in extreme. The sovereign's state of exception, that of being beyond the law while constituting the law, manifests in male form insofar as the law takes the form of man's command to which he owes no obedience himself. This dynamic does not occur because we consciously desire to see men in positions of authority, but because the conceptual field which structures 'authority' imposes masculinist characteristics that necessitate the hollow space of authority be filled by a masculine body in ways that appear reasonable. Certain dynamics of conventional masculine aesthetics like aggressiveness, assertiveness, and entitlement are equally the political preconditions of performing as the medium of sovereignty's impossible material locus. Agamben's refusal to deal with gender is itself an implicit affirmation of Aristotle's confining politics to the space of men; the fact that the *oikos* and figures like the slave are discussed only as pre-political reflects the fac that, insofar as western politics still operates within Aristotle's fourfold scheme, the sovereign people desire to manifest and see themselves embodied by a leader inhabiting the masculine and properly political space. Masculinity and political authority, especially sovereignty, relate to each other as an dialectic in the western tradition where they see and desire one another as the images of themselves.

What other theorists and cultural critics have taken for metaphors or grand narratives I instead want to locate as a specific conceptual operation. Masculinity is not merely the aesthetics of western sovereignty but that our concepts of sovereignty and masculinity can only make sense insofar as they relate to each other. The discussion of sovereignty in various disciplines that does not engage with gender only repeats the fundamental error that Beauvoir herself recognized about masculinity: it is a phenomenological claim toward universality whose claiming universality is itself the precondition for obscuring its bodily, material contingencies. Wendy Brown argues that the advent of walls and physical security is the psychic as well as aesthetic response of sovereignty to global forces which penetrate the nation.[197] Postcolonial theory has shown us that that the public dimensions of the 'nation' correlate with masculine drives for change, progress, expansion, and activity while the feminine relates to tradition,

[197] Brown, Walled States Waning Sovereignty, 32-33, 54.

passivity, and the domestic.[198] Joseph Allan Boone even goes so far as to claim that the "Penetrating phallus" is a metaphor for the nation in order to explain the metaphorical drives linking fucking to military aggression and national vulnerability to male vulnerability in the West's security imaginary.[199] These theoretical metaphors, however, betray something about the concept of masculinity and sovereignty when insisting on their ontology as metaphors. Anxiety regarding one's vulnerability, active roles (both against the world and in sexuality), and public command are the essential conceptual foreground against which sovereignty and western masculinity constitute themselves and each other. Contemporary masculinity and sovereignty do not stand in for one another as metaphors but as metonymy in the Lacanian sense: as a conceptual oscillation or "sliding of meaning" between poles of likeness rather than as fundamentally separate objects that the mind can find relations between only through the suppression of difference.[200] That sovereign imperative to manifest in a male body is thus made all the more pressing given the global context which Brown describes: the sovereign political space of the nation-state is being penetrated by forces beyond its masculine command, and thus we need a masculine commander to reassert our totality and deny (or suppress) our vulnerabilities.

This universality, however, is further complicated by the pervasive acceptance of methodological liberalism in discussions of sovereignty and democracy. Rawlsian liberalism narrows our democratic possibilities by limiting the way we think about 'equality' as a one-way move toward political authority for those formerly denied political authority. Not only is the reverse move, the one-way move away from political authority for those with political authority, limited to asides in radical texts – examples – but the very process of conceiving of equality in these terms presumes that individuals are static subjects meant to inhabit permanent modes. We should not think of political authority as a stable, self-contained position – as the masculine confines of western politics insist – but instead always as a temporary mode. We should move beyond

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[198] McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995. 353-357, 359; Chaterjee, Partha. *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993. 117-118; Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 15;

[199] Boone, Joseph Allen. *The Homoeroticism of Orientalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. 4-5.

[200] Lacan, Jacques. *Formations of the Unconscious: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book V*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Translated by Russell Grigg. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2017. 65-73.

Aristotle's oscillation of equality as conditional upon the otherwise stable male form who can only ever exchange roles with other men toward the contingency of the female, slave, and mechanic. All four are 'modes' and subjects in political societies need to equally inhabit in order to make the democratic critique of sovereignty, Agamben's critique, a realizable goal; a redistribution of the full activity of producing and reproducing socio-political reality rather than a reorganization of who is situated in what positions. The democratic critique is not to insist that a masculine commander is masculinist or fascist – by conceptual operation, both are desired in the fact that a sovereign people call on one to manifest sovereignty – but rather through insisting on the need to de-masculinize sovereignty, including even the 'virtual' masculinity wielded by supposedly progressive, women leaders. Much like Agamben returns to Aristotle in order to excavate an alternative way for thinking politics in the present, so should we rethink the West's political commitment to the operation of the concepts in his fourfold scheme.

While much has been written about the father of western political theory's explicit misogyny[201], few critiques would go so far as to suggest that 'freedom' and the public domain of the polis are problematic in themselves, rather than problematic only insofar as they are restricted to men. But I want to suggest that we abandon the western commitment to freedom as a fundamental good, which is often guides our reading of political theory as a kind of implicit liberal methodology. Lisa Lowe has illustrated how modern liberal notions of freedom can only persist, much like Aristotle's free gentleman, in connection with labor performed by racial, sexual, and gender minorities.[202] Similar to how Agamben privileges the creative freedom to do otherwise in theorizing a political subject liberated of sovereign constraints, most of western liberal political theory subscribes to free individuals as the ideal political condition. Egalitarian movements have reduced equality to a matter of increased freedom where minorities are increasingly brought into the public space of Aristotle's gentlemanly citizen. But our commitment to

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[201] Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981. 47; Okin, Susan Moller. *Women in Western Political Thought.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979. 16-18, 83; Spelman, Elizabeth. *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988. 40-45; Saxonhouse, Arlene W. *Women in the History of Political Thought*: *Ancient Greece to Machiavelli*. New York: Praeger, 1985. 67-69.

[202] Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of the Four Continents*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015. 6-7.

increasing freedom and liberating people from the constraints of menial tasks, household work, and service in the will of another operates as a linear move that forgets an important observation implicit within Aristotle: someone must do these other tasks, because the production and reproduction of society necessarily require that someone labors, someone cares for the household, and someone serves others. For the sake of this discussion, I accept that even the position of the Aristotlean slave is a necessary function, but I emphasize the subjectivity of obedience rather than the material conditions of chattel slavery; I do think having individuals unconditionally obey is at times a necessary function, but this function need not be bound by a notion of property. It is Marxists and Feminists who have been at the forefront of critiquing the liberal move toward freedom by emphasizing the need for reproductive labor, care labor, the material labor for the city, but most Anglo-American critiques are ultimately oriented toward restoring one's sense of autonomy over the world rather than pushing for a shift in orientation toward and in service to the world.

Aristotle's fourfold scheme between citizen, slave, laborer, and female remains the implicit fourfold scheme of contemporary western political theory. But most modern political theory promotes only the vertical move from these other stations to the first. Contemporary, Western political theory presume that these terms can be abandoned, collapsed into one another, replaced, or (as in liberalism) ignored. Here is where I pick up Agamben's modal ontology and productively rethink his critiques of sovereignty in light of the *oikos*: that this fourfold scheme is a mode of being with respect to the polis that can be inhabited by all individuals; we need to redistribute the potential to operate in all four modes and emphasize them all as fundamental goods, rather than give undue weight solely to the mode of the citizen. I am, in fact, claiming that there must be conditions under which someone people do not inhabit freedom, but that we should productively celebrate and rethink being in spaces of un-freedom; and that even these modes of service, so anathema to western theorizing, would constitute one temporal mode of four equally shared by all denizens of the polis.

What Remains

Throughout this chapter I have balanced a difficult line between a critical and constructive project. Much of this tension I chose because the constructive impetus

reveals, counterfactually, what is at work in Aristotle's masculinist, fourfold scheme and its contemporary vestiges.

What is left to explain is why this response takes the form of something usefully identified as "resentment." Why are strongman aesthetics mobilized to discipline utopic intrusions? Why are fear, anxiety, and hatred weaponized to suppress dissent? I think these questions cannot be disentangled from the moral values espoused by the Trump coalition. To recognize that masculinity and sovereignty anchor the political field is only the first step; to identify how *suffering* synthesizes this dialectic is to complete the political theological genealogy.

Chapter Three:
Suffering Together

John Winthrop's "A Modell of Christian Charity" is the first North American invocation the "city upon a hill." But unlike later allusions to Christ's parables, the moral authority Winthrop encouraged celebrates order and servitude rather than progressive movements toward democratic justice. In fact, Winthrop's sermon opens by acknowledging the rigid class divisions God ordained for the world, reminiscent of the Great Chain of Being standardized by the Church just a few centuries prior. It then encourages early colonists to manifest the Christian "love" necessary to become a community by practicing "cheerfulness in serving and suffering together." The social-hierarchical dimensions of American religious patriotism have long been recognized by critics as a symbolic basis for racism and nationalism. But what interests me here is the "suffering together." Winthrop's sermon identifies a worldly political link between the sovereignty that ordains hierarchical divisions and the suffering that such division necessarily entails. Suffering's moral force conditions a community that is both political and religious as much as it signifies those best manifesting Christian love. Suffering is both a constitutive condition and subjective discipline.

Winthrop's call to suffer cannot be separated from its political theological foreground. Suffering here is not simply moralizing rhetoric or metaphysical justifications for complacency, but that which creates and sustains a community prior to clear divisions between the religious and political. And as a value that both emerges with God's orders but must also be obediently practiced, it directly relates to modern conceptions of sovereignty. As readers four centuries removed from Winthrop's context, we should not allow ourselves to assume the meaning of his invoking "suffering" is sufficiently explained by its religious dimensions alone. Rather, we must ask why suffering makes sense as the necessary condition for building and sustaining community; why its religiosity so effortlessly manifests as politics. What is it about this component of everyday living that makes it most amendable to Winthrop's appropriation as opposed to the range of qualities and virtues that linger in the broader Western tradition? Because, for Winthrop, suffering maintains some essential link to sovereignty. But why might he so readily correlate suffering and sovereignty?

The answer to this question rests in the central doctrines of Christian theology. In particular, three dimensions of Christ have remained stable for nearly seventeen centuries: his masculine humanity, his divinity (and, thus, sovereign authority), and his earthly suffering that both constituted and manifested both. Christ dies to redeem humankind of the consequences of the fall. Sectarian differences interpret "redemption" and "fall" differently, but a fundamental error is nonetheless recognized as occurring at the dawn of human history which is only corrected in the Son of God's violent death. Thus, discussions of sovereignty need to redress not only the Medieval church's claim to steward Christ's divine sovereignty, the antecedent to contemporary secular sovereignty, but also those conditions that prompt the very *need* for this authority. To understand why Winthrop so readily mobilized suffering as a political virtue requires engagement with Christian theodicy. We must read Genesis 3, the fall of humankind, as a political text, identifying the ways that the fall of humankind relates to God's sovereign command. Within this text, the disorder of the world invites the need for earthly – political – authority, which is dictated by God in ways that are co-emergent with a rigid gender/sex binary which is itself further conditioned and defined by specific kinds of suffering. This is the matrix that Christ's death narrative inverts, the man who suffers and dies in order to make possible a return to direct access to God's orderly authority. The theological complexities aside, suffering here intervenes as a necessary component in the process of mutual glorification between masculinity and sovereignty. Man *suffers* authority as much as authority is demanded by the suffering natural to the world.

In this chapter, I first explicate the shared similarities between certain secular literatures on suffering. I locate a shared gap susceptible to political theology's interventions. I then interpret Genesis 3, the fall of humanity, as the foundational text of Christian political theology. I rely on both feminist and historical criticisms of the text in order to identify the difference between the text itself and the way it has been received by the orthodox positions of mainstream Christianity – Protestants, Catholics, and non-denominational Evangelicals. Akin to my earlier reading of Aristotle, I want to emphasize that the text itself is open to different possibilities, the existence of which always insists on the contingency of dominant readings while also marking the political horizons of these dominant readings. I then pick up on the work that suffering does in the

text, identifying three relationships: first, that the western gender binary is co-emergent with suffering, where suffering is seen to encompass both specific kinds of endless labor; second, that this gender binary is also co-emergent with worldly sources of authority; and third, that suffering engenders authority both by needing authority to anchor the possibility of social reproduction but also, theologically, by creating the need that will be resolved by both the Church and Christ's sovereignty. I then return to early modern and late medieval political theorists in order to identify how suffering works in their text to both constitute and obscure the conceptual relationship between masculinity and sovereignty in the post-Christian West.

The point of identifying these conceptual links is not merely to complicate the earlier relationship I illustrated between sovereignty and masculinity. Rather, I demonstrate how the subjective dimensions of suffering become the disciplinary acts in daily life that connect one to both a gendered relationship to the world and authority. What emerges as a theological economy of glorification between masculinity, sovereignty, and suffering has become a celebration of suffering in itself for precisely the masculinist and authoritative ends that such a celebration offers to the participant. The abstract operation of glorification that occurs between masculinity and suffering becomes concrete through corporeal acts of suffering that both draw their meaning from and reiterate the ontological centrality of this hollow glory. We need understand the Christian theology of suffering only insofar as this theology still frames the horizons against which modern, post-Christian populations see an intrinsic worth within suffering itself as a means to cultivate masculinity and sovereign legitimacy. Christian suffering is a political theology of ritual discipline. Suffering becomes the basis of mutual recognition for the construction of political communities as much as it becomes the necessary – and desired – aesthetic of sovereign leaders.

The Politics of Suffering

Literatures on the politics of suffering – or, secular literatures on suffering – have proliferated since the late twentieth century, larging owing to Bourdieu's *Weight of the World*. Many of these I will discuss in the next chapter as they share the central, Marxisant narrative of "resentment" to explain the suffering precariat's inclinations toward rightist populism. Besides these 'resentment' texts, a number of other scholars

have offered secular interpretations of the politics of suffering. Some identify suffering as one part of a broader apparatus of 'feeling' politics, using suffering as a heuristic for the affective interrogations of political decision-making and the politics of world building.[203] Others have examined the raced and postcolonial biopolitics of suffering as a consequence of either the sovereign decision to kill or let live or Eurocentric (white) policing of boundaries pertaining to the rational, human citizen.[204] The differences between these two sub-sets reflect the mutually constitutive nature of sovereignty endemic to Winthrop's sermon: the subjective dimension, that suffering is a discipline that constitutes ones moral worth and authorizes one as a member of the sovereign political community; and the objective dimension, that it persists as a natural phenomenon of the disorderly world which conditions the need for sovereign order. Suffering operates subjectively to make humans of agents that navigate the world while operating objectively as the natural disorder which conditions the sovereign decision between who might belong to the orderly community that preserves itself. One of the only attempts as systematically exploring the politics of suffering articulates the dialectic of suffering as that which is both "inherent in humanity" and the "supreme value," a "metaphysical framework" that "modernity" merely "inverts" rather than overcomes through its secular operations.[205]

Two genres of academic literature illustrate the metaphysics of suffering as a political problem. The first are critical accounts of American religious nationalism, the symbolic successors of Winthrop's sermon. The second is literatures on humanitarianism. Both of these genres reflect the arbitrary and complex relationship between politics and religion in ways that can be made sense of only through reflecting on the political theology of suffering. And in these ways, they demonstrate the dialectic relationship of suffering remains an uninterrogated dimension of sovereignty.

Suffering has been identified as a practice of constitution both the worth of the nation and nationalist belonging. Various scholars of religious nationalism and civil

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[203] Lars Tonder, *Tolerance*, 5; Lauren Berlant, *Queen of America*, 1-2; Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 10, 100; Jennifer Terry, *Attachments to War*, 2-3, 20.
[204] Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 79-80; Puar, *The Right to maim*, 13; Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 75-77; Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby Papa's Maybe", 206-207;
[205] Cynthia Halpern, *Suffering, Politics, Power*, 29-30.

religion in the United States have described national suffering as endemic to the country's nationalist discourse. Sydney Ahlstrom, a major figure in the early canon of American Christian history, mentions tragic suffering as an existential dilemma posed by the Civil War that Christians understood by reflecting on American "choseness." Nineteenth century Christians in both North and South interpreted the Civil War's tragic suffering as a national *discipline* through which to build their nation's Christian identity.[206] Others discussions of "Civil Religion" and "Theonationalism" illustrate the prevalent belief that the United States is "chosen" by God to be the "New Israel"[207] in ways that directly link the nation's development to the communal sufferings of the ancient Hebrews. In other words, objective conditions in the world inculcate the need for the sovereign American community. But these same narratives reflect the subjective and disciplinary dimensions of suffering. Curtis Evans, among the foremost contemporary historians of Christianity in America, describes suffering as a discipline wielded by Proslavery Christianity to inculcate civilizational dispositions among the enslaved.[208] Nancy Ammerman, a sociologist of American Protestantism, describes contemporary religious conservatives as believing that all instances of personal "suffering" are God's "will" and that bearing these hardships is a matter of personal "obedience" to God.[209] In both the personal and extra-personal instances, suffering is a mechanism of human construction and a prerequisite for full admittance to the community.

Christian groups across the political spectrum have appropriated suffering as the invocation of sovereignty to justify political action. The Social Gospel movement, African American liberation theology, and religious resistance to the Vietnam War all exemplify robust traditions from the left that mediate American nationalism and Christianity in ways that insist moments of suffering can be remedied. These radical

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[206] Ahlstrom, 685-686.
[207] Bellah, Robert N. *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*. New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1975. (18-21); Albanese, Catherine L. "DOMINANT AND PUBLIC CENTER: REFLECTIONS ON THE "ONE" RELIGION OF THE UNITED STATES." *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 4, no. 3 (1983): 83-96. 87-89; Shalev, Eran. *American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013. 3, 8-12, 19-20. Ahlstrom, Sydney E. *A Religious History of the American People*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972. E-Book. 1094; Mark A. Noll. *America's God: From Johnathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. 32.
[208] Evans, Curtis. *The Burden of Black Religion*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008. 44-45.
[209] Ammerman, 66, 41.

traditions generate an optimistic politics that strives for egalitarian political change. Moderated forms of this radical tendency surface in progressive campaigns and administrations that appeal to personal faith and Civil Religion to promote civility, national unity, and reiterations of the nationalist eschatological hope that America is unfolding toward democratic greatness. These center-left and left movements see suffering as constituting the moral authority of their politics as much as it grants them sovereign agency to demand historical changes within the greater political communities within which they are situated. In other words, suffering is that which allows them to make claims against both the church *and* state. It situates them as agents partaking of God's sovereignty against the failure of the orders otherwise representing this sovereignty. Conservative movements similarly invoke suffering for its authorizing force. The contemporary Christian right descends from a political moment when it perceived changes to the sovereign order occurring to rapidly and thus imagined itself as *defenders* of this order and *victims* of the left's usurpation of justice claims.[210] These movements appeal to suffering in order to authorize their reactional legitimacy and invoke their moral sovereignty in order to preserve the inequalities of the current political community. Despite their differences, politicized Christians share a dialectic approach to suffering which tethers it to God's sovereignty.

In contrast to personal and micro-communal claims to God's sovereign authority, humanitarian dilemmas reflect the consequences of invoking suffering to violate national claims of international sovereignty. A fundamental theoretical issue emerges in discussion of humanitarian interventions, whether military or peaceful: Is there a kind of suffering prior to politics, a natural suffering, that humanitarianism can redress without political interventions? Or is all suffering constituted by politics and thus any intervention is itself political, even if discursively situated as apolitical? This "gap" between politics and morality in humanitarianism, the need to "create a space for human security" that is

[210] The "persecution motif" has a long history in Christianity and is by no means unique to conservative Christians in the United States. Nonetheless, the self-victimization of socially conservative Christians is another iteration of this motif. These religious believers are not merely reversing the logic of 'identity' politics for their own end but actively engaged in the reinvention of the 'persecution' motif within their own tradition.

"nonpolitical" but "within the political space of violence and war and group interest,"[211] is itself a political theological problem regarding the disputes between suffering and sovereignty. Much of this "gap" emerges from history, wherein Christian traditions of charity emerge as acts that presume suffering is the domain of religious or otherwise non-political actors to remedy in small quantities.[212] But there exists a uniquely modern "emergency"[213] logic to the politics of suffering that is not satisfactorily explained by the mere institutional separation of religion and politics despite being politico-theological. One key to understanding this logic is to examine Henry Dunant's reasoning, the symbolic forefather of humanitarianism. Dunant subscribed to a sect of Calvinism that accepted that "Fallen" state of the world. The best a "moral man" could do within an "immoral society" and the "Fallen world" is to mitigate suffering.[214]Contemporary humanitarian appeals for apolitical, moral authority are thus the product of a "rigid evangelical Protestant separation between religion and politics" that normalizes (ontologizes) suffering.[215]

Other scholars have likewise recognized a division between suffering as a normative foundation to the material world and "emergency" suffering as a unique concentration of suffering that can be remedied back to its otherwise natural (or politically acceptable) state. For Amanda Moniz, North Atlantic humanitarianism emerges within specifically masculinist and imperial colonial relations whereby the ability to recognize something first as "emergency," like Atlantic drownings and extreme poverty, and later as contingent, like slavery, is part of what constitutes the "self-assurance" the a rising, white, male middle class.[216] Here, as with the religious right, the sovereignty manifests itself as the ability to identify an instance of suffering as contingent or absolute. Iain Wilkinson and Arthur Kleinman suggest my interpretation by describing humanitarian politics as a kind of "providence" Christianity bequeaths the secular and modern period.[217] The social community and the nation enter the empty space of God's

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[211] Warner, Daniel. "Henry Dunant's Imagined Community: Humanitarianism and the Tragic." In *Alternatives Global, Local, Political* Vol. 38 No. 1. 2013, 6.
[212] Calhoun, 51; Moyn, Last Utopia, 221; Moniz, Empire to Humanity, 26.
[213] Calhoun, 51.
[214] Warner, 12-13.
[215] Warner, 20.
[216] Moniz, 12; 58; 70-72; 38, 44; 87; 131-132.
[217] Wilkinson and Kleinman, A Passion for Society, 38.

historical authority as the sovereign agent to both identify and remedy situations of imbalanced suffering.[218]

The emergency logic of humanitarian suffering and the reactionary logic of the American religious right both reveal an implicit and ontological connection between suffering. All of these instances operate under the assumption that identifying a manifestation of worldly suffering as contingent is in some way not merely a political act but an act of political *authority*. To claim that a manifestation of suffering in the world is contingent rather than essential is in some way imply that necessity of fixing it. Within the Christian theological heritage, this fixing is the exclusive domain of God and is resolved through participation in the divine economy of salvation. The worldly sovereign alone wields the ability to not only invoke a legal state of exception but also a state of emergency whereby political intervention can redress an otherwise temporary excess of corporeal suffering. For domestic social conservatives, liberal and left utopic politics are a series of "wrong beliefs" about society and fundamentally misunderstand the reality of the world.[219] Their misunderstanding of the world "damns" them theologically because utopic politics intervenes on God-centered hierarchies of authority by usurping Godly sovereignty and reconfiguring the world toward "chaotic" democratic possibilities.[220] Likewise in the international sphere, for one actor to identify an instance suffering within sovereign boundaries as contingent and imply the need for remedy is to infringe on that actor's sovereignty. Here the dynamics of sovereignty are immediately recognizable for their violating recognizable rights and defined borders. The legal norms and cultural norms constituting sovereignty are not the only conceptual problems with identifying international situations of suffering. By identifying a situation as a moment of emergency or otherwise identifying a situation as susceptible to change, humanitarians risk committing the same 'error' that domestic conservatives accuse of liberals and leftists: of usurping sovereign authority in pursuit of a disorderly politics of the utopic.

The dialectics of suffering are a political theological problem first set into conceptual motion by Christian theology. Having illustrated how suffering becomes the

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[218] Wilkinson and Kleinman, 31-34.
[219] Ammerman, 77.
[220] Ibid, 41; 77.

means to invoke sovereignty, I now wish to make sense of why this process seems reasonable. What is the conceptual foreground within which different domains of secular life discover in suffering a sovereign appeal? This relationship between sovereignty and suffering, and the historical imbalances of power rooted in masculinity that constitute them, begin with a specifically Christian problematic.

Gender, Suffering, Sovereignty

Christianity's approach to politics begins not with memories of Rome's crucifying Jesus nor with exhortations in Romans 13 to obey secular authorities, but rather with the socio-political implications of Genesis 3. The fall of mankind and expulsion from the garden marks the beginning of social and political problems. For Augustine and the Western (Catholic and Protestant) churches specifically, Genesis 3 presents man as utterly depraved and therefore discourages structural political change while animating a rigidly masculinist notion of political authority. Understanding how Genesis 3 has been traditionally received and interpreted will reveal how *suffering* sustains the dialectic between masculinity and sovereignty.

Genesis 3 opens with the "subtlety" of the serpent convincing "woman" to eat from the middle tree of the garden, the only tree which God has prohibited man and woman from eating.[221] The serpent claims that eating from the tree will make woman "like gods" and, upon eating the fruit, man and woman's eyes "were opened."[222] Where the serpent convinced woman to eat, woman infamously convinces man to follow.[223] The pair then hides from God who discovers (or already knew) what occurred. He then curses all the characters involved:

> And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field…And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam…cursed is the ground for thy sake;

[221] King James Bible, Gen. 3:1-3.
[222] Ibid,. Gen. 3:4-7.
[223] Ibid., Gen. 3:6.

> in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.[224]

Only after man and woman have had their punishments allocated and man's primacy mandated does Adam "[call] his wife's name Eve."[225] Man and woman, initially equal in immortality with no need for production or reproduction, find themselves suffering the work of society as punishment for disobedience. In Christian theology, this disobedience inaugurates a shift in the nature of humankind. For Eastern churches, the "ancestral" sin is man and woman's inclinations toward disobedience. For Western churches, beginning with Augustine, the "original" sin exemplifies human's essential nature as totally fallen. Under the ancestral sin model humanity is seen as potentially good if properly guided; under the original sin model, humanity is so depraved that the church only exists as a bulwark against even worse human behavior. In both cases, Christ's death redeems humanity from its initial disobedience and makes possible a return to the Edenic state in the hereafter. The need to glorify God, to turn one's attention to the metaphysical at the expense of everyday life, cannot be disentangled from the problem which glory works to resolve: our disobedience and initial turning away. The church partakes of God's sovereignty only to the extent that it shelters man from the depravity of the world and exists as the only means of reconciliation with the divine.

Genesis 3 is, at its core, the foundational text of Christian political theology. Contra Aristotle, who sees a fourfold scheme at work in the reproduction of society, Genesis 3 proposes only two: the man, husband, and laborer; and the wife, servant, and domestic worker. Slaves do not figure in the early Genesis narrative, although Aquinas admits that slavery is justified after the fall as a necessary state of social relations made possible by the need to labor for society.[226] What matters for politics after the fall is that man and woman exist as stable figures in hierarchical relations that share between themselves the labor, which the text emphasizes as "suffering," of producing and

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[224] Ibid., Gen 3:14-19.
[225] Ibid., Gen 3:20.
[226] Thomas Aquinas. *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*. Translated and Edited by Paul E. Sigmund. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988. 39.

reproducing society. The word here translated as "sorrow" derives from the Greek "lupeo" (λυπέω) which in different forms broadly means sorrow, suffering, giving pain, feeling distress, grieving, facing vexation or harassment. The term signifies God's equally punishing both actors in sex-specific ways that broadly reconstitutes the way they perceive themselves in the world and each other. Suffering here is not meant to embody momentary pain, but a subjectivity of permanent distress. Thus, the first political act of sovereignty is to separate humanity by sex. By 'politics' here I mean sovereign activity in the world after the fall from utopic stability, wherein the relationship between human obedience and God could not be said to encompass something identifiably political insofar as it was natural. Man is defined as much by the materiality of his bodily sex and active sexual capacity as he is by the need to work the fields; woman is defined by her passive role and her suffering through childbirth. Neither the role of field worker nor child-bearer exist in Eden despite a presumed material difference in bodies. Only after the fall does God mandate a correlation of bodily sex and labor role as a distribution of suffering. Moreover, until the New Testament authors write their texts as resolutions to Hebrew narrative problems, Genesis 3 did not permit the possibility of escape. Man and woman are punished to labor in the material world for eternity. The New Testament's solution, faith in the savior who took up the remainder of necessary labor through his suffering, allows sovereignty to sanctify human death presuming one dies in conditions of faithful obedience.

The traditional approach to Genesis 3, that which sees God's command as inaugurating a clear gender-sex division by way of distributing sovereignty and delegating the male lordship, is not evident in Genesis itself. Feminist theologians have disputed this political link between masculinity and sovereignty that the suffering of Genesis holds together. Rosemary Radford Ruether describes the "curse" of Genesis 3 as severing man from unification with God's sovereignty.[227] The church intervenes in this separation to guide man and woman back to God but through a means that mandates a patriarchal metaphysics. God becomes approachable as *Logos* and ancient traditions of *Sophia* or wisdom become suppressed; the Church's emphasis on faith appropriates and

[227] Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1993 [1983]. 81.

reforms the classical privileging of the (masculine) mind over (feminine) body; and the general problems of fallenness, that inspiring the need for salvation, constitution a grand narrative of "male transcendence" where he flees from "warfare against the realm of the mother, the realm of body and nature," through refuge in the church.[228] Christianity's interpretation of the fall, its response to human suffering in the world, is to naturalize a metaphysics of gender where the activity of reunifying with God occurs within a conceptual matrix of masculinity. Suffering is not only the divinely ordained response for disobedience but also the justification for masculinist order. The church's material form, it's masculinist bishopric and associations with (male) Christian emperors, is a politics of trying to manage a disobedient and fallen material world by orienting it toward the beyond.[229]

Likewise, Phyllis Trible notes how the text of Genesis uses suffering to naturalize a masculine metaphysics of power. Trible presents a close reading of God's interrogating man and woman after eating the fruit and notes that God, in these moments, only speaks to woman through man. Woman's disobedience severs her direct access to God by initiating a process of male mediation.[230] This mediation reverses the Edenic state of gender equality where man and woman both spoke directly to God and shared life in the garden. Looking toward the Hebrew rather than Greek, Trible explains that the gendered terms for labor in both instances of man and woman contain a clear connotation of "suffering" that goes beyond momentary pain.[231] Woman must "toil" and "suffer" childbirth and domestic reproduction; man must "struggle" and "toil" through the power struggle of overcoming the world which he was previously master over.[232] Wherein the original creation produce leisure and pleasure, disobedience causes "the earth itself" to "produce pain and famine."[233] Male gains dominance over woman not as a matter of "destiny" or divine gift, but in forcibly being positioned as a "master" over disobedient woman in an upturned world.[234] The gender-sex dichotomy, that of

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[228] Ruether, 58, 74-75.
[229] Ruether, 125.
[230] Trible, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality.* Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978. 120.
[231] Trible, 127.
[232] Trible, 130-131.
[233] Trible, 131.
[234] Trible, 128.

allocating social roles based on the material divisions of a dimorphous body, emerges in Genesis as conditions that justify and respond to the suffering now endemic to reality. In contemporary American life, socially conservative religious women continue to embrace a literal reading of the fall and make sense of themselves as subordinate to the masculine authority necessary to anchor some semblance of reality in socio-political order.[235]

Besides feminist theologians, historical-critical scholars of the Bible dispute the male-hierarchical reading of Genesis as obvious. A number of scholars engaging in biblical criticism have identified alternatives dormant in different manuscripts of the Genesis texts as well as implied through make sense of its historical context. Gender is not necessarily a part of Eden before the fall despite man and his counterpart existing as separate.[236] The language of woman's subordination does not imply a social political subordination in itself and there is no clear narrative attribution of man's dominance to divine mandate.[237]In fact, it's not at all evident that classical notions of gender implied an essential division between male and female substance rather than a "continuum" of masculinity where women were simply inferior men.[238] What matters for the sake of contemporary reception of Genesis 3 is not the authentic meaning of the text but rather the dominant tradition of dissemination which circumscribes the acceptable possibilities for interpretation. The orthodox Tradition in the West, by way of Augustine and Aquinas, anchor a reception of Genesis 3 that see God's granting man, a unified and independently sexed substance, authority over woman, a clearly delineated and opposite substance, as a means to temporarily order the material and political world until Christ's return or man's reunification with God upon death.[239] Thus, the ontological reality of

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[235] Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997. 41, 52, 137, 140-141; Manning, Christel J. *God Gave Us the Right: Conservative Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, and Orthodox Jewish Women Grapple with Feminism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999. 126, 171-175, 194-195.

[236] Kraus, Helen. *Gender Issues in Ancient and Reformation Translations of Genesis 1-4*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 18-20.

[237] Kraus, Helen. *Gender Issues in Ancient and Reformation Translations of Genesis 1-4*. 32-33; Trible, 96-98; Lohr, Joel N. "Sexual Desire? Eve, Genesis 3:16, and תשוקה" *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol. 130 No. 2 (2011) 227-228, 246.

[238] Kuefler, Mathew. *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 4-5.

[239] Kraus, 192-193; Kuefler, 197-203; Kraemer, Ross Shepard. "Gender," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religions*. Edited by Barbette Stanley Spaeth. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 299-300; Colleen M. Conway, "The Construction of Gender in the New Testament," *The*

suffering is both a punishment and the circumstances necessary for the possibility of authority to emerge as a brief respite of stability. This burden is understood as a kind of suffering in itself as much as it is a privilege and is bequeathed to man *qua* man.

Suffering, gender, and authority become related in specific ways in the orthodox reception of the narrative of the fall. Genesis 3 becomes mobilized as a narrative that makes gender co-constitutive with the labor necessary for the reproduction of society. In our contemporary, more inclusive vocabulary, "sex' refers to the material differences between bodies related to both reproduction and/or pleasure, whereas "gender" refers to the aesthetics of signifying the role we identify with within the economy of sex. In Genesis, both reproduction and the pleasures of sexuality are a curse. The material differences between bodies and their aesthetic presentation are demanded, by God's sovereign authority, to be unified with respect not to sexuality but to labor. The sex of our material bodies, our corporeality, becomes politicized through gender as gender becomes the way our sex manifests itself in labor. But labor here is specifically tied to gender-specific kinds of suffering. Suffering, then, is the norm that justifies the relationship between gender and labor. As the active sufferer who farms and builds, the male is given theological precedent of authority over passive woman who exists to be a passive sufferer and bear offspring. Masculinity and its authority emerge through conditions of suffering as much as it is justified by that same suffering. Suffering becomes essential to understanding the political theology of gender that emerges in the West.

A Brief Genealogy of Western Christian Suffering

The Genesis text by no means implies the brief reading I have offered. In fact, diverse Rabbinical interpretations precede and contradict what I have suggested. The previous reading emerges long after the text was written from with a specific historical context wherein a fledgling community begins to interpret itself inter-communal relations and relations to the world in novel ways. The first Christians invented what we now identify in English as 'suffering' and have, ever since, read back into the Genesis text. A few decades removed from the Crucifixion, Paul wrote to a community at Colossae that "I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing

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Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender. Edited by Adrian Thatcher. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 224-226;

what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church."[240] The Greek word Paul invokes here for "sufferings" is *pathemasin* (παθημασιν), from the infinitive *pathema* (πάθημα), which means "that which befalls one, suffering, misfortune."[241] Whereas the verb in genesis implies ongoing state of being, Paul's verb implies a passive subject confronted by the world-at-large. This passage from First Colossians is just one of many in Paul's letters that illustrate suffering "as an integral part of the process of salvation" and therefore constitutive of Christianity.[242] But Paul is not alone in conceiving of his own identity and mission in relation to the *suffering* of Christ. Early Christians formed their communal identity in relation to the suffering of Christ and subsequent martyrs. And they inaugurated a tradition of thinking "Christian" to be synonymous with someone who suffers insofar as suffering allowed one to partake of the likeness (and in earlier traditions, the *gratias* or *energia*) of Christ.

Suffering in the early Christian imagination was both an experience upon which communal identity took root and a constructed value that established a break with the classical worldview. Early Christians constructed a subjectivity of suffering in order to comprehend a world "unrelentingly filled with risk, pain, and death."[243] This subjectivity established new categories of suffering, like the sick and the poor, that were "essentially absent" from the Greco-Roman "classificatory" systems.[244] Likewise, Christian eschatology, predicated on the world's imminent end, shaped attitudes toward death, pain, and voluntary martyrdom that further distinguished Christians from the Greco-Roman neighbors.[245] Martyr narratives extended Christian suffering toward novel forms of political resistance as enduring bodily pain, especially in public view, became a spiritual value. [246] The memories generated from early martyrdoms, even those of

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[240] Colossians 1:24, New Revised Standard Versions, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1%3A24&version=NRSV
[241]Liddell-Scott-Jones Concordance, Tufts University *Perseus* Online Lexicon.
[242] Dunn, James D. G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998. 486, 496.
[243] Perkins, Judith. *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*. New York: Routledge, 1995. 9, 15.
[244] Perkins, 8.
[245] Perkins, 40; Castelli, 25.
[246] Perkins, 109, 142; Castelli, 35; 119-122; 199; 196; Rives, James. "The Piety of a Persecutor," in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* Vol 4 No 1 Spring 1996. Pp 1-25. 25. Shaw, Brent D. "Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs," in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* Vol 4 No 3 Fall 1996 pp. 269-312. 275;

dubious historicity, became a shared set of symbols within which all Christians imagined themselves in the world.

As Christianity took its institutional shape and formalized theology, suffering remained a touchstone of Christian identity. Both Greek and Latin Christianity prioritized bodily suffering in the theological imagination. Eastern fathers, like John Chrysostom and Basil, turned toward the bodily suffering of martyrs as a model for both asceticism and non-bodily disciplines. [247] Augustine, the preeminent Latin patriarch, described Christ's suffering as an "exemplum" for Christian humility[248] and claimed that suffering constituted the ontological condition of fallen man.[249] In both instances, these early Christian thinkers continued the legacy of linking Christian identity to martyr figures by centralizing discussions of suffering in their theological images of both man and the world. With the reemergence of Aristotle in the West centuries later, Medieval theologians like Aquinas and Bonaventure constructed Christian vocabularies of pain in order to answer questions pertaining to the ways a soul might suffer independent of the body. [250] Medieval Christianity considered pain to be intrinsically valuable because "suffering on earth was granted to martyrs" and "denied to the wicked."[251] Like the early fathers, Medieval Christianity emphasized suffering as a means to cultivate an intrinsically Christian subjectivity. Despite widening theological differences and emergent schisms, bodily suffering as a discipline and as a category for theological reflection remained prominent into late Medieval Europe.

What this earlier genealogy reveals, from late antiquity period through early modernity, is two parallel dimensions of suffering. The first is the objective or ontological. Suffering is the state of the material and corporeal world. What distinguishes

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312. Shaw, Brent D. "Judicial Nightmares and Christian Memory," in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* Vol 11 No 4 Winter 2003, pp 533-563. 561-563.

[247] Skedros, James C. "The Suffering of Martyrdom: Greek Perspectives in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries", 17- 32. Harrison, Nonna Verna and David G. Hunter (editors), *Suffering and Evil in Early Christian Thought*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006. 25-26.

[248] Drever, Matthew. "Images of Suffering in Augustine and Luther," in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* Vol 51 No 1 Spring 2012, pp. 71-82. 72-73.

[249] Hunter, David G. "Evil, Suffering, and Embodiment in August," 143-161. 160-161. Also in Harrison and Hunter.

[250] Mowbray, 41.

[251] Cohen, Esther. *The Modulated Scream: Pain in Late Medieval Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010. 51; 256.

the divine from the real is the existence and unending persistence of suffering. This situates the way Christians respond to the fall in Genesis 3: from order to disorder, utopia to suffering. To turn away from the possibility of redemption is to resign oneself to this suffering in the world and, as such, divine punishment – a constantly shifting theological concept long before the early modern invention of a fiery hell – is God's resigning men to their own resignation. Thus, a yearning for utopic order is necessarily a return to God's sovereign authority. But this ontological foreground makes possible the second dimension of suffering: the personal and the disciplinary. The facticity of material suffering is itself the precondition for forming one's moral worth by relying on Christ's redemptive authority and, thereafter, bearing the suffering of the world as constitutive of one's spiritual identity. By accepting divine authority, one is able to approach suffering as resolvable *not* through one's capacity to change it in real time but by being separated from it in the hereafter. Denying one's capacity to change the world through *suffering* it becomes the foremost testament of faith by which one is rewarded with freedom from suffering in the hereafter. Various traditions arise that build on this theological motif by making the embrace of suffering a means of overcoming objects in the world and rejoicing in Christ. One is not resigned to the permanence of suffering but embraces it as proof that an alternative exists and thus encounters it as an object of faith. One publicly reveals their true faith through their bearing suffering with faith. And suffering persists as a secular discipline of worth connecting us as subjects to desired forms of order; it remains the secular level of individual practice that correlates with authority as much as worship and prayer correlate with the metaphysical authority of God.

In other words, suffering is the obscured foreground of political theology, the precondition and sustained consequence of Christian sovereignty.

The Political Theology of Suffering

The Christian foreground of Western political theory establishes a theological link between suffering and sovereignty. Augustine posits the fall of humankind as the need for moral and political order. But this summary of his life's work, which significantly changed over time as he came to oppose his earlier receptivity to classical Greek thought, is by no means evident. Augustine ultimately settled on the claim that evil is merely a privation of the good rather than a metaphysical reality in itself and that the world's

disorder was continually permitted by God so as to inculcate a longing for unification in the hereafter. Thus, his political theory is not so much a systematic explanation of the need for order as much as it is a contrast between the depravity of the world, and the ontological futility of earthly order, and the need to posit the true and only source of sovereign authority in the hereafter. Earthly authority persists only to make our worldly lives tolerable.[252] Augustine gives no final or totalizing explanation for why the fall of mankind occurred but insists on the importance of recognizing it as a formative event.[253] And the only remedy to this problem is salvation in Jesus Christ and, thus, reunification with divine sovereignty. The world is hopelessly dystopic and the utopic promise cannot be excavated in the here and now. The intricacies of Augustine's theology and his own contradictions are largely sidelined in public by the early modern period, wherein Augustine persists as an appeal that grounds depravity in the world.

The form of his argument, however, is taken up and refined by Aquinas who recovers and privileges Aristotle. Aquinas, via Aristotle, view political society as a good in itself which only takes on more responsibility after the fall of mankind but would have nonetheless existed, in a simplified form, prior to the fall.[254] More specifically, ruler for the sake of the ruled (*ad regimen ordinatus*) would persist prior to the value as that which sustains a community oriented toward virtue; but after the fall, rule for its own sake (*ad dominandum*) occurs.[255] Here Aquinas's synthesizes Aristotle and Augustine in ways that will frame Western political theory thereafter. What for Augustine is a demand pressed upon human life by the disorder consequent of the fall is for Aquinas both a demand and a virtue. Aristotle's notion of virtue and the Christian theodicy combine to inaugurate a view of political community where it exists as a good in itself to discipline man toward his highest end – which, for Aquinas, isn't merely virtue, but obedience to God[256] – and force its hand against a disorderly world. The conceptual work is here laid for a modern

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[252] Weithman, Paul J. "Augustine and Aquinas on Original Sin and the Function of Political Authority," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* Vol. 3 No. 3 (1992) [pp. 353-376], 354.
[253] Couenhoven, Jesse, "Augustine's Rejection of the Free-Will Defence: AN Overview of the Late Augustine's Theodicy," *Religious Studies* Vol. 43 No. 3 (Sept. 2007) [pp.279-298] 281, 287; Chappell, T. D. J. "Explaining the Inexplicable: Augustine on the Fall," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 62 No. 3 (Autumn 1994) [pp. 869-884] 872, 878.
[254] Weithman, 355.
[255] Weithman, 360.
[256] Thomas Aquinas. *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics*. Translated and Edited by Paul E. Sigmund. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988. 4.

dialectic of suffering to emerge. The subjective, disciplinary aspects of suffering as the tensions that occur between our own individual wills to rule (*ad dominandum*) and our participation in society to better orient our attention toward God's sovereignty (*ad regimen ordinatus*); and the objective aspects of the suffering, the disorderly world which inaugurates earthly domination (*ad dominandum*) but also preconditions the participation in God's salvific economy (*ad regimen ordinatus*). Suffering both constitutes and is constituted by earthly political order and man's relationship with God, the ultimate sovereign.

This political theology of suffering lingers in secular ritual in the ways we negotiate the moral and political tensions of suffering. Who is suffering, and whose suffering is morally justified? For whose suffering is it morally justified for us to intervene? Have these people suffered enough to warrant our attention and intervention, in either comparative or absolute terms? To what extent is our responsibility for suffering? What suffering is natural and unchangeable, and what suffering is political? In secular translation, Aquinas's terms elucidate our contemporary politics of suffering. Recognizing that the inherent fallenness of the world situates sovereignty as both a demand and a virtue, we can replace the theological fall with changing climate circumstances, increased competition over material resources, and the various objective conditions external to formal political institutions as a similarly overwhelming sense of impending dread that characterizes nation-state rule as virtue and demand. The "refugee" is a "disquieting" element within liberal order precisely because it reveals sovereign citizenship to be both virtue and demand: something at once potentially offered but never actually accessible to all peoples, totally dependent on a group against which one can be identified as the not-citizen, necessary for those resources needed to survive.[257] Contemporary sovereignty is a necessary precondition for the ability to live well within a political community (*ad regimen ordinatus*) while nonetheless being conceived as a good in itself that must be defended against threats internal and external that disrupt its stability (*ad dominandum*). But within this duality is an operation of suffering: that the ability to not suffer in a sovereign society requires obedience to sovereignty itself (*ad dominandum*) as well as cultivating the proper moral demeanor as a subject (*ad regimen*

[257] Agamben, Means Without End, 20.

ordinatus); while the ability to recognize instances of suffering as problems to resolve becomes an activity of recognition between communities self-constituted as similar in some way (*ad regimen ordinatus*) but also manifestations of hierarchies of sovereignty in the global community, wherein some are simply more sovereign than others (*ad dominandum*). God no longer persists as the foundation of legitimacy but he's been replaced by a fraternity of sufferers.

Western political theory enshrines suffering as a precondition for sovereignty through its foundationalist approach: the state of nature. Contrary to those who might approach the state of nature as mere thought experiment or metaphor, the state of nature is the literal secularization of the Genesis myth and represents out inheriting Genesis concurrent through nascent European secularism. Some thinkers, like Locke and Hobbes,[258] wholesale appropriate the Edenic state of nature as the myth that conditions the need for political authority. Others – Bodin,[259] Grotius,[260] Pufendorf,[261] and Vattel[262] – simply reiterate Aquinas, stating that man is unique among the creatures of the world for having a highest aim in the contemplation of God. And this contemplation can only occur through belonging to a political community which suppresses our beastly natures, implying not quite a state of nature but something nonetheless exterior and ontological prior to the human-political. Rousseau's anthropology resembles a different synthesis of Aquinas and Hobbes, relying on the state of nature as a foundation for a political society that *could* develop the virtues in man, but identifying the political community's teleology as historically regressive.[263] Nonetheless, Rousseau's General Will is both voice of "people" and "God"[264] and exists to unify those who, conditioned by society, must now necessarily live together.[265] In each of these cases, social disorder is naturalized through appeals to human nature where political order is the necessary precondition for security. This statement at first appears as common sense to those versed in the political theory canon, but when juxtaposed with the Aquinian Aristotle who forms the foreground of

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[258] Locke *Second Treatise* 8-14; , Hobbes, *Leviathan* 81, 161, 183-188; Rousseau 53-55, 61.
[259] Bodin, 3, 10.
[260] Grotius, 87.
[261] Pufendorf, 60, 198-199.
[262] Vattell, 1, 6.
[263] Rousseau, 53-55, 61, 82, 84.
[264] Rousseau, 133.
[265] Ibid., 272.

western political theory, it becomes evident that natural social disorder is merely a secular theological claim. It is not at all evident that any kind of disorder is natural. This "crisis" which is the secular variant of Christian suffering reflects, per Agamben's comments on Hobbes, that "contemporary politics is founded on a secularization of eschatology."[266]

My analysis here correlates Christian suffering with the natural social disorder of modern political theory as an intervention against the way that secularism has limited our reception of the standard canon. Our tacit, uncritical acceptance of secularism allows us to dismiss the writings on religion and theology that many of these thinkers considered to be an integral part of their own works. By arbitrarily considering certain texts 'political theory' within which we further dismiss the religious, and by accepting only selections and partial readings of canonical theologians like Augustine and Aquinas, we inhabit a secular vision that inhibits our capacity to see the genealogical links between Christian theodicy, eschatology, and the normative grounding for Western notions of sovereignty. To view political community, and thus sovereignty, as the necessary prerequisite for the development of virtue where "virtue" is one's orientation toward God; or to view political community as either an ideal or pragmatic necessity for human security in an otherwise hostile and disorderly world is, in both cases, retaining the ontological form and reframing the theological content of Aquinas' theodicy. Disorder and insecurity are secular metonyms for theological suffering. They are foundationalist arguments that condition sovereignty as a worldly concept with no capacity to intervene in a depraved world where disorder is permitted by God. Given that modern political theory structures its solutions to disorder in such a way, we must further admit that one cannot separate Western political theorizing from its foundationalist claims without both carrying over and blinding oneself to the theological form within which they claims first derive their force.

Here, my previous discussion of masculinity and sovereignty manifests its theological dimensions. Masculinity and sovereignty are not merely co-constitutive of terms in Western political thought; they are both secular remnants of a political theology of suffering that sees the male as entitled to authority as the one who both bears suffering

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[266] Agamben, *Stasis*, 289.

in the world and suffers the (active) labor to change the world. Grotius, Kant, and Locke agree with Aquinas in privileging the male in the western gender dichotomy precisely because sexed difference, when properly embodied, enables men to manifest his highest aim – either glorification of God, or it's secular variant, the pursuing of virtue.[267] Bodin[268] and Rousseau[269] see the gendered family as a necessary teleological link between singular man and the political community that sustains him. Hobbes and Pufendorf both premise a worldly equality between the genders which is then inverted either through divine preference[270] or brute strength.[271] A secular reading would see these as arbitrary defenses of an otherwise historical patriarchy, as specifically distinct but generally shared defenses of a gender hierarchy that already exists. Set against their foundationalist appropriations of Eden, however, they reflect God's command in Genesis that gendered divisions of labor co-emerge to separate the division of laboring to reproduce the worldly community. Masculinity is co-constitutive with sovereignty because the disorderly suffering endemic to the world conditions the male in particular as the active agent; furthermore, through Aquinas's Aristotle, man alone retains the capacity to manifest the highest aim, which is contemplation of God. Masculine hierarchies are not merely defended by early political theory but also necessary (in this post-Christian scheme) for sovereignty as the only vehicles with the potential for worldly perfection. Detached from its theological foundations, the metaphysics of sovereignty survives in masculine form by reconstituting the ability to bear suffering as a masculine act and by retaining the ability to inflict and sustain suffering as masculine prerogative.

Fraternité

Thus far, I have shown how suffering is a subjective-objective dialectic in contemporary life in ways that frame politics. I then retrieved the origins for this operation in a political reading of Genesis 3, showing how Christianity bequeaths this meaning to our reception of classical politics via Aquinas. In this final discussion, I linger

[267] Grotius, 507-510, 514; Kant 164, 176; Locke 30-31, 35.
[268] Bodin, 1, 6-7, 10.
[269] Rousseau, 88-89.
[270] Hobbes, 253.
[271] Pufendorf, 199.

on the politics of suffering as a value in order to situate its contemporary force in our contemporary masculinist order.

Most of the modern political theorists I cite take fundamentally opposite approaches to the institution of sovereignty in political community. In fact, we could generally classify two difference styles of sovereignty: that of a singular body or foundation to the political community and that of an institution or class of people who together exercise sovereignty. Much writing on sovereignty focuses on this first dimension, kingship. Less focuses on the latter other than to emphasize how these democratizing moves, limited as they are, challenge the unity essential to sovereignty. But as I argued in the previous chapter, these democratic moves are tied to masculinity in specific ways that should discourage their being identified as properly 'democratic.'

The political moves that Locke and Kant make, per Derrida, to identify the male as the corporeal locus of perfection and thus grant to him access to the sovereign political community, is predicated on the Christianization of Aristotelian friendship.[272] Democracy is not a clearly delineated political concept precisely because it rests on an identity between ruler and ruled that requires an ontologically prior act of counting and inclusion which necessarily always destabilizes the identarian foundations of democracy; Democracy is "tragically irreconcilable and forever wounding."[273] This unfolding wound is the masculinist dialectic at the heart of democracy. It is the counting of those included as friends among a democratic fraternity. Its "demise" is the "patriarchy" which "never stops beginning" with the dream of democracy, that which "endlessly haunt[s] its principle."[274]

Derrida's anti-masculinist critique of sovereignty intervenes in Schmitt's agonism, but without meditations on suffering. He notes that Schmitt "never speaks of the sister."[275] That politics proper is something altogether new, an "old name" with "other forms of struggle" unrelated to the fraternal division of the friend-enemy relation, or we must "admit that the political is in fact this phallogocentrism in act…in the Bible and in the Koran, in the Greek world and in Western modernity: political virtue (the warrior's

[272] Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 6-8, 64-67.
[273] Derrida, 22.
[274] Derrida, ix.
[275] Derrida, 149.

courage, the stakes of death and the putting to death, etc.) has always been virile virtue in its androcentric manifestation."[276] Derrida's overarching, twofold task in *Politics of Friendship* is both to identify our genealogical inheritance in privileging the existential threat of the enemy over that of expanding who we consider to be friends; and to make clear that any democratic claims contain within themselves this legacy in ways that require critical suspicion. He admits in closing that nothing he writes "says anything against the brother or against fraternity."[277]

Suffering moves our attention away from this conceptual analysis toward the bodily signifiers that dialectically obfuscate our ability to think otherwise and productively identify the "contradictions" of modern "political philosophy" as they emerge from "theological roots."[278] The theologically objective conditions of suffering in the world orient our attention toward order just as the theologically subjective dimensions of suffering inculcate within us a sense of moral self-worth and political belonging. The political theological legacy of suffering enables and sustains the normative weight of "androcentric" virile virtue. It is not merely that the ideological and mental components of religiosity structure the language that we ask but that our bodily habits of feeling are circumscribed by legacies of religious traditions that have both invented the language by which we discuss them and furnish the range of normative values through which we experience them. The fact that suffering has conditioned us to find hope in order and justify our belonging to that order is itself the reason why we should think with Derrida's impasse and critique the notion of "brotherhood" at the heart of Schmitt's agonism.

This implies both a constructive claim as well as a descriptive one. As per the former, we should be free to merely embody suffering, or to recognize that any moment of suffering is something that can and should be changed independent of any claims to authority. This claim should seem obvious to most persons committed toward the coming democracy. Descriptively, however, we should thus not take Schmitt to be excavating a natural law of politics so much as we should accept that his agonist vision of politics is a claim to how he and others engage the political. Those of us who deny that suffering

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[276] Derrida, 158.
[277] Derrida, 305.
[278] Agamben, *stasis*, 290.

should either found or justify entry to the fraternal political order need to take seriously that others in the world still do. We must separate our own democratic hopes from our descriptive analysis in order to reflect more robustly on those who we might not want to be enemies, but who nonetheless take up that title for themselves.

Chapter Four:
Trump's Sovereign Redistribution of Suffering

During a Mississippi rally in the fall of 2018, Donald Trump publicly mocked sexual assault survivor Christine Blasey Ford.[279] Behind him, men and women cheered. Trump's crowd gleefully shared his animosity toward a survivor who was like them, conservative and white, but differed in one major regard: Ford had the audacity to publicly express her past torment in ways that demeaned a male figure of authority. As most of us have come to realize, the aesthetics of this event is no longer exceptional. Whether insulting perceived enemies on Twitter, antagonizing the marginalized in speeches, or leveraging executive authority against racialized others, Trump regularly incites animosity toward the vulnerable as an expression of his own authority. He has cultivated the persona of a disciplining strongman – and his base enthusiastically embraces it. Why?

For decades, the predominant ways we imagine politics to operate has largely constrained our focus toward the formal dimensions of disagreement. Whether liberal or Marxist, the domain of politics proper consists of the rules and regulations of institutional functioning or the ideological currents that exist between formal institutions. Rules, reason, or ideological commitment become positioned as both the problems and solutions to political well-being. To celebrate violence, if even rhetorical, against the vulnerable is to engage in an activity not adequately theorized by the traditional tools at hand. Some more aesthetic and sensible is occurring; solidarity here forms against an enemy along currents that are explicitly affective and phenomenological. The crowd behind Trump did not reasonably decide that Ford, either out of identity category or political strategy, solicited antagonism. Rather, they shared an emotive commitment toward apprehending a kind of sovereign justice whereby Trump's hostility exacerbated and demeaned her pain. Prior to the domains of reasonable discourse and ideological calculation linger subjects who first feel and navigate the world sensibly through inclinations which proceed from a sensorium of moral suffering.

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[279] NBC News, "President Donald Trump Mocks Sexual Assault Allegations Against Brett Kavanaugh," on *YouTube* 3 October 2018.

As discussed in the previous chapter, suffering is a political theology of ritual that binds the genealogical dialectic between masculinity and sovereignty in Western political theory. Imagining ourselves as subjects with access to traditional notions of freedoms entangles us in phenomenological webs of suffering that obfuscate the gendered notions of authority that constitute them. Many of the women of Trump's audience would reject that their celebration of Ford's humiliation manifested a masculinist politics. In fact, they would probably have a shared understanding of 'woman' to appeal to in order to preempt such accusations – as I'll discuss in the next chapter. What matters here is that the ritual celebration of pain in a moment is part of a broader constellation of a moral economy of suffering which occurs prior to any ideological commitments or robust conceptions of one as a subject precisely because it frames the terms of engagement within which we being to think and imagine the political. In this sense, it constrains us within a masculinist logic of vertical sovereignty at least partially by obscuring it. But for those who fervently support Trump, the relationship between suffering, sovereignty, and masculinity is more readily apprehended. The celebration of masculinist sovereignty for its own sake, the secular remnant of Aquinas's *ad dominandum*, manifests as *ad regimen ordinatus* insofar as masculinist sovereignty becomes something subjects partake it through a practice of suffering as constitutive of moral and political worth. Trump's audience is not merely gleefully cheering Trump's performance for his masculinist incivility but for the very hostility that imposes a moment of suffering on someone vulnerable not seen to belong to the political community precisely for bearing suffering in the right way.

Donald Trump's winning coalition is best explained by situating their moral and ideological imperatives to vote against the phenomenological foreground within which these terms of engagement make the most sense. More specifically, they share a moral economy of suffering where Trump as sovereign is leveraging his executive authority to both validate the suffering of his followers while distributing it against those who have antagonized their masculinist conceptions of order. Many literatures on Donald Trump's victory recognize the relevance of gender, racial, and socio-economic politics to explain his win, but my explanation attempts to synthesize them into a coherent explanation that more broadly critiques western liberal sovereignty. In what follows, I'll first explain why ideological factors are insufficient for explaining the affective dimensions of this

coalition. I will then critique the opposite trend: those who emphasize the affective dimensions within the reductive "resentment" narrative in ways that position Trump's coalition as unreasonable. Identifying a set of demographics these narratives often collapse into one another – the white working-class, religious conservatives, the Rust Belt, and rural America – I validate the impetus to describe them as a coherent unit only with respect toward their shared phenomenology of suffering. This discussion orients me toward distinct genres of academic literatures – social suffering, rural politics, and religious conservatism – which I synthesize around their fundamental similarities: a politics of "hard work" which is itself a metonymy of a moral economy of suffering. Despite their demographic and ideological differences, these Donald Trump animates their emergent solidarity precisely in his ability to both justify their perceived suffering and weaponize it against others.

The Standard Narratives: Authoritarianism and Resentment

The two dominant explanatory narratives of Trump's victory are either ideological or emotive. In the former, Trump's most fervent supporters – as in, not those who simply voted in opposition to Hillary Clinton or voted for a single-issue – share a commitment to a sociological constellation of "authoritarian" values or were otherwise motivated primarily by gender, race, or xenophobia. In the latter set of narratives, those belonging to Trump's base are so entrenched in dire material circumstances or otherwise intense fear of perceived marginalization that they cultivate a "resentment" toward the social gains (presumably) secured by liberals for racial and gender minorities. Both sets collapse the differences between various demographics for convenience, appealing to the white, blue-collar worker marginalized by globalization whose figure simultaneously represents conservative religiosity, rural America, and the post-NAFTA Rust Belt.

The social scientific study of authoritarian ideology as an illiberal undercurrent endemic to liberalism begins with the Frankfurt School's joint project with American psychologists, a massive 1950 tome entitled *The Authoritarian Personality*. Adorno and Horkheimer preface the collaborative project by noting its indebtedness to psychoanalysis and phenomenology as much as emerging behavioralist psychology.[280] And the joint introduction locates the eponymous figure as between "ideology," which is the "an

[280] Adorno, et. al., *Authoritarian Personality*, xliv, liii, lxxi-lxxiv.

organization of opinions, attitudes, and values – a way of thinking about man and society,"[281] and "personality," a "structure within the individual" which acts within and against the world and is adaptable to change.[282] The group concludes with a summation of their subject in terms resoundingly similar to current academic descriptions of right-populism: " a basically hierarchical, authoritarian, exploitative parent-child relationship…[carries] over into a power-oriented, exploitively[sic] dependent attitude toward one's sex partner and one's God and may well culminate in a political philosophy and social outlook which has no room for anything but a desperate clinging to what appears to be strong and a disdainful rejection of whatever is relegated to the bottom."[283] Peter E. Gordon excavates the psychoanalytic impulses that Adorno's and Horkheimer's American colleagues tempered in their conclusion, writing that the continental theorists understood the authoritarian personality to mean that "fascism does not signify a radical break from mass democracy but only emerges as an intensification of its inner pathologies."[284] But Gordon, like many writing on authoritarian values after the Frankfurt scholars, too heavily emphasizes the ideological over the implicitly phenomenological. He sees "Trumpism" as a masquerade, the "standardization of rebellion and the saturation of consciousness by media forms."[285] In other words, the affective and psychological dimensions become a kind of repression by way of ideology. The Trump voter is positioned as someone without the words or conceptual resources to express the totality of his or her situation. Consequently, their ability to think otherwise becomes deferred through the conservative embrace of xenophobic nationalism.

A number of other scholars have likewise explained Trump's support through appeals to an authoritarian personality. Some interpret the masculinist dynamics of Trump's campaign as soliciting the affective desires for control and domination that underpin an authoritarian-like ideology.[286] Others see Trump as, in practice albeit not in

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[281] Ibid., 2.
[282] Ibid., 6.
[283] Ibid., 971.
[284] Gordon, et. al., *Authoritarianism: Three Inquiries*, 75.
[285] Gordon, ibid., 71.
[286] Does, Serena, Seval Gudemir, and Margaret Shih. "The Divided States of America: How the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election Shaped Perceived Levels of Gender Equality" *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 289-290, 300; Pahlke, Erin, Rebecca Bigler, Meagan Patterson, "Gender-Related Attitudes and Beliefs Predict White Women's Views of Candidates in the 2016 United States Presidential Election" *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 52; Alison Reiheld, *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* E125;

profession, a Christian figure who uses force to impose a conservative, behavioral orthodoxy that celebrates strong, masculine leadership.[287] And some have used Trump to reinterpret standard rally-around-the-flag effects to suggest that Trump's totalizing, friend-enemy distinctions activated anxieties that flocked to a strongman for security.[288] These and other studies[289] share a general conclusion: that different demographics reasonably decided on Donald Trump because he promoted an agenda which matched an ideology that, like Adorno and Horkheimer's authoritarian personality, rejects minorities; embodies vertical and masculine power; and celebrates punitive responses to perceived errors. Unlike the early critical theorists, however, the phenomenological and psychanalytic dynamics are missing from these analyses. They begin from the supposition that voters are reasonable in a traditional fashion and that the only way by which a reasonable voter would consider Donald Trump is because he aligns with their ideology. The authoritarian personality narrative insists on conscious and systematic decision-making within the political grammar endemic to traditional liberalism.

The authoritarian personality explanation suffers from two flaws. First is the assumption that the liberal grammar available to us sufficiently demarcates the horizons of political reason within those who coalesce around Donald Trump. The emotive and performative elements of Trump's presidency are considered 'illiberal' and unreasonable, feeding a second strand of a narratives seeking to supplement the ideologically driven ones: the "resentment" narrative. Calculating within an ideology presumes too much instrumental effort on the part of voters whose calculus is more complex – in much the same way than any of us are more complex – and posits the Trump voter as somehow too narrow-minded or otherwise not fully informed. Secondly, the very qualities by which

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Baum, Bruce. "Donald Trump's 'genius,' White 'natural aristocracy,' and Democratic Equality in America" in *Theory & Event* S18.

[287] Whitehead, Andrew L., Samuel L. Perry, Joseph O. Baker, "Make America Christian Again: Christian Nationalism and Voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election" *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* 165; Marti, Gerardo. "The Unexpected Orthodoxy of Donald J. Trump: White Evangelical Support for the 45th President of the United States" *Sociology of Religion* 5; Viefhues-Bailey, Ludger, "Looking Forward to a New Heaven and a New Earth Where American Greatness Dwells: Trumpism's Political Theology," in *Political Theology* 195, 198.

[288] Cohen, Florette, Sheldon Solomon, Daniel Kaplin, "You're Hired! Morality Salience Increases Americans' Support for Donald Trump" *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 340.

[289] Sherman, Ryne A. "Personal Values and support for Donald Trump during the 2016 US presidential primary," in *Personality and Individual Differences* 37; Setzler, Mark and Alixandra B. Yanus, "Why Did Women Vote for Donald Trump?" in *PS: Political Science and Politics* 523-524.

ideology is measured demeans the complexity of the Trump voter's calculus. What, precisely, is meant by the claim that women who voted for Donald Trump are anti-women, or that the rural precariat votes against their own socio-economic interests? Ideology is meant to supplement this already operative assumption that Trump's coalition is doing something against itself; ideology is a factor through which we make something unreasonable seem reasonable. This dynamic is what I mean when I refer to the limits of the liberal political grammar: the very form of reason is so truncated that we prohibit ourselves from recognizing something in excess of it. In both cases, understanding the Trump voter – which means admitting that the language we have available to us as scholars might in itself be limited – means encountering them in a more holistic way, and even being open to the possibility that their use of the liberal vocabulary might mean something fundamentally different than what is commonly accepted by those of us not embedded in their circumstances.

The second narrative explanation is both a complement and, in some cases, alternative to the ideological one: resentment. These explanations share an emphasis on the psychoanalytic, emotive, and affective dimensions of the Trump voter. Nearly all forms of this narrative consist of a standard form: the ideal-type Trump voter is at once actually (socio-economically) and falsely perceived to be (white) marginalized, and out of working-class exhaustion has lashed out at liberal order and voted for an illiberal candidate who opposes the hand-outs to minorities allowing them to more easily attain success. Recent professional essay collections share this conclusion,[290] and it's also the most popular explanation among the more prominent American media sources.[291] And academics across disciplines, including the most cited monographs[292] purporting to

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[290] David Bromwich, *American Breakdown: The Trump Years and How They Befell Us*, New York: Verso, 2019. 56-57; Isaac, Jeffery C. *#AgainstTrump: Notes from Year One*. New York: Public Seminar Books, 2018. 132-133.

[291] Cohn, Nate, "Why Trump Won Working Class Whites, *The New York Times* 9 Nov. 2016; Brooks, David, "What the Working Class is Still Trying to Tell Us," 8 Nov. 2018; Smarsh, Sarah, "Our Blind Spots Often Hide the Truth About America," *The New York Times* 16 August 2018; Lozada, Carlos, "Liberal Elites Don't Have a Clue About the White Working Class. So Says a Liberal Elite Law professor," *The Washington Post,* 28 July 2017; Dionne Jr., E. J., "Trump's Real Constituency isn't the white working class at all," *The Washington Post* 12 November 2017; Winfrey-Harris, Tamara, "Stop Pretending Black Midwesterners Don't Exist," 16 June 2018.

[292] Gest, Justin. *The White Working Class: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 36, 44, 68; Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016. 7, 87; Hochschild,

explain Trump, provide empirical support suggesting "resentment" as the best means to understand why voters either switched from Obama to Trump or otherwise felt pressed by socio-economic circumstances to vote for Trump.[293] The resentment narrative entices readers for its emotive explanatory power, a narrative that allows outside observers to read it into the faces of interviewees and make sense of Donald Trump's outlandishness. But it's enticing force masks fundamental problems with its explanatory power. First, why does emotive resentment take the object that it does? The empiricists cited hear would answer by situating different demographics within a set of circumstances that make certain objects more likely to be attributed animosity than others. Herein we are left asking who, precisely, is the Trump voter: are they the white working-class? The Rust Belt independent? The white woman? The Evangelical? Resentment is not the same in all cases, in cause or object. Most popular embraces of the resentment narrative pick up academic inquiries into the white working class within the Rust Belt and project it onto the Trump demographic more broadly. Resentment can only explain why a partial subset of Trump voters are drawn to Trump; it cannot explain why different demographics, with different interests, could align around the candidate.

Thinking between these two narratives, we are left with different causal explanations that only make sense if we imagine Trump's demographic to be similarly composed and operating within conventional politics. Even the illiberal dimensions of resentment imply liberal political engagement as somehow the norm. We should thus ask *who* voted for Trump before attempting to ask *why*. The majority of Trump's voters "were not members of the working class" and 28% of Trump's voters were former (white working-class) Obama voters and (white) 2012 nonvoters.[294] Additionally, more than half of white women – across the socio-economic spectrum – voted for Donald Trump,

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Arlie R. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York, NY: The New Press, 2016. 226; Jones, Robert P. *The End of White Christian America.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2016. 39-40, 229.

[293] Samir Gandesha, "Identifying with the aggressor: From the authoritarian to neoliberal personality" *Constellations* 151, 158; Daniel D. Miller, "The mystery of evangelical Trump support?" *Constellations* 51; Johnson, Paul Elliott, "The Art of Masculine Victimhood: Donald Trump's Demagoguery," in *Women's Studies in Communication* 246-247; Connolly, William E. "Trump, the Working Class, and Fascist Rhetoric," in *Theory & Event* S28.

[294] Morgan, Setphen L. and Jiwon Lee, "Trump Voters and the White Working Class," *Sociological Science* No. 5, April 2018 pp. 240-242.

partially motivated by racial resentment.[295] This gender gap remains consistent with white women's voting for conservative presidential candidates since 2004.[296] With respect to sexuality, (white) straight women and bisexual men were "divided" between Clinton and Trump while "heterosexual men were especially pleased by Trump's macho ways and screeds about improper Black activism."[297] And, of course, a "majority" of Evangelicals voted for Donald Trump, a dynamic expected insofar as "political identification with the Republican Party is a constitutive feature" of their religious identity.[298] Donald Trump mobilized enough of the conventional Republican base and 2012 nonvoters that the white working-class, particularly within the Rust Belt, secured the electoral college. Without each part of this coalition – white women, white men, Evangelicals, the working-class – he would not have won. Moreover, an explanation of Trump is also forced to confront the dynamics of the American electoral system: voting for Trump because he is the Republican nominee, voting for Trump because one was more opposed to Hillary Clinton, and voting for Trump in the primaries against all alternatives are three different scenarios. An astute explanation for "why Trump" needs to explain the ways Americans imagine executive authority; why Americans would be willing to vote for a demonstrated misogynist over a woman with traditional qualifications; and why a small subset of Americans would be at first drawn to Donald Trump in order to sustain his campaign through the primaries. It needs to bridge the different demographics with an account that considers gender, authority, and Trump's emotive hostility.

My previous phenomenology of suffering, whereby suffering becomes the ritual discipline through which subjects make sense of masculinist authority and the world prior to ideological or further affective engagement, attempts just this explanation. Not merely is authority necessarily male, but it's so masculinist that even Clinton's attempts to win necessarily constrained her to a technocratic performance that celebrates masculinist

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[295] Setzler, Mark and Alixandra B. Yanus, "Why Did Women Vote for Donald Trump?" in *PS: Political Science and Politics* Vol 51 No. 3 July 2018 pp. 523-527.
[296] Emily E. LB. Twarog, "The Ghosts of Elections Past, Present, and Future: Gender and Racism in Electoral Politics" *Labor Studies Journal* 252.
[297] Swank, Eric. "Who Voted for Hillary Clinton? Sexual identities, Gender, and Family Influences" *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 34-35.
[298] Daniel D. Miller, "The mystery of evangelical Trump support?" *Constellations* 18.

reason. Trump's major alternative, Ted Cruz, embodied an explicitly Christian form of discipline that balanced punitive measures with affective compassion. And Bernie Sanders, of course, exhibits the 'righteous' anger fully appropriate for a male body. The full domain of what was considered reasonable by November of 2016 was truncated by a general view of political authority as masculine in a specific way: that masculine sovereignty alone had the capacity to not only determine life or death, but determine what constituted suffering and whose suffering could be remedied. Debates about social welfare cannot be removed from this more expansive sovereign prerogative. Donald Trump won the day precisely because he mobilized a coalition of those committed toward sustaining a certain level of suffering as 'normal' and redistributing suffering back toward those imagined by his base to have overstepped.

And we can observe this dynamic in the language used by different demographics to describe their world. How do they experience social reality? How do they mediate their relationships with others and the political community? What is their source of the 'good' and how are their politics subordinate to it?

Values Voters and the Value of Suffering

The two major forces in both propelling Trump and Cruz to the end of the Republican primary and in solidifying Trump's victory were the American religious right and the white precariat, a figure encompassing rural white America and the white-working class in the Rust Belt. While not numerically the majority, they stabilized the electoral college and constituted the most loyal of Trump's base. We thus need to examine the language and behaviors they use to make sense of their world in order to attribute any causality toward their support of Donald Trump. This inquiry requires engaging literatures not obviously related to the 2016 election: social surveys and ethnographies of working-class 'suffering' that begin with Bourdieu; the social histories of the political animosity which has been building throughout twentieth century conservatism; and qualitative accounts of what activates these groups for political engagement. The account that follows focuses exclusively on the religious right and white working-class, as chapters to follow will pick up those other dynamics of conservative history – women and masculinity – as they mimic these dynamics in unique ways.

Sociological reflections on working-class suffering begin with Lillian Rubin's *Worlds of Pain* and Pierre Bourdieu's edited volume, *The Weight of the World*. Rubin surveyed a number of white, American working-class families in the 1970s in which she identified a number of limits that constructed "worlds of pain."[299] These consisted of small horizons of aspirational possibility, repetitive and meaningless jobs, and dichotomous gender identities anchored to labor as early as childhood.[300] Minimal leisure, mostly superficial pastimes means to make bearing "dullness" and "disappointment" more manageable, leads to "[anger] and [resentment]" at the feeling of being "overburdened."[301] For Rubin, liberal individualism, self-blame, and socio-political isolation are all constitutive of a perpetual dynamic of suffering.[302] Bourdieu, writing within the French context, refers to various "double binds" that limit discursive possibilities for expressing white working-class suffering in the context of capitalism, class, and social circumstance.[303] Bourdieu critiques "neoliberalism" as a root cause of the racial resentment animating the French white working-class's political attempts to "monopolize access to the economic and social advantages associated with citizenship."[304] Rubin, writing a new introduction for her work after Reagan, likewise linked racial resentment to neoliberal changes as a resurgent factor in understanding the American white working-class.[305] What both Rubin and Bourdieu share is an understanding of suffering as externally conditioned by socio-economic forces. Suffering among the working-class is a consequence of material circumstances and policy changes that is managed by aggressive political sympathies – in Rubin's work, individualist resentment against outsiders; and in Bourdieu's, support for the National Front. The emphasis here on external conditions discursively conceals the need to interrogate

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[299] Rubin, Lillian B. *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-Class Familiy*. New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1992. 214.
[300] Rubin, 126, 188-189, 159-161, 169.
[301] Rubin, 169, 202-203.
[302] Rubin, 19.
[303] Bourdieu, Pierre. "A Life Lost." In *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, 381–91. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999. 383.
[304] Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Abdication of the State." In *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, 181–88. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999. 188.
[305] Rubin, Lillian B. *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-Class Familiy*. New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1992. Xvi-xvii, xxxv.

dynamics internal to white working-class subjects as they *construct* their sense of suffering.

Recent academic literature on the white working-class – for my purposes, including surveys of the working class generally that identify the specificity of whiteness as well as surveys of rural America that emphasize race and work ethic – links economic precarity to political attitude. The white working-class perceives their marginality in relation to broader racial and economic shifts over which they have little control. Racial minorities and immigrants are visual symptoms of this political impotency and race foregrounds the way the white working-class makes sense of their social circumstances.[306] Geography further inflects this political isolation: the rural-urban divide as well as local trust in the faces of their communities against the seemingly value-less, federal bureaucracies of D.C. breed a sense of political distance that correlates with moral difference.[307] Moreover, the struggling white working-class is forced to burden taxes that support *perceived* maldistribution while having fewer economic opportunities available in light of racial integration, immigration, and broader neoliberal shifts. The politicized vocabulary of "Timeworn values," "deservedness," "special rights," "laziness," "self-sufficiency," "dependence," and most importantly "hard work" reflects a moral economy emerging within this context that provides the white working-class with a sense of value and a way to make sense of non-white others in light of their precarity.[308] But these terms have more than one moral valence: it is not at all obvious that economic self-sufficiency is the beginning and end of their moral connotation. In order to understand the moral economy within which these values operate and uncover a more troubling moral connotation, we must first understand the importance of working-class *suffering.*

External conditions shape white working-class suffering but this fact, *which the white working-class recognizes*,[309] does not imply that such conditions should radically change. Rather, suffering is mutually constitutive with white working-class subjectivity.

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[306] Wuthnow, *Small-Town America,* 293; Kramer, 87-88; Engels, 84; Hochschild, 146.
[307] Wuthnow, *Small-Town America*, 50, 52; Kramer, 5-7; Hochschild, 217; Duina, 8-9.
[308] Wuthnow, *Small-Town America*, 52, 121, 270, 280, 297; Kramer, 6, 51, 75-76, 88, 145; Engels, 110-111; Hochschild, 146-149, 226; Duina, 8-9, 10, 40; Sherman, 37; Setzler and Yanus, 524; Viefhues-Bailey, 195.
[309] Gest, Justin. *The White Working Class: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, 130.

The white working-class inhabits a Christian moral economy, albeit secularized through modernity and political liberalism, that constructs suffering as a moral good even while suffering constructs their sense of self. The language of "hard work," "timeworn values," and "deservedness" – correlating with Rural Consciousness,[310] a Deep Story about the American Dream,[311] Ethnocentrist-Nationalist Authoritarianism,[312] and other conceptual signifiers for white-working class ideology – refers not only to external economic shifts but refer to a moral economy operating internal to white working-class communities that generates moral and political value prior to external conditioning. This moral economy furnishes a set of values, discursive patterns, and affective disciplines for understanding suffering prior to making sense of the political and economic dynamics which inflect suffering.

Nearly all of the recent surveys cited associate the political attitudes and social opinions of the white working-class with Christianity.[313] But the focus on externally conditioned suffering locates religion as simply one of many ideological foregrounds that provide discursive routes for managing this suffering. To think against this minimizing of religion, I center it as a fundamental part of the moral economy of working-class suffering. More specifically, suffering is a secularized, Christian subjectivity that grounds the moral vocabulary of "hard work" and "deservedness." For most of Christian history suffering was a subjectivity cultivated to constitute one's moral worth. Moral suffering was not only a way of making sense of dismal political and material circumstances but also a way of *desiring* those circumstances. This uniquely Christian mode of suffering continues to inform the modern, American white working-class insofar as it situates a moral economy that has secularized suffering as constitutive of political worth.

Besides the literatures on the working-class and its suffering, a corollary history exists of the religious right which demonstrates a similar sense of perceived powerlessness manifesting as either resentment or authoritarian values. Yet these narratives, too, can be reconfigured in light of their explicitly theological commitments to explain a different history: one of a commitment to masculinist sovereignty and its

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[310] Cramer, 6
[311] Hochshild, 135, 146.
[312] Viefhues-Bailey, 194.
[313] Wuthnow, *Red State Religion*, 306; Hochschild, 226; Duina, 26; Viefheus-Bailey, 194.

attendant moral economy of suffering. Mark Noll, preeminent historian of Evangelical Christianity in America, describes a legacy of "historical resentment" against federal social policies informing the Christian right's belief that the "past has been stolen from them."[314] Kevin Kruse, historian at Princeton, argues that the "Christian America" idea motivating the religious right formed in response to "Christian libertarianism," an ideological coalition between populists and capitalists resisting Roosevelt's New Deal.[315] And Jason Bivins, historian of Christian and American politics, frames conservative Evangelicals as practicing a "Christian anti-liberalism," an

> aversion to the centralization of power; a sense that politics has become hostage to elites; politics and the state are out of line with, or even an affront to, Christian morality.[316]

Bivins further frames the relationship between federal social policy and Evangelical "antiliberals" as, from the Evangelical's ideology, a "politicization" of Christian identity occurring "against their will."[317] Despite the nuanced differences of their projects, historians agree that some form of resentment motivates the Christian right's desire for a restored Christian America, one built on liberal-Christian individualism. Sociologists of Christianity and American politics similarly contextualize the political mobilization of Christianity on the resentment of federal power and a corollary moral individualism. Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, co-authors of a major survey on Christianity and race, linked "Enlightenment liberalism" and "Protestant Christianity" to a "Freewill-individualist" tradition that rejects federal attempts at mitigating racism while placing the burden for overcoming racial injustice on black individuals.[318] More recently, scholars have emphasized anxiety among the religious right in addition to their aforementioned individualist values. Robert Jones considers "White Christian America" to be aware of its

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[314] Noll, Mark. *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. 190-191.
[315] Kruse, Kevin M. *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015. Xiv; 8.
[316] Bivins, Jason C. *The Fracture of Good Order: Christian Antiliberalism and the Challenge to American Politics*. Charlotte, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004. 20.
[317] Bivins, 109.
[318] Emerson, Michael O. and Christian Smith. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000. 2; 74-77.

"slow death" and subsequently left "with a haunting sense of dislocation."[319] Matthew Bowman interprets Trump's presidential victory as the consequence of a threatened Christian coalition seeking to preserve "American democracy" and its necessary attendant "Christian republican sentiment[s]."[320] For the Christian right, political resentment, liberal individualism, and nationalism inflect their moral economy, mutually constituting their morals and their politics.

This nexus of liberal-individualism is the secular language of conservative religious politics rather than the thick content of its political practice. At the heart of this dynamic is the belief that suffering is both *constitutive* of reality as necessary for one's moral and political constitution as a subject. Liberal individualism is the secular way to describe a politics of encountering suffering as a discipline of moral development. Moreover, the liberal insistence on an ontological equality between interchangeable individuals is not an implicit attempt to normalize the suffering of hierarchy but, within the conservative schema, a conscious effort to express suffering as a necessary precondition of hierarchy. Conservatives are not appealing to liberal equality to obfuscate the inequalities of historical-material hierarchies but to further justify their moral and ontological importance. Social inequalities are not historical accidents to be to be remedied or passively accommodated but norms to positively sustain and further entrench.

We can put the language of both of these groups together in order to arrive at something not reducible to either material circumstances or authoritarian values. Resentment is operating in both cases, but toward fundamentally different objects, and somehow persists in connecting both groups in a social coalition. Both groups also appeal to timeworn values, albeit one with theologically inflected time and the other without, in ways that posit such values as an object not only beyond critique but as a source of normative valuation. And both groups have vocabularies of freedom and discipline that, again, structure similar political engagement and political goals despite proceeding from superficially different ideologies. Here, the political theology of suffering is the grammar

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[319] Jones, Robert P. *The End of White Christian America.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2016. 229.
[320] Bowman, Matthew. *Christian: The Politics of a Word in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018. 29; 187; 225.

behind both vocabularies which is just as liable to manifest as resentment as it is coalesce into authoritarian ideology.

The Moral Economy of Suffering

Having thus provided overviews of both Christian history and the white working-class, I now turn toward a synthesis of these literatures in order to provide a reinterpretation of the moral vocabulary of resentment. In what follows, I portray suffering as a Christian subjectivity operating politically in both theological and secular registers. Suffering's external conditions are therefore less relevant than the fact that suffering constitutes one's moral, and therefore political, value. The discourse of "hard work" and "deservedness" is intimately bound with a Christian sense of individualism where, in addition to the socio-economic and racial dimensions identified by previous literature, there exists a concurrent moral valence implying that others *have not suffered enough.* This moral economy binds the religious right, the white working-class, and white women together in Trump's coalition insofar as his public performance and the symbolic moral capital of his victory redistributes suffering upon others who are imagined as having not suffered enough in order to make claims for their political participation.

First, what is Trump's coalition morally *resenting*? Most broadly, egalitarian shifts since the 1960s wherein different minority movements have pressed claim to public, political belonging without having visually demonstrated that they have sufficiently suffered. The juridical language of "special rights" discursively positions "egalitarian" social change as "unfair" in legal contexts by suggesting that "fortunate Americans" have *earned* privilege "with hard work and merit."[321] The language of "hard work" cannot be separated from the bodily context in which it emerges as a discipline that constructs morally valuable subjects – subjects that contrast with the effeminate labor of "desk" jobs.[322] But leisure, too, correlates with urban living, disintegrating values, and politically impotent subjects. This moral economy rejects abortion as a Feminist right to leisure that denies the political discipline of bodily hard work: "the idea that a woman might choose to have an abortion suggests that she is not living according to the

[321] Dudas, Jeffrey R. "In the Name of Equal Rights: 'Special' Rights and the Politics of Resentment in Post-Civil Rights America," in *Law & Society Review* Vol. 39 No. 4 2005 pp. 723-757. 725-726.
[322] Kramer, 67, 188.

purported standards of hard work and moral obligation that are the hallmarks of small communities."[323] Extreme bodily suffering constructs one's moral and political subjectivity which grants access to the right of political voice.

This moral economy of suffering requires both bodily suffering and visual obviousness. Katherine Cramer correlates the moral capital of "deservedness" with "someone who has labored extremely hard his entire life."[324] Likewise, Robert Wuthnow ties the economy of "moral capital" to the face-to-face interaction and shared visual circumstances of communal suffering in small-town America.[325] On homosexuality, his rural subjects expressed moral opposition not toward sexual deviance itself, but toward the public "flaunt[ing]" and visually "disrupt[ive]" nature of gay equality movements.[326] Abortion is a bodily process that signifies a woman conditioned by leisure and not suffering; homosexuality is a visible aesthetic that, while signifying private moral shifts, needs to be contained because of its visually signifying capacity. The contrast exposes how bodily suffering and visual registers coordinate within the moral economy of "values voters." The visual dynamic legitimates the moral economy of suffering while the moral economy justifies the efficacy of visual evidence in Christian ways. *Ecce Homo*, "Behold the Man!" was the first declaration in Christian consciousness as Pontius Pilate served an abused, suffering Christ over to the public. In visualizing Christ's pain, they constituted their own sense of suffering.[327] The theology of visual suffering took on a masculine dynamic in the American context, where Christ bearing his suffering became an ethical model directing men to suffer in order to become men.[328] Connecting these extreme histories is a Puritan emphasis on labor and liberal individualism, which to extend Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's thesis, results in a "rigorous, sometimes exclusionary supervision" and visual policing of bodily suffering.[329] For most of us Western Moderns,

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[323] Wuthnow, *Small-Town America*, 268-270.
[324] Kramer, 188.
[325] Wuthnow, *Small-Town America*, 112-113, 117-118.
[326] Ibid. 280-282.
[327] Moltmann, Jürgen. *On Human Being: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009. 19.
[328] Brintnall, Kent L. *Ecce Homo: The Male-Body-In-Pain as Redemptive Figure*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011. 55, 97-98; Morgan, David. *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998. 108-112, 115-117.
[329] Garland Thomson, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997. 47-48.

visual suffering and theology are only co-constitutive in moments of excess. "To feel the pulse of Christian iconography in certain wartime or disaster-time photographs is not a sentimental projection," but religious sentiment elicited by the sympathies of our "gaze."[330] But the moral economy of the white working-class operates visually by circulating sentiments framed by still-enchanted quotidian suffering.

A political theology of suffering is the foundation upon which most of the conservative moral economy is built, binding together the white working-class and the religious right. Here I am only reframing in an alternate vocabulary what Lauren Berlant refers to as the "crisis ordinariness" in light of the feudalism that Anne Norton identifies as the "rich interior" of political liberalism.[331] Suffering as a ritual that constructs subjective worth in ways that give one the right to evaluate the suffering of another connect subjects to the masculinist sovereignty that, in the first instance, posits the world as a field of ordained suffering. Suffering is the unchanging fact of social existence, a norm that limits discursive horizons concurrent to its discursive construction by Christianity. "Hard work" is to discipline oneself in light of this suffering: to constitute one's sense-of-self in light of suffering and subsequently derive a sense of moral and political value from this discipline. This political theology of suffering manifests in two ways within conservatism generally and Trump's coalition specifically. First, insofar as suffering is the determined and unchangeable state of reality, political movements that intend to neutralize, mitigate, or manage suffering are engaging in a fool's task. Second, because the discipline of hard work generates moral and political value from suffering, proposing alternative possibilities through which to generate moral and political worth is to directly challenge both the self-worth of the "hard workers" as well as to threaten to upend the conceptual schema.

With the moral economy of suffering in mind, I can now articulate why Donald Trump's vulgar antics operate as a moral discipline that elicit support from the religious right and white working-class. On November 24th, 2016 he publicly mocked a disabled reporter at a campaign event. White, able-bodied supporters behind him smiled.[332] One

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[330] Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York, NY: Picador, 2003. 59.
[331] Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. 10, 96-99; Norton, Anne. "The King's New Body," in *Theory & Event* Vol. 20 No. 1 Supplement 2017, pp. S116-126, S-123.
[332] CNN, "Trump Mocks Reporter with Disabilities," on *Youtube*, 25 November, 2016.

month prior his "Grab'm by the pussy" conversation generated public outcry but did not rebuff white women's vote. And by the end of the election, most American Protestants as well as a few heirs of the religious right – most notably Jerry Falwell, Jr. – supported Trump.[333] While these political demographics share racial sympathies, liberal values, and respect for hierarchy, the moral economy of suffering inflects and synthesizes these values. Progressive activism and broad demographic changes instill a sense of existential dread for those who derive their moral worth from suffering. Radical and progressive politics suggests that suffering need not be normalized and that a world without suffering is possible. This claim counters not only the metaphysics of conservative ontology but further denies the moral economy of suffering. "Hard work" is no longer generates moral and political capital and reveals itself as mere toil.

Public aesthetics are the medium by which progressive and radical politics have challenged the moral economy of suffering. The religious right feels threatened and politically mobilized against their will,[334] white and rural Americans believe that "tyrannizing minorities" are "shouting" against their way of life,[335] and conservatives believe that "liberals" are denying the "deep story" and accusing conservatives of "not feeling the right feelings."[336] These modes of resentment are not merely economic but inflected by affective and moral registers. In response, the religious right and white working-class what to defend the "masculinized and White idea of precarious America"[337] and have elected someone to save "Christian civilization as they imagined it."[338] Those chose to support a man whose rhetorical gestures will *discipline* by redistributing suffering. They want a man whose aesthetics will return the public to the confines of the moral economy of suffering and, by visually eliciting suffering through his gestures, silence voices that have clamored for political value without having been seen to bodily suffer. Such activity not only strengthens and validates their own political and moral worth as persons who suffer, but distributes suffering back upon those

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[333] Posner, Sarah. "How Donald Trump Divided And Conquered Evangelicals," *RollingStone* 21 July 2016.
[334] Bivins, 109
[335] Engels, 91.
[336] Hochschild, 227.
[337] Johsnon, 246-247
[338] Bowman, 225.

leisurely, effeminate, urban progressives whom are perceived to have publicly victimized themselves without having sufficiently suffered.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have suggested that an ontological view of suffering animates elements of conservatism. Protestant Christianity and Modernity normalized suffering as an everyday, or quotidian, dimension of human social and material life. Both view suffering as constitutive of reality rather than as a consequence of political and social dynamics. But this suffering is directly tied to the hierarchical values that proceed from a disciplinary and masculinist conception of sovereignty. Various egalitarian political movements have rejected these hierarchies of power that stabilize suffering as a norm and subsequently reconceived instances of suffering as ethical problems that can be resolved. Contemporary social conservatives, however, reject this reconceptualization of suffering as an ethical rather than ontological dilemma. But this rejection is not discursive. The ethical view of suffering, optimistic for change, and the ontological view of suffering, intrinsically pessimistic, have no common vocabulary through which to deliberate. Rather, these differences are fought secondhand through those mediums which are shared in common: public aesthetics, "culture" wars, and political institutions. Donald Trump's victory was fueled, in part, by the pessimistic moral economy of suffering. The white working-class and religious right both perceive that the very foundations of what generates moral and political value are being disrupted by political movements that further deny their view of reality. To push back, they support a man who uses his public presence to discipline these opposing voices and restore moral order.

The narrative of "resentment," and its racial and economic implications, is not incorrect. Rather, it works simultaneous to a moral narrative and ontology which animates this resentment as well as furnishes an alternative, more hierarchical, vision of politics. Despite my suggestion that Trump embodies the redistribution of suffering, I do not think that the moral economy of suffering fuels uninhibited rage. The members of the white working-class and religious right are still human and express empathy, regret, and fear like anyone else. But their need to return to the "normal," impossible to separate from hierarchical dynamics, is animated by an ontological worldview that makes their racism, sexism, and xenophobia concurrent to – rather than in contradiction with – forms

of sympathy. Being born into another part of the world, being raced other-than-white, and being "inflicted" with homosexuality are all human inflections of an otherwise unalterable suffering distributed by chance rather than constituted by politics. Rather than impose contradictions onto groups who are "voting against their own interest" or incapable of recognizing a separation of church and state, I propose we take them at their word. To promote a more egalitarian America, to propose that suffering can be resolved and need not be normalized, is to reject "Christian civilization as they imagine it."[339]

[339] Bowman, 225.

Chapter Five:
Phyllis Schlafly and White Women for Trump

Donald Trump's electoral success revealed key social presumptions about the ways the politically attuned imagine the contemporary conservative coalition. Whereas the media emphasized the "deplorables" narrative that fixated on the white working-class as the key to Trump's success, scholars attended to more complicated social realities that revealed the opposite to be true: most voters were not white-working class, and quite a few were pulled away from Obama's victory coalition.[340] One difficult revelation that followed post-election polling was the number of women who preferred Donald Trump to Hillary Clinton. More than half of white women voted for Donald Trump because of the "degree to which they held racially resentful and sexist attitudes" and the shared value systems of "hard work" and opposition to "special favors."[341] But the very fact that this revelation is difficult reveals certain discursive contradictions at work in the ways we construct conservatism as a political tradition. Namely, that we think of contemporary U.S. conservatism as relatively homogenous and stable with respect to gender, constructed by masculine interests and existing prior to the experiences, reasoning, and political activity of women. In other words, conservative women are necessarily "sexist" in intention or self-hating in adopting a masculinist view of the world; we leave little room for the possibility that conservative women are independently responsible for the construction of the conservative coalition, and that conservatism might better be imagined as less stable, fluid, and united by shared values not reducible to – even if necessarily correlating with – patriarchy.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the values by which key demographics used to explain the way they morally and politically evaluate the world. White women, too, whether rural or conservative-urban, follow these same patterns. What is unique, however, is that the conservative white woman occupies a space where the gendered dynamics of authority and the explicit sexism of candidates unavoidably inflect their decision-making. In what ways do they make sense of themselves as explicitly gendered

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[340] Morgan, Setphen L. and Jiwon Lee, "Trump Voters and the White Working Class," Sociological Science No. 5, April 2018, 240-242.
[341] Setzler, Mark and Alixandra B. Yanus, "Why Did Women Vote for Donald Trump?" in *PS: Political Science and Politics* Vol 51 No. 3 July 2018, 523-524.

subjects within these dynamics? How does one's sense of "womanhood" and the masculinist dynamics of the American political field intersect to encourage one to support conservatism, generally, and Donald Trump, specifically?

To think from the perspective of the conservative, anti-feminist woman is to recognize that contemporary American conservatism is an ideology that might reasonably appeal to a woman. Within the discussion that follows, I use the location of the conservative, anti-feminist woman as a heuristic through which to explore the dynamic nature of contemporary American conservatism. In doing so, I take a stance with respect to women in the United States that shares a theoretical agenda with Saba Mahmood: to resist reducing agency to the liberal desire for freedom from subordination, recognizing an equally agential politics at work in embracing values that seem patriarchal but are understood by these women as a source of positive freedom.[342] In assuming the rational capacities of conservative women to be aware of their discursive and cultural circumstances and readily adopt institutions, traditions, and values that would otherwise be recognized by outsiders as patriarchal, I suggest that we might better understand contemporary American conservatism as a coalition of different demographics that privilege bodily and mental suffering as the preeminent source of moral and political value. In other words, the conservative, anti-feminist woman is one who readily embraces suffering as the path toward constructing themselves and their moral worth – and equally relies on suffering as a standard by which to evaluate others and political circumstances. In other words, the embrace of conservative ideology follows from the way that the political theology of suffering structures their phenomenological field of political and moral engagement.

The structure of my argument proceeds from a critique of both the discursive terrain in the social sciences through which the conservative woman is constructed and of the way that second-wave feminism constitutes this same object. By explicating the terms and fundamental assumptions behind "conservatism" and "woman," I show how conservatism is always presumed to exist prior to the women who embrace it – an assumption never thrust upon the men seen as active agents in its construction. I further

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[342] Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 16, No. 2 (May 2001), 207-208.

explicate a key argumentative difference in the way Second-wave feminism approaches sex/gender in order to ground my second claim: that radical challenges to social reality conceive of oppression within this reality as an object that can be identified and changed (social oppression as occurring within the domain of epistemology), which contrasts with a view of social oppression as constitutive of reality and, therefore, a constraint upon the possibilities of reason (social oppression as ontological). I illustrate with a close reading of Phyllis Schlafly's collected works, Schlafly embodying the preeminent face of conservative, anti-(Second Wave) feminist women, in order to illustrate how the ontological approach to gender difference which sustains an active engagement with the conservative tradition. Conservative, anti-feminist women are agents in the construction of contemporary American conservatism. They belong to the conservative coalition not because they share an adoption of patriarchal values given to them; but rather because they, like other conservatives, see suffering as endemic to reality and as a source of moral and political value. They accept the masculinist notions of sovereignty as the prerogative of male-bodied figures to deem what suffering is acceptable; but accept their own capacities of sovereign agents in rejecting feminist calls for what others perceive as gendered oppression. Schlafly in particular reveals a theory of freedom from within the political theology of suffering that necessarily supports masculinist authority. The gendering of the world is simply another means of distributing unchangeable suffering as much as it is a discipline which inculcates self-worth and moral authority.

The Contradictions of Conservative Women's Activism

Scholarly depictions of conservative women present an image of women paradoxically situated between sexist opposition to their public activism and a mimetic appropriation of feminist activism for an anti-feminist agenda. In some ways, these accounts redress gaps in the broader literatures on American conservatism that often ignore women's place in a movement often assumed to be largely structured and sustained by men's interests. Such narratives productively recognize the agency of conservative women and the unique contributions they bring to sustaining American conservatism. But in other ways, these narratives reduce conservative women to strategic dependency on feminism: that these women benefit from the feminist activism that makes

their political activism possible while nonetheless approaching gender in reaction to and within the terms set by feminism.

Historical consensus presents conservative women's activism as a religiously motivated response to feminist critiques of the nuclear family, domesticity, and a decentralized federal government that places responsibility for social welfare on the family. Late twentieth century conservative women's activism, and particularly those political coalitions Phyllis Schlafly organized, consisted of Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and Jews opposed to perceived federal violations of the space of the nuclear family.[343] These movements relied heavily on the moral language of religious crusades and civilization while embracing the conservative image of "woman" as the moral bulwark of the nuclear family.[344] But these religious undertones supplemented conservative women's appropriation of feminist identarian politics in which claims of the nature of womanhood anchored political claims for what best-suited American women's interests.[345] Besides the *discursive* isomorphism of conservative women's activism, these movements also emulated the grassroots *organizing* strategies of feminism. They established local networks between suburban housewives, organized conferences in support of conservative womanhood, and creating women's political committees within the Republican party meant to centralize women's issues in state and national platforms.[346]

Conservative women's activism also exhibits unique characteristics not reducible to isomorphism with feminism. Most importantly was its gendered opposition to communism. For conservative women, the menace of communism and federal overreach were two intertwined issues that challenged the nuclear family as a constitutive unit of

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[343] Donald T. Critchlow. *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, 220. Ronnee Schreiber. "Playing 'Femball': Conservative Women's Organizations and Political Representation in the United States" *Right-Wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists Around the World*. Edited by Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power. New York, NY: Routledge, 2002, 213.

[344] Rymph, Catherine E. *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage Through the Rise of the New Right*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. 127. Critchlow, 8.

[345] Schreiber, 215; Rymph, 169-171; Critchlow, 221.

[346] Schriber, 211; Rymph, 55, 150; Critchlow, 247; Blee, Kathleen M. "The Gendered Organization of Hate: Women in the U.S. Ku Klux Klan." *Right-Wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists Around the World*. Edited by Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power. New York, NY: Routledge, 2002. 110.

Western civilization[347]. This anti-communist hostility reflected itself in opposition to "internationalists" and in support of aggressive U.S. military action abroad. In addition to anti-communism, the enthusiasm grassroots conservative women's activism brought to the Republican coalition resulted in Goldwater's 1964 victory of the Republican nomination and initiated the rightward turn in late twentieth century Republican politics.[348] The relationship between Goldwater and conservative women's activism reinforced the belief that women were ideologically uncompromising, which simultaneously strengthened the moral foundation of their discursive appeals to a battle between civilizations while entrenching stereotypes of woman lacking the pragmatic thinking necessary for public, political engagement. Lastly, conservative women gradually leveraged their appeal to dominate women's institutions in the conservative movement. By the end of the 1970s, liberal feminism in the Republican party found itself at odds with the majority of female activists and left the party. Phyllis Schlafly was the face of these institutional changes as well as at the forefront of the rhetorical battle against communism, internationalism, and "liberal" Republican "kingmakers."[349]

Despite scholarly intentions to portray conservative women as the protagonists of their own narratives, these accounts nonetheless straddle the contradiction between conservative women as active agents and conservative women as passive political actors. On the one hand, conservative women are motivated by a moral rhetoric of civilizations that responds to multiple different dynamics of contemporary politics. On the other hand, they are secondary actors to male conservative figureheads and dependent on the work of the feminists whom they oppose. This contradiction results from the juxtaposition of conservative women's activism against feminist activism: the presupposition that these two movements necessarily exist in an antagonism whereby the former can only be understood in relation to the latter. Is it possible to understand conservative women without reducing them to strategic isomorphism? Is there a different discursive origin from which to narrative conservative women that does not reduce them to a contingency

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[347] Rymph, 114; Critchlow, 34, 61.
[348] Rymph, 163-165, 169, 175; Critchlow, Donald T. *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007, 68 135.
[349] RYmph, 165, 175, 189-190; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly*, 302; Critchlow, *Conservative Ascendancy,* 68; Philip Jenkins. *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006, 86;

on either conservative men and feminist women while also making sense of the ideology they espouse?

The fundamental tension that needs to be resolved in order to more accurately theorize conservative women is to challenge the category of conservatism itself. By constituting conservative women as an object of study where conservatism exists prior to this activism, these women are always necessarily framed in ideological subordination to the patriarchs of U.S. conservatism. The most obvious example of this presupposition is Corey Robin's recently revised *The Reactionary Mind*. Robin's account situates U.S. conservatism in a broader, North Atlantic genealogy that prioritizes the values, goals, and discursive frames of men. Robin presumes the tradition he critiques is a coherent, albeit synthetic, whole within which women like Schlafly are always secondary characters. He thus reduces Schlafly's antifeminism to an isomorphic appropriation of feminist activism operating "ironically" toward a defense of patriarchy.[350] But Schlafly's intellectual potency is further reduced by the nature of conservatism itself, which Robin defines as a process of "adapt[ing] and adopt[ing], often unconsciously, the language of democratic reform to the cause of hierarchy."[351] In contrast, Andrea Dworkin thinks not from the perspective of conservatism but rather from the "tragic" as an analytic for making sense of women like Schlafly. Dworkin describes right-wing women as "so committed to survival [they] cannot recognize that they are committing suicide." They rightfully understand the world as a "dangerous place" that exploits women and "abandon[s]" them to male civilization, but accept this tragic predicament as an unalterable reality rather than as a challenge to "publicly overcome."[352] Whereas Robin posits conservative women as secondary both to feminist activism and the masculine genesis of conservatism, Dworkin recognize these women's agency as existing prior to the discursive situations that they find themselves within. Nonetheless, Dworkin's recognition of conservative women's "logical" views is an aside that she leaves undeveloped in an otherwise nuanced account of conservative women's ideology.[353]

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[350] Corey Robin. *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 49, 197.
[351] Robin, 50.
[352] Andrea Dworkin, *Right-wing Women.* New York: Perigee Books, 1983 (979). 35, 68-69.
[353] Dworkin, 231.

Quite unlike accounts that theorize conservatism as the patriarchal constructions of hierarchies, I propose that American conservatism be understood as a coalition of divergent interests motivated by a political theology of suffering. Not only are western conceptions of sovereignty and masculinity co-constitutive in ways that figure each other as the necessary sources of both protection from the world and sources of authority to deem what constitutes harm in the world; but suffering also, both bodily and emotional, becomes the primary discipline of generative subjective moral worth as well as the means by which to evaluate both the moral and political worth of others. Here I take a similar stance to Cynthia Burack's view on "compassion" politics, wherein the work of "compassion" with respect to gay rehabilitation and anti-abortion activism engages in a politics of harm.[354] For Burack, these harmful political activities are part of a "boundary-maintaining project" and it is within the moral boundaries of conservatism that the antifeminist woman is able to imagine "gendered submission" as "freely chosen."[355] I consequently take Dworkin's following aside on right-wing women literally: that Schlafly's anti-feminism is "logical" given that these women truly believe that "sex oppression is real, absolute, unchanging, [and] inevitable."[356] To be a conservative woman is to approach gender as a necessary precondition of reason which is itself natural *in some way*. This precondition brings with it the oppression which induces the very suffering constitutive of women's moral and political value as women. Conservatives valorize the domestic mother and the submissive wife *because of*, rather than despite, the suffering that both entail. Prioritizing suffering as a link within the broader conservative coalition treats women like Phyllis Schlafly as agents exercising their full capacity rather than reducing them to reactions against male conservatism and feminist activism. It further establishes a heuristic by which to more clearly identify the differences between conservative women's activism and feminism without suggesting that the two ideologies are mere opposites.

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[354] Cynthia Burack, "Compassion Campaigns and Antigay Politics: What Would Arendt Do?" *Politics and Religion* 2, 32; *Touch Love: Sexuality, Compassion, and the Christian Right* (SUNY Press, 2014), 2-3; 78; 176.
[355] Burack, *Tough Love*, 124.
[356] Dworkin, ibid.

Feminism, Suffering, and Change

Feminism, like most critical ideologies, suggests that the social structures of the world are contingent rather than inevitable. More specifically, feminists in both theory and practice mobilize gender as a heuristic that identifies both the social imbalances of power in any given cultural location while also calling attention to the constructed-ness of "gender" itself. In this regard, left and liberal feminism both share an epistemic approach that conceives of gender as an object of knowledge which can be used productively for political change. Feminist theory conceives of the suffering distributed according to gender as a political problem that is neither natural nor beyond reproach. The gendered world is a world that can and should be altered.

The major second-wave feminists all theorized feminism within circumstances that identified the differences associated with sex as problems that could be resolved. Betty Friedan begins *The Feminine Mystique* examining the "problem with no name."[357] This problem has resulted in the middle-class housewife's feeling unfulfilled and longing for something more to the extent that she suffers.[358] Kate Millet defines "Patriarchy" as a relationship constituted by the "social order" which is justified through appeals to God or nature despite it's having been "manufact[ured]" by men.[359] Andrea Dworkin similarly argues that sex is a category of difference made to seem essential in stark contrast to it's obvious construction within the social: "we become female…the pleasure of submission does not and cannot change the fact, the cost, the indignity, of inferiority."[360] But all three women remain indebted to the pioneering work of Simone de Beauvoir, who explicitly articulates the common motivation to second-wave theorizing: that man posited himself as "sovereign" and in doing so "created" not only the situation of women's inferiority but also the category of woman as a social fact that one "becomes."[361] Within these statements I want to highlight a discursive fact often concealed by the obvious. These women recognize similar dynamics that shape sexed subjects and suggest a different

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[357] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2013 (1963), 22.

[358] Ibid.
[359] Kate Millet. *Sexual Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016 (1969). 25.
[360] Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse*. New York: Basic Books, 2006 (1987), 182.
[361] Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books, 2010 (1949), 8, 74, 283.

world; they proceed from a discursive location that reduces sex to an epistemic construct, even if this construct as ontological impact on both subjects and institutions, which means that they presume that sexual difference can be resolved, mitigated, or managed. The binary of sex difference is here conceived of as an object that can be recognized and therefore reflected upon rather than operated within as an ontological predicate of subjectivity and, consequently, of reason. Despite my sharing the values they espouse, the possibility that animates their critique – sex as an epistemic object of critique, rather than an ontological predicate of reason – is not at all evident or intuitive, even for some women.

What Beauvoir and the Second-wave theorists share – what enables them to deny the ideological move toward displacing gender toward the ontological – is a recognition of their own suffering as an external condition to be overcome. Beauvoir identifies the "cause of women's oppression" in the patriarchal family (among other sexist institutions) and asserts that "women's condition improves considerably" when the family structure and inheritance are disrupted.[362] Millet outlines various forms of oppression that externally condition women's subordination and inferiority: ideological, biological, sociological, class, economic, force, anthropological, and psychological.[363] Friedan links this oppression more explicitly with women's subjective suffering referring to a "crisis of identity" one undergoes to become "woman" and sustain and unsustainable, unsatisfiable lifestyle.[364] And Dworkin astutely recognizes the tension between the epistemic and ontological in contrasting herself with the conservative, anti-feminist woman. She denies the Right's "metaphysical and material promises" that exploit fears originating in "the perception that male violence against women is uncontrollable and unpredictable."[365] The conservative woman accepts the operations of sexism as unchanging preconditions of social reality; Dworkin dares to assert that men bear responsibility for their actions and, through feminism, recognizes the same operations of sexism as social and political conditions that can be identified, critiqued, and disrupted. In all of these instances, feminism proceeds from the standpoint that woman's situation exists prior to the reality it

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[362] Beauvoir, 96.
[363] Millet, 26, 27, 33, 35-37, 41-43, 46, 55-56.
[364] Friedan, 80.
[365] Dworkin, *Right-wing Women*, 21.

finds itself thrown within. Reality is not something to adapt toward but rather something to actively change. Suffering is the manifestation of existing within the restraints of a reality hostile to your person. In this way, suffering, to the feminist, signifies the possibility of change by its being a symptom of social problems.

Here there persists a fundamental tension between all iterations of feminism and those women who would oppose the identification. To suggest that women's oppression is both a politically and socially constituted dynamic and, further, that it can change is to take up the capacity of sovereign recognition. Feminism performs a kind of sovereign authority in recognize gender oppression as continent rather than natural. The conservative woman, however, must deny this capacity or otherwise leverage their agency in support of masculinist authority precisely because the ontological – not merely ideological – preconditions of social reality are at stake.

Moreover, by prioritizing the experience of woman prior to reality, and in mobilizing their suffering as a symptom of external problems, the feminist woman constitutes the conservative, anti-feminist woman as a figure that is simultaneously easily (if not reductively) understood and totally enigmatic. Or, to rely on Dworkin's description, the conservative woman to a feminist is "ludicrous, terrifying, bizarre, instructive…[and] sometimes strangely moving."[366] These contradictions arise out of the conservative, antifeminist woman being constituted separately as "conservative," "anti-feminist," and as "woman." "Woman" is the clearest category for feminism to engage with: it is a socially constructed, gendered mode of being which is underprivileged in the patriarchal system. The "anti-feminist" is more difficult to discern, but we can recognize that it broadly encompasses all those who reject the either (or both) feminist premises that the patriarchal world is unjust and can (and should) change. The "conservative" for second-wave feminism would be all those relying on the traditions of patriarchy – religion and capitalism most acutely – as the animating spirit of their politics. Within these three general definitions, the conservative, anti-feminist woman is understood reductively as their mere synthesis: an under-valued, gendered woman who nonetheless opposes feminism precisely for her conservatism. But at the same time, this figure remains enigmatic: she must necessarily suffer oppression in the same way all women do,

[366] Dworkin, *Right-Wing Women*, 31.

but she nonetheless denies it as a signifier of alternative political possibilities through her refusal to recognize it as a symptom of external conditions. Why would a woman who suffers not want to reflect on her suffering as conditioned and temporary when other women so cogently present the case that such suffering isn't necessary?

The answer to this question requires challenging the relationship between patriarchy and conservatism as well as reflecting on the ideological differences of sex/gender as an ontological predicate rather than as an epistemic object. The second-wave theorists and Beauvoir all refer to broad structures, institutions, and traditions we might intuitively recognize as "conservatism" as components of patriarchy. These include the masculinist myths of religion[367], male inheritance laws and private property[368], heteronormative and male-dominated nuclear families[369], domesticity[370], and the state's monopoly (and aggressive deployment of) violence.[371] Dworkin accuses the conservative, anti-feminist woman of aligning herself, for her individual survival and out of "self-hatred," with ideologies that desire her destruction.[372] In all of these instances conservatism is constituted as an object structuring reality external to women's experiences which allows for the feminist critique centered on the position of "woman" to make sense. Conservatism is a tradition constituted by and for men that oppress women. But what is conservatism is not external to women's experiences, but at times constituted by them? What if the patriarchal myths, institutions, and regimes are not solely the discursive creation of men, even if they obviously serve men's interests? To assume that conservatism is an intellectual tradition created by and for men prior to engaging the conservative woman is to impose a false sense of stability onto a tradition that is better understood as a coalition of different interests, agendas, and experiences (as all traditions are); and is further to deny conservative women their creative and agential capacity in constructing a unique thread within this tradition. If, like good feminists, we center anti-feminist, conservative women as active centers of construction within the conservative tradition, then we are left trying to reconcile the active engagement of

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[367] Dworkin, *Intercourse*, 80, 157; Millet, 46-52.
[368] Beauvoir, 90-91, 96; Millet, 36-43,
[369] Friedan, 56; Beauvoir, 96
[370] Beauvoir, 156; Millet, 26, 33.
[371] Friedan, 87-89; Beauvoir, 157; Millet, 44-45.
[372] Dworkin, *Right-wing Women*, 17, 34-35.

women with a tradition postulating their subordinance in ways that deny reductively theorizing these women as passive recipients of ideology. Here, Dworkin's pejorative use of "self-hatred" is more astute than she possibly realized when writing it. To recognize that conservative women actively construct conservatism, which is not simply a tradition by and for men; and to recognize that conservative, anti-feminist women suffer like all women do; leads us to the conclusion that these women experience suffering in ways that return toward the ontological rather than leading toward the epistemic. The suffering of gender oppression is not a signifier of external constraints that need to be changed. This suffering is a source of moral value to be embraced and negotiated as a feature of reality and as a precondition for lived experience. *"Self-hatred" might very well be the point.*

Phyllis Schlafly, Part One: Civilized Freedom

Phyllis Schlafly (d. 2016) was a Catholic, conservative women's activist, lawyer, Harvard alumna, and – most importantly for herself – mother. She remains the preeminent face of the antifeminist woman for her roughly sixty years of publishing and advocacy work defending traditional womanhood. But like most conservative, antifeminist women, Schlafly is often perceived as the afterthought to masculinist strands of conservatism. She is a figure whose reputation is owed to feminist activism for making the public a space accessible to women while rising to prominence herself through the campaigns of Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan. Nonetheless, her political ideology is not reducible to a rhetorical mimicry of feminist activism for conservative ends; nor is it reducible to the mere repetition of a masculinist ideology.

Schlafly's lifelong work is the development of a strand of conservatism that privileges a specific kind of freedom as a normative ideal. She strongly believes in a liberal, individualist conception of freedom that can only ever externalize itself in specific socio-cultural circumstances: the capitalist, post-industrial West and, more specifically, a Judeo-Christian United States. Gender for Schlafly is only *partially essential*. God constructs a rigid male-female binary. Much like choosing to embrace Christianity, adhering to God's preferred constructions of gender is a political choice. Making this choice maximizes the possibilities for externalizing freedom in the world; denying this opportunity only exacerbates the constraints that one while striving for an impossible – utopic – politics. For Schlafly, there are ideal gender constructs that are

anchored on both nature and theology, but their normative foundation does not preclude the ability to socially construct alternative gendered orders. The reason for embracing gender constraints *is* liberal freedom, where liberal freedom is understood metaphysically as an interior force of agency prior to the material forces of the world. In other words, what feminists understand as the oppressive consequences of patriarchy are understood by Schlafly as the necessary hardships of gender that should be approached positively for the sake of preserving and reproducing Western civilization and achieving self-actualization as a woman. Freedom here is not coterminous with sovereignty, as per feminism; but a condition only possibly if masculinist sovereignty exists prior.

The young Schlafly first theorizes her notion of freedom not from gendered differences but from security concerns. But she understands this freedom in relation to threats both domestic and foreign during the Cold War. Her first book *A Choice not an Echo* attacks Republican "kingmakers" and "New York Internationalists" for promoting the "New Deal-New Frontier Foreign Policy" and subverting the popular will's supposed desire for a doctrinaire conservative.[373] Schlafly champions Goldwater's nomination as the solution for the "problem of world communism" and as a means to restore America's relationship abroad.[374] *A Choice not an Echo* makes only two asides to gender, claiming that women have recently become "sheep" to elites[375] and capitalist ingenuity has been the true "liberator" of women.[376] But her call for America to be "ready for war 'at all times'" and her critiques of American military passivity are implicitly gendered through their advocacy of masculine aggression as a means to secure American civilization.[377] Moreover, *Choice* develops, indirectly, a political liberalism explicitly partnered with the institution of the nation-state as a means for making one's individual freedom concrete in the world. Globalism and communism are the two major threats to individualism and American sovereignty, and therefore the major threats to freedom. The works Schlafly publishes over the next ten years further develop this opposition between American freedoms and a hostile world. In *Strike From Space* she claims that "the two great

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[373] Phyllis Schlafly, *A Choice Not an Echo*, 6, 26; 46; 80.
[374] Schlafly, ibid, 8-9, 15, 84-85.
[375] Schlafly, 6.
[376] Schlafly, 81.
[377] Schlafly, 46, 84-85.

guarantees of peace are the power of God and the United States military" which must be preserved from delivery to the "Devil," or communism.[378] She explains Goldwater's loss as the result of "gravedigger" peaceniks who deny the existential threat of the Soviet Union and the "one-worldism" of the U.N. and NATO.[379] Gravediggers are "emotionally incapable of effectively opposing Communists" and are weak, dishonorable draft dodgers.[380] Here again her gendered critique is implicit, attacking the effeminate culture of Democratic politicians by identifying the need for aggressive, militant masculinity. She proposes a traditional configuration between gender and the western liberal nation-state: men embody the masculine, public vigor of the nation and engage in the physical labor of state reproduction, whereas women embody the moral clarity of the private sphere and engage in domestic reproduction.

Her conventional approach to the gendered nation continues to be the locus through which she articulates society and gender until the eighties. In *Safe Not Sorry*, Schlafly refers to the "moral sickness of the federal government" as evidenced by crime, domestic racial feuds, and the inability to win the Vietnam War[381]. She classifies "poverty workers" (social workers) as political agitators aligned with the New Left and Communists and calls for public trials against Black Panther leaders for advocating the overthrow of the United States by violence.[382] The text further bemoans liberal "situation ethics," academic theories of structural or "trapped" poverty, and the "subversion blind" Department of Justice.[383] She praises McCarthy for exposing "homosexual infiltration" and further identifies the need for "high moral standards" in federal elected office. *Safe* concludes with yet another critique of "Republican Kingmakers" and warns conservatives that liberal movements toward social justice, the advocates of "big power," are emulating Hitler in an attempt to subvert American institutions.[384] Her last word on communism is *Kissinger on the Couch*, wherein she opposes Kissinger's foreign policy as

[378] Schlafly, *Strike From Space*, 3, 16.
[379] Schlafly, ibid, 92; 128-129; 145.
[380] Ibid, 146-147.
[381] Schlafly, *Safe Not Sorry*, 6.
[382] Schlafly, ibid, 31-37; 103.
[383] Ibid, 50, 61-62, 107.
[384] Ibid, 146-150.

"defeatism,"[385] advocates for a liberal use of American "kill-power,"[386] and calls for the emulation of Israel who alone as a nation recognizes that "to survive in freedom, a nation must have both the military power and the will to use it."[387] Despite her seemingly haphazard approach to litter her text with standard conservative opinions, *Safe Not Sorry* and *A Choice Not an Echo* share a coherent worldview that remains with Schlafly throughout her activist career. The Nation-state constitutes a moral republic that structures the possibilities for individual freedom if and only if they are supplemented with private morals that sustain a nation's virility. A rigidly hierarchical, aggressive, and masculine use of state power publicly and stalwart morals in the home are the twin pillars of a free civilization.

Schlafly's early theory of freedom mimics the structure of my political theology of suffering. First, her theory begins from the position of international security rather than domestic concerns; her worldview begins first and foremost with the hostile, Augustinian reality that the world is fallen and chaotic. This move constitutes the first problem against which all other moral and political values must be derived. And Schlafly's standard is one of masculinist sovereignty which preconditions all other possibilities for freedom. All of her earliest political antagonists – homosexuals, internationalists, party elites, peaceniks, and communists – represent a weakening of U.S. sovereignty and the feminization of American nationalism in a world that Schlafly perceives is unalterably hostile toward the existence of the United States and the values that it represents. The status of the United States as a pinnacle of freedom and highest form of Western civilization is precarious and must, therefore, be actively preserved. And the world is an ideological battlefield more than it is a cradle of freedom. This view of the world will guide the way she critiques second-wave feminism. As agents, we must inculcate our suffering for moral virtue in defense of masculinist sovereignty. The feminists seek to disrupt this delicate, God-ordained order.

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[385] Schlafly, *Kissinger on the Couch*, 15.
[386] Ibid. 111
[387] Ibid. 782.

Phyllis Schlafly, Part Two: The Freedom of the Positive, Christian Woman

Schlafly's first book on feminism, *The Power of the Positive Woman*, contrasts freedom as a metaphysical force of agency with feminism as an ideology that truncates freedom. Feminists theorize gender as a discursive structure that encourages women to think of themselves as "a little cog in the big machine" rather than "confront[ing]" daily life as a serious of challenges within one's personally capacity to solve.[388] The eponymous "Positive Woman" is a woman who has self-actualized an orientation toward the world where she is neither a victim nor constrained by her situation.[389] Structural imbalances of power are challenges meant to be confronted positively as a source for personal growth and as a means to externalize freedom through struggle, rather than proof of arbitrary institutionalized hierarchies. The Positive Woman's power comes entirely from within herself. Freedom is a linear movement from one's interiority to the exterior world, a force animating social circumstances rather than being constrained by them.

Schlafly's theorizing the relationship between gender and freedom is simultaneously individualist and collective. Freedom proceeds from the individual to the world but this movement is better sustained by a moral state that helps elicit this trajectory. Because she is an individual who has realized her own possibilities for freedom, the Positive Woman has no need for gendered antagonisms: "man" is not the "enemy" but rather a "partner" in the movement of freedom.[390] Schlafly's Positive Woman, however, is also a *natural* woman. She identifies various physical, physiological, and emotional differences as innate to man and woman: different capacities for drinking alcohol, hardiness for physical labor, different kinds of reasoning, among others.[391] Moreover, these natural differences reflect the will of a "Divine Architect," an architect who gave men physical power over others while giving women a greater "power" than brute strength: the ability to "motivate…inspire…[and] encourage" those men.[392] But Schlafly refuses to wholly collapse gender with nature. Schlafly lists

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[388] Schlafly, *The Power of Positive Woman*, 7.
[389] Ibid, 8.
[390] Ibid., 10.
[391] Ibid, 14; 18-20.
[392] Ibid, 15-17.

various instances where society is able to work against nature and organize gender arrangements counter to the Divine Architect's design. One is the set of domestic threats to "Judeo-Christian tradition and civilization": women's studies curriculums, feminist oppositions to the homemaker and wife, the emasculation of Western men, and the Warren court's overturning obscenity laws.[393] A second is difference abroad like "African societies" where gender relations are more fluid and linked to the African's inability to construct and maintain civilization.[394] The fact that the gendered order is natural but alterable reflects its precarity: as a predicate for concrete individual freedom, it anchors progressive opposition to Western civilization because the subversion of this order will constrain freedom. For Schlafly the reverse point is also true: aligning with the 'natural' gendered order, and securing it, maximizes society's possibilities for living freely. Of course, this precarity structures a different argument about freedom that Schlafly often alludes to with anxiety. If the United States is precarious and must be constantly defended (with aggressive wars), then the feminist's version of equality essentially thrusts women to the front lines of physical battle – vacating the domestic and collapsing that which is to be defended. Schlafly thus opposed the Equal Rights Amendment as a law that would destabilize the Christian Republic.[395]

Positive Woman concludes with a call to return to the early Republic's emphasis on God as a predicate for freedom,[396] a theme she develops in the companion *The Power of the Christian Woman*. This text, published two years after its predecessor, repackages much of the same argument but with explicitly theological language. God has "furnished" an "eternal identity" to the woman that, once realized, is the source of her "power."[397] Man and woman have essential theological differences but are equal as social "complement[s]."[398] Denying this difference is equated to denial of "the very essence of womanhood." Feminism here is no longer simply a political ideology but also a theological ideology opposed to "creation."[399] But this text yet again illustrates Schlafly's

[393] Ibid, 73, 118-119, 199.
[394] Ibid, 39.
[395] Eagle Forum,"ERA: Phyllis Schlafly and Betty Friedan," *Good Morning America*, 1976, 4:40-4:52.
[396] Ibid, 214-215.
[397] Schlafly, *The Power of the Christian Woman*, 9.
[398] Ibid, 9.
[399] Ibid, 10.

recognition that social movements are not bound by the world. Feminism advocates a concrete social shift that Schlafly perceives as a threat. Undergirding her theological argument is the belief that God made the world in such a way that individuals have the freedom to align with or disregard God's vision. God's gendered command is "the great gift to woman" through which she can achieve full actualization.[400] The humanists "put man in the place of God" and "feminism" puts "woman in the place of God," both striving with futility to overcome the constituent laws of reality in pursuit of political projects that misrecognize the human predicament.[401] The Christian woman in particular is gifted with a "positive outlook" derived from "inner serenity" that perceives the domestic life as a source of freedom and fulfillment rather than "imprison[ment]."[402] Schlafly extolls capitalism and technological innovation – the fruits of the "free enterprise system" – are the true "liberators" of woman.[403] As the "beneficiaries" of the "Judeo-Christian" civilization that produced these freedoms, Schlafly encourages women to find within themselves the "moral vision" America needs to retain the predicates necessary for its free society: the rigidly gendered family.[404]

Schlafly's final works on feminism demonstrate a remarkable coherence with her earlier texts (although, in part, this coherence is sustained by degrees of self-plagiarism). In *Who Killed the American Family*, Schlafly attacks Hillary Clinton for her "it takes a village" remarks. She highlights Clinton's comment as signifying "the progressives' metaphor for the theory that the government, speaking through judges, psychologists, school personnel, and social workers, should make decisions about child rearing, not the parents."[405] She promotes the heteronormative, two-parent family and rigid "gender roles" as the "fundamental institution of our stable, liberty-loving, and very successful society."[406] The underdevelopment of the Islamic world and various indigenous societies are mobilized as rhetorical proof that the Western nuclear family is the foundation of a successful civilization.[407] But the "instinct" for the Western nuclear family is "not innate"

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[400] Ibid, 12.
[401] Ibid.
[402] Ibid, 15-23.
[403] Ibid, 37.
[404] Ibid, 37-40; 167; 175.
[405] Schlafly, *Who Killed the American Family*, xii.
[406] Ibid, 1-2.
[407] Ibid, 7-9.

and therefore is in need of religion and law to inculcate and preserve.[408] Here, again, we see another iteration of Schlafly's overall argument on freedom. The external world needs to be organized politically in such a way as to make individual freedom a concrete reality. Gender is one mode of enhancing or constraining this possibility. Feminists are free to pursue alternative arrangements to gender relations, but they are inhibiting their own ability to self-actualize their individual freedoms by confusing "dependency" and "victim[hood]" for liberation.[409] Schlafly specifically critiques Firestone, Friedan, Steinem, Beauvoir, Millet, and Greer for their assaults on the family as assaults on Western freedom – which Schlafly identifies as the reason why American women are "the most fortunate class of people who ever lived."[410] *Feminist Fantasies* repeats these tropes but with more vulgar, insulting language and falsehood. Schlafly criticizes Feminism for refusing to deal with rape insofar as it is exclusively concerned with eradicating the domestic housewife.[411] She again attacks Hillary Clinton for having an "inability to cope with life's meaning."[412] But certain rhetorical reformulations of her antagonism toward feminism reflect the argument on freedom that implicitly runs throughout her corpus. "Feminism," she writes, "is doomed to failure *because it is based on an attempt to repeal and restructure human nature*."[413] She refers to Beauvoir's *Second Sex* as "utter nonsense" and the work of an "imagination" that is "beyond reality."[414] Margaret Thatcher is extolled as the embodiment of true female equality because she achieved it not through "the clenched fist, the whimper of a victim, or even affirmative action" but rather "hard work, perseverance, and sticking to sound, conservative principles."[415] The language of "reality" and "hard work" are not arbitrary appeals to conservative readers so much as they are a judicious application of a conservative discourse that is more complex than the vulgarity of Schlafly's text immediately suggests. Feminism is doomed because it attempts to actualize a change that can never occur. It is a utopic promise restrained by reality: gender is a condition that one

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[408] Ibid, 7.
[409] Ibid, 172, 216.
[410] Ibid, 24-25, 29, 79.
[411] Schlafly, *Feminist Fantasies*, 22-24.
[412] Schlafly, 37.
[413] Ibid, 28. Italics my own.
[414] Ibid, 66.
[415] Ibid, 63.

must operate within, rather than an object to be recognized as a hinderance and overcome. Thatcher suffers this condition and succeeds; Beauvoir, to Schlafly, succumbs to victimhood, wallowing in abstraction. Freedom is a reality that can only be achieved through individual struggle.

Partway through *Feminist Fantasies*, Schlafly provides an illuminating contrast between *Gone With the Wind*'s success and a recent televised edition of *Death of a Salesman*. "There are times when survival is the supreme achievement," she writes, and precisely for these reasons do so many Americans turn toward heroism and triumph as literary motifs against narratives of loss and misfortune.[416] Reality is full of difficulties and hindrances by design which will not always be overcome. Nonetheless, we must confront reality with a positive attitude and continue to meet these challenges as if they might be overcome. Survival is a process of approaching hardship with positivity. To champion the victim, a tragic figure overwhelmed by his circumstances, is to inculcate a pessimism that breeds insecurity and helplessness. Against this, Schlafly advocates for an embrace of subjective suffering both morally and politically.

Phyllis Schlafly, Part Three: Suffering

Phyllis Schlafly's final work, published posthumously, is a co-authored defense of Donald Trump. Some might interpret the work as further evidence of American conservatism's succumbing to its internal contradictions and intellectual incoherence: a genre of fascism masquerading as classical liberalism. But this interpretation denies internal coherence to the long arc of Schlafly's work and twentieth century conservatism more generally. Schlafly's Trump is "a choice not an echo" and the successor to both Goldwater and Reagan.[417] Unlike Hillary Clinton, Trump embodies the masculine vigor necessary to pursue an aggressive military policy abroad, secure national sovereignty through rigid border security, and fight against LGBTQ attacks on the domestic family.[418] He further embodies the ideal Christian president: he opposes a political correctness that leaves the "global ideology" of "Islam" unchallenged, defends the "civilized" world, and demonstrates a masculine "loyalty" that proceeds from his family to his country.[419] His

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[416] Schlafly, 65.
[417] Schlafly, *The Conservative Case for Trump*. Ix-x.
[418] Schlafly, ibid, xi-xix.
[419] Ibid., 49, 60, 91-92.

moral lapses are nothing more than red herrings in much the same way that Reagan's moral lapses did not prevent him from being the ideal religious favorite over Carter.[420] A conglomerate of Islam, Hillary Clinton, and the Democrats displace feminism as the rhetorical enemy of Western civilization. With respect to her broader corpus, readers might ask why Schlafly extolls Trump as moral exemplar without hypocritical self-indictment. But the narrative structure of *Case for Trump* presents a coherent and consistent response: defense of Western civilization, a precarious construct that is always under threat, is a greater moral activity than individual failings, which are themselves expected. The United States is the pinnacle of Western freedom and the only space where individual freedoms can be channeled into concrete reality. Christianity is a personal choice that, while fundamentally true, can be rejected – much like God's ordained gender standards. To defend and embrace the United States alongside Christianity is the most successful way to preserve and actualize individual freedom in the world. The moral failings of day-to-day life are merely additional challenges to overcome in one's gradual process of achieving greater freedom. Donald Trump preserves Western civilization through his opposing assaults domestic and foreign. His individual moral failings testify to his humanity.

The more astute question regarding Schlafly's extolling Donald Trump – and conservatism in general – is to ask why she remains so deeply committed to a project of individual freedom that predicates itself on her gendered subordination. Her fervent belief that American women are the "most privileged" in the world remains insufficient to explain her twin commitments to political liberalism and socially conservative Roman Catholicism. The answer to this question lies in the conservative moral economy of suffering. The conservative variant of political liberalism requires that individuals suffer, albeit optimistically. In their daily confrontations with challenges both short-term and structural, the ideal conservative individual retains a positive demeanor because their confronting insurmountable challenges with positivity is constitutive of their moral and political self-worth. Phyllis Schlafly's corpus reflects this moral economy of suffering in various iterations. Gender and political liberalism converge as iterations of suffering in

[420] Ibid, 96.

Schlafly's valorization of Golda Meir and Margaret Thatcher.[421] Both embody the Positive Woman, someone who self-actualizes their femininity through the making concrete their power of individual freedom. Both faced gendered suffering: they had affective ties toward the domestic and self-conceived the domestic space of the family as the place of woman, but felt compelled toward the public, and masculine, work of politics as a necessary means to preserve the domestic face. They had to sacrifice their domestic callings to pursue public careers in addition to facing the vitriol of men. Gender here is a mode of being that distributes suffering in the world; a natural constraint that must be confronted with positivity rather than dwelled within as a structural handicap. Schlafly's opposition to feminism is rooted primarily on the fact that gender as a mode is *ontological* rather than a social construct that can be adapted through political change: it is "nonsense," "beyond reality," and in opposition to "creation." Feminism is a utopic politics that encourages women to turn toward the unreal and manifests victimhood. Woman can only make freedom concrete through suffering the constraints of gender with "inner serenity."

The conservative moral economy of suffering is not exclusively a force constitutive of individual moral and political worth, but also a means of evaluating the worth of *others*. Schlafly regularly evaluates the moral character of others in reference to various subjective qualities. Liberals and progressives are "emotionally incapable," cannot emotionally handle reality, and encourage emotional confusion.[422] Feminist women are particularly blamed from lacking a "cheerful disposition,"[423] celebrating their circumstantial victimhood,[424] and consequently approaching life with negativity and powerlessness. Schlafly's ability to morally evaluate both progressives and feminists is anchored in her ability, like other Positive and Christian Women, to provide a moral "vision for America"[425] and maintain a "positive outlook."[426] She does not engage in these rhetorical attacks as a conservative strategy of argumentation so much as to embody

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[421] Schlafly, *The Power of Positive Woman*, 58; *The Power of Christian Woman*, 54; *Feminist Fanatasies*, 63.
[422] Strike from Space, 147; Feminist Fantasies, 15, 37, 61.
[423] Positive Woman, 70.
[424] Positive Woman, 7-8.
[425] Christian Woman, 175.
[426] Christian Woman, 15.

the form of her argument, that she herself has the moral clarity necessary to identify these moral diseases. She has the moral vision of the Positive Woman: she recognizes that the United States is the pinnacle of freedom through its Judeo-Christian heritage and the preeminent context for the free enterprise system and desires to preserve this heritage. She also suffers, and in suffering testifies to her own worth: she commits herself to a life of public activism, bringing with it the vitriol of the opposition, all the while maintaining herself as a mother of seven and reproducing her part of the state's domestic sphere. Here, the gendered foundations of society's reproduction are a means of distributing the suffering of labor (woman in the home; man, in the factory or military) which, in being embraced as a means for freedom, constitute one's political and moral worth as well as their political and moral frame. This same argument is often presented in a gender neutral or masculinist variant in discussing the white working-class: that those engaged in visibly strenuous occupations, who bodily suffer "hard work," are more morally deserving than those who are lazy or morally licentious. Conservatives, sharing Schlafly's opposition to "poverty workers," domestic welfare, and iterations of civil rights, profess a social welfare politics that align neatly with their gender politics.[427]

A final dimension of the political theology of suffering, one that both Schlafly and Trump illustrate, is the affective. Through rhetorical form or public performance, they leverage vulgarity and hostility to elicit anxiety, fear, and emotional pain. For Schlafly, her texts often antagonize feminists and progressives with insults and vulgarity – like her harsh critiques of Hillary Clinton and Simone de Beauvoir. Alternatively, she leverages her demeanor in public forums to elicit the frustration of opponents, as in her debate with Betty Frieden.[428] Donald Trump similarly antagonizes his political opposition through public performances that celebrate masculine entitlement and chastise his opponents through insults and vulgarity. In both cases, these figures leverage the format of their speech and bodily mannerisms prior to discursive content in order to affectively elicit specific responses from their opponents. While limited in duration by their published texts or public performances, these affective elicitations nonetheless enact the conservative moral economy of suffering by referencing the intention to harm through

[427] Safe Not Sorry, 6, 10, 22-23, 31-37.
[428] Eagle Forum, "ERA: Phyllis Schlafly and Betty Frieden," *Good Morning America*, 18:09-18:24.

their performance. They are both supplements to a politics of suffering as well as self-referential signifiers to a desire to see harmed states of being in others.

Schlafly's Positive Woman, a genre of republican womanhood, is a woman who suffers. She suffers the labor of childbirth, the constant reproduction of the domestic sphere, and dependency on her husband. In rare instances where this woman chooses to pursue a life beyond the home, she suffers the isolation of being away from her family and the hostility that confronts any public woman. But these are not structural problems to Phyllis Schlafly; they are the predicates for deriving normative value. These are the challenges that one confronts with inner serenity. They are the reasons for seeking out and emulating Gold Meir and Margaret Thatcher. Confrontations with suffering construct one's moral value. They sustain the linear movement from freedom from the individual to the world; suffering makes freedom concrete. In navigating these circumstances and reproducing the domestic, woman is *freed from* physical labor in factory, military combat, and the stress of supporting dependents. She is also *free to* love others, to socialize, to engage her mind, and to leisure. Feminists, meanwhile, are doomed to chase a utopic dream that they confuse for freedom. They exchange the ability to self-actualize freedom for victimhood and nihilism. By denying the moral and political value derived from suffering, by maintaining the audacity to believe a woman might not suffer, they chase after confusion and hopelessness. At least according to Phyllis Schlafly.

Conclusion

In reflecting more broadly on why white women voted for Donald Trump, we should not presume that their worldview is internally incoherent. As Phyllis Schlafly illustrates, women remain committed to republican womanhood in ways that perceive Donald Trump as the embodiment of masculine, national virtue. His sins are secondary to the civilization he defends, one in which the deserving man or woman is free to inhabit and maintain their deeply gendered notions of freedom. With women more specifically, the freedom of the domestic space is precarious, a space under threat by domestic social shifts and foreign powers. As Schlafly reveals, conservative American women self-conceive as among the "most liberated" in history, and as women committed to a liberation that correlates with patriarchy,

> Perhaps they have come to value their slight ascendancies so much that they accept their larger subjection. Perhaps they have come to love their abjection.[429]

What for Dworkin is the conservative woman's "self-hatred" is rather a form of subjectivity wherein the female self only knows itself through pain. Such mode of living is a permanent state of suffering, one where subordination *is* freedom, because to think otherwise is to dream an impossibility. This appropriation of suffering as virtue is among the most unique contributions that women offer to the contemporary conservative tradition: dwelling on uncharted paths of bodily and emotional pain where men can never travel. But to think of this process as one of mere accommodation to patriarchy reduces the power they embody as agents who draw their moral and political worth out of this suffering. As Dworkin correctly identifies, they believe that "the system of sex oppression," which is a system of *freedom*, "is closed and unalterable."[430] And since the utopic future is always receding, all that remains is a "positive attitude."

[429] Anne Norton, "The King's New Body," *Theory & Event* 20 (1), S-120.
[430] Dworkin, *Right-Wing Woman*, 231.

Chapter Six:
Memelords, Hardcore Gamers, and the New Frontiers of Political Masculinity

In 2014, a targeted, online harassment campaign forced feminist gamers and journalists from their homes. The nefarious #GamerGate,[431] as it's come to be called, originated with the harassment for Zoe Quinn, a video game developer. Quinn's *Depression Quest* received positive reviews from journalists that male critics, picking up on a blog post written by her disgruntled ex-boyfriend, insisted were *quid pro quo* consequences of sexual impropriety. The campaign grew in strength and intensity as gaming journalist Anita Sarkeesian, who published an article critiquing gender tropes in video games, and developer Brianna Wu, who mocked the #GamerGate subreddit, were doxed (identifying and releasing someone's public information in a form meant to feel, if not be, threatening) from their homes. Those who identified with the #GamerGate community perceived Quinn, Sarkeesian, and Wu as symptomatic of cultural trespasses against the 'lifestyle' of gaming. These women embodied the decline of 'hardcore' gaming, the feminization of spaces perceived to be refuges for 'real' men, and as creative agents in a friend-enemy narrative that posited the virtual male as enemy – and consequently, to these men, as victim. The incident continues to generate discussion regarding the relationship between masculinity and (virtual) spaces and the ways that young men create political identities that coalesce into virtual communities. And many of these political communities are the agents behind God-Emperor Donald Trump's memeosphere and various internet forums that "ironically" support him.

While numerous academic and professional explanations have sought to explain Donald Trump's appeal to distinct minorities – the religious right, white women, and the white working-class – fewer have contextualized Trump's appeal to *white men*. This lack of deeper inquiry more broadly reflects the political presuppositions behind how we

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[431] Jay Hathaway, "What Is Gamergate, and why? An explainer for non-geeks" *Gawker* October 10, 2014 <https://gawker.com/what-is-gamergate-and-why-an-explainer-for-non-geeks-1642909080>; Simon Parkin, "Gamergate: A Scandal Erupts in the Video-Game Industry" *The New Yorker* October 17, 2014 <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/gamergate-scandal-erupts-video-game-community>. Shaw, Adrienne. *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*, 1; Condis, Megan. *Gaming Masculinity: Trolls, Fake Geeks, and the Gendered Battle for Online Culture*, 103; Anable, Aubrey. *Playing with Feelings: Video Games and Affect*, 35; Jennifer Malkowski and Treaandrea M.Russworm, editors. *Gaming Representation: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Video Games*, xiii; Kocurek, Carly A. *Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood at the Video Game Arcade,* 190.

recognize specific objects as fruitful for analysis. The resentment and authoritarian narratives both presume that, in some sense, specific demographics are voting against a presumed interest: whether gender solidarity, socio-economic relief, or ideological rigidity. We do not ask why white men are drawn toward Donald Trump or conservatism precisely because we imagine something about this inclination to be natural. White men are *obviously* self-interested in rightist politics.

To accept such a relationship as given, however, is to reconstitute "white male" as the normative subject in precisely deferring its contingency. Even if we accept that there persist social and political patterns that benefit the white man, and Trump sustains such patterns, then we must still seek to understand why white men would be drawn toward seemingly disruptive patterns that draw attention to the imbalances of power within the system. In other words, why are different iterations of white men – lower-class and upper-class, educated and not – drawn toward a candidate whose melodramatic performances risk their secure positions, presuming that they are self-interested? What political horizons make possible a shared since of white masculine solidarity around such a performatively extreme candidate? The mere correlation between white male voting patterns and conservative candidates in modern U.S. electoral history cannot speak to the ways that different white men come together and, more importantly, the ways that certain white men desire to push the situation further to the right.

In what follows, I focus on the supposed novelty of internet masculinity as a cipher for understanding conservative masculinity more generally. Memes, web forums, and online gaming feature prominently within conservative, masculinist communities as both markers of identity and as conscious political strategies. This connection naturally follows from the gendered transition from military development toward competitive gaming in the late eighties as much as it does the legacy of a "muscular" masculinity experiencing changes in parenting away from outdoor play toward suburban tedium. Both of these specific social facts, however, more broadly signify Western political thought's underlying dialectic between masculinity and sovereignty. The militant, masculine sovereign conceives of the virtual as a medium to colonize and securitize, positing it a priori as an anxious space of vulnerability and anxiety. The need to police feminized behaviors and secure virtual masculine spaces is thus the defensive component of the alt-

right's offensive deployment of memes and doxing. The alt-right's relationship with the internet is another microcosm of masculinity's sovereign orientation toward spatial order and this dialectic's use of suffering as both a discipline conditioning subjective worth – virtually through competition – and as a force to weaponize – virtually through different kinds of antagonism.

Manifesting Masculinity through Play

The social history of the video game illustrates the twentieth century changes in masculinity, space, and play. To understand how the virtual has become a new medium through which to continue a kind of masculinist manifest destiny is to understand how the market emerges for video games and how video games become specifically marketed as a masculine object.

The end of manifest destiny proper and the integration of the far west into the United States happened concurrently to shifting, gendered notions of play. On the one hand, the closing of the frontier brought an end to the expansionist, "masculine" activity of civilizing.[432] Jason Pierce's description of frontier values closely resemble those which I previously identified as both masculinist and sovereign: "strength, intellect, fearlessness, and individualism."[433] On the other hand, the codes of masculinity shaped and reinforced by expansion across the frontier and into the specific needed new ways to manifest. Thus Greg Grandin described "Trumpism" as another iteration of a recurring frontier logic, the "passions" channeled beyond the frontier turned "inward."[434] These shifts in masculinity inflect the ways Americans imagined children and play. At the close of manifest destiny, children were encouraged to seek "free and unstructured play."[435] But with the close of the frontier, children became more intense objects of study and toys came to be marketed for specific development purposes. For "preadolescent boys, a few almost universal toys seemed to dominate play: sleds, bicycles, marbles, balls, and, to a lesser extent, guns and knives."[436] Nonetheless, toys were seen as objects to invest with a

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[432] Hine, Robert V. *The American West: An Interpretive History*, 324; Merrill, Karen R. *Public Lands and Political Meaning: Ranchers, The Government, and the Property between Them*, 21-22, 42;
[433] Pierce, Jason E. *Making the White Man's West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, 10.
[434] Grandin, Greg. "American Extremism Has Always Flowed from the Border." *Boston Review* January 9, 2019. http://bostonreview.net/politics/greg-grandin-american-extremism-has-always-flowed-border
[435] Chudacoff, Howard P. *Children at Play: An American History*. 69-72.
[436] Chudacoff, 83.

child's imagination and children were still encouraged to explore and spend time outdoors.[437] Urbanization brought additional challenges to this conception of childhood. Children, inclined toward imaginative outdoor time, became nuisances in public spaces. The Playground Movement constituted one of the early attempts at managing children by confining them to specific, observable spaces. Likewise, the proliferation of public, urban parks and backyards became other means by which to manage and discipline children's play.[438] With both frontier closed – the Far West and the open spaces of the child's imagination – toys became more prominently oriented toward disciplining specific kinds of children, rather than merely complementing unstructured imagination. Boy's toys "anticipated…future manhood" and thus sought to instill "competition and teamwork." Hence, early and mid-twentieth century boys were given "building blocks and miniature tools…electric trans, toy cars and airplanes, tinker toys, erector sets, and Lincoln logs."[439] Post-war America thus sustained a "boy culture" where "values of loyalty, physicality, and competitiveness prevailed."[440]

This foreground structures how the market both opened a specifically masculinist niche for video games while also itself being driven by the military and political logics of masculinity. After the 1950s, the mass marketing of toys replaces the "roaming" of earlier decades and video games become a means to channel masculine aggression while also constraining boys within a field of supervision.[441] Video games first "originated" in "the U.S. military-industrial complex" to which they "remain umbilically connected."[442] In her rethinking of the link between masculinity and gaming, Carly Kocurek describes video games as the successor to early twentieth century toys for boys: "a postindustrial, heavily individualized labor market" needs these new kind of virtual toys of "celebrate the skills and victories of individual achievements, where workers fulfill work roles as consultants, contractors, and freelancers."[443] Whereas the beginning of the century celebrates an imagination as open as the frontier, by the end of the twentieth century men

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[437] Ibid., 84.
[438] Ibid., 128, 112-115.
[439] Ibid., 117.
[440] Ibid., 143.
[441] Ibid., 168, 172.
[442] Dyer-Witherford Nick and Greig de Peuter. *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games,* xxix.
[443] Kocurek, Carly A. *Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood at the Video Game Arcade*. 13.

need new spaces in order to have the capacity to imagine. Video games arise as a virtual frontier, one where men can inhabit the post-fordist, technocratic masculinity of late capital while simultaneously embodying the aggressive, expansive fantasies of their constrained imaginations.

This brief social history of American masculinity bears new light on the way that Carl Schmitt theorized contemporary sovereignty and returns me to my prior discussions of the way both concepts are mutually constitutive. In his *Nomos of the Earth*, Schmitt narrates the development of what we now recognize as international law through the genealogy of the "nomos." The *Nomos* is a term Schmitt invokes to both deny the disciplinary boundaries of Western social science while nonetheless capturing something more fully than "law."[444] Nomos is the sovereign's prerogative to name but this capacity cannot be disentangled from the shared moral order inhabited by those who collectively embody sovereign – or, those whom are embodied by the sovereign. For Schmitt, the past five hundred years of international relations are largely the conflicts and expansions of different ordered Nomoi. Part of manifesting and securing a Nomos involves the work of actively appropriating, distributing, and building these orders[445] – not mere euphemisms for, but outright justifications of colonial projects. These activities, however, requires spaces. The first nomoi begin with the natural limits of the earth as they constrain both political and physical human activity and thus shape our initial moral conceptions of the world.[446] In the mid-twentieth century within which Schmitt writes, the Cold War has transcended both earthly and oceanic boundaries and is now making the air and space itself the new mediums of order.[447] These new mediums require new kinds of reasoning and hence justify the turn toward "technical" and "managerial" reason,[448] insofar as the sheer amount of politicized space encourages the more distant management over the more proximate domination (a political field which can only exist within restrained boundaries).

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[444] Schmitt, Carl. *The Nomos of the Earth*. Translated by G. L. Ulmen. Candor, NY: Telos Press, Ltd. 2003. 326-327.
[445] Schmitt, 335.
[446] Ibid., 42.
[447] Ibid., 354.
[448] Ibid., 355.

The relationship between space and reason which constitutes the sovereign's prerogative to name bears new eight when we consider the advent of the virtual as a post-Manifest Destiny space. The shifts in boys' play throughout the twentieth century retained an emphasis on the aggressive and dominating styles of masculinity that find themselves enshrined in Western genealogies of sovereignty. The specificity of their iterations only reflected the concerns of political discipline and managerial reason: the aggressiveness of boys was encouraged, but it needed to be directed toward the right ends and within the right spaces. With the proliferation of backyards, the end of formal colonization, and the material circumscription of spaces for men to embody both their imaginative dominance and interpersonal dominance, a new field was necessary within which to 'manifest' masculinity. I do not mean to imply that the virtual itself is a conscious attempt to fulfill some genealogical need within the dialectic between masculinity and sovereignty so much as to suggest that the way men leverage it fits within broader social and political histories that both frame it as a masculinist space while also allowing men to continue embodying their fantasized gender ideals. The virtual is a seemingly limitless field for man's expansive imagination that is, ironically like the sovereign itself, vulnerable to penetration to forces not coincidentally framed as feminine.

World of Mancraft

The rules governing online play reflect the ways that masculinity and sovereignty have 'expanded' into the virtual as a space to conquer. The most popular MMORP (massively multiplayer online role-playing game), and a locus of masculinity on the internet, is Blizzard Entertainment's *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*). The way that players engage the Warcraft community illustrates the ways that masculinity appropriates the virtual as a space to claim and dominate. But *WoW*, too, has its own issues with the alt-right that provide concrete examples of the ways the virtual fantasy imagination and ultra conservative, masculinist politics converge.

Both the expectations behind the internal dynamics of gaming as a form as well as the market shaping these expectations are determined by men. The "ultimate happiness" of game developing is to find the difficult medium between being "hard enough to be

difficult" and "easy enough to succeed" for players.[449] But the ideal player here is a man: more specifically, a man who imagines himself misunderstood by broader social reality.[450] Thus games are largely built under the presumption that their audience is a socially isolated male. The economics sustain this presumption. The "vicious cycle" of the gaming industry is one where managerial and development positions are occupied more than two-thirds by men who likewise imagine themselves as players. Gendered "nostalgia" – longing for the competitive, homosocial spaces of early gaming – further magnifies this cycle through elevating the masculinist past of gaming into the ideal toward which development should pursue.[451] Women are actively involved in both development and production of video games but must work against a cultural dynamic that nonetheless posits men as the norm.[452]

These social and material contexts furnish medium-specific gendered dynamics to gaming. Most all online characters are always in some way presumed to be male or otherwise buttress masculine kinds of subjectivity[453]; and female players, when identified through mediums like headsets, are positioned as weaker or less skilled. Online gaming otherwise sustains an anonymous atmosphere where gender parodies reiterate the centrality of the neutral male by performing the feminine as a joke. Within the dynamics of playing, various rules encourage an aggressive, individualist playstyle against cooperative play. These include griefers: those who antagonize lower level players; campers: those who wait next to deceased players bodies to kill or harm them upon resurrection: and trolling, the accumulation of social capital through social antagonizing in server group chats or in-game discussion boards. In my own experience as a player for fifteen years, trolling in particular has become a medium through which to introduce, and normalize, far right politics in World of Warcraft. Trolling allows players to inject socially undesirable or malicious topics into forums under the guise of merely trolling until, through repetition, such topics become mainstream or accepted subjects.[454]

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[449] Heineman, David S. *Thinking About Video Games: Interviews with the Experts*. 31.
[450] Heineman,
[451] Heinemen, 19, 233; Kocurek, 26, 37, 52-55; Thomas P. Oates, "Madden Men: Masculinity, Race, and the Marketing of a Video Game Franchise," *Playing to Win*, 52-53, 55;
[452] Jennifer Dewinter and Carly A. Kocurek, "Aw Fuck, I Got a Bitch on my Team!" 57-58.
[453] Kocurek, 52-55, 90, 144;
[454] Condis, Megan. *Gaming Masculinity: Trolls, Fake Geeks, and the Gendered Battle for Online Culture*. 22-25.

Cooperative gaming is further hindered by a kind of player burnout, where those who shoulder the burden of care often take on responsibility for too many new players and, therefore, opt out of playing altogether.[455] These gender dynamics also structure more recent innovations in gaming. *Hardcore* games are those animated by competition and conquest; *casual* games are more leisurely and can be done at one's own pace. Naturally, the former type is considered both proper gaming and masculine while the latter is considered improper and effeminate.[456] Hardcore gaming consists not only of multiplayer, online games but also playstyles within games that encourage competition; casual gaming consists of slow playstyles, paying more attention to world-building than quantifiable measures of success, and games that do not mandate one's time like those played on mobile phones. "Hardcore" gamers feel "threatened" by the proliferation of casual gaming, which not only risks feminizing the medium but also "interrupts" the "leisure time" of men whose hardcore games demand structured focus.[457]

World of Warcraft represents nearly all of these dynamics. As a player myself, I play both 'sides' in the game: the Horde, a loose affiliation of the more bestial races; and the Alliance, a united front of kingdoms representing the more stereotypically civilized races. Each player starts their character by choosing a "realm" or serve on which to begin their play. My Alliance serve is titled "Emerald Dream," and this serve in particular is notorious within the community for the toxic, far right politics of it's in-game chat feature. As players move around the world they have the option of communicating with anyone in their zone; or, if located in one of the designated cities, there is a shared chat communication between these hubs called "general" chat. Particularly in general chat, players engage in most of the toxic behavior recognized by feminist critics of gaming: active invocations of rape, homophobic slurs, and aggressive masculine policing.[458] In my own experience, however, I noticed many higher level players – as in, not newly created characters or 'bots' – synthesize these traditional antagonisms with support of Donald Trump. Trump complicates another feature recognized in masculinist gaming.

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[455] Nicholas David Bowman, editor. *Video Games: A Medium That Demands Our Attention*, 13.
[456] Anable, Aubrey. *Playing with Feelings: Video Games and Affect*. 82, 87.
[457] Jennifer Malkowski and Treaandrea M.Russworm, editors. *Gaming Representation: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Video Games*. 39-41, 45; Bonnie Ruberg, "Playing to Lose: The Queer Art of Failing as Video Games," 199.
[458] Condis, ibid.

Precisely because gaming is imagined as a male, and therefore neutral, space, players are discouraged from bringing "politics" to the game. Politics, here, stands in for sexual, racial, and gender inclusion.[459] The aggressive masculinity of Trump and his refusal to adhere to liberal norms justifies in gaming his mobilization as an apolitical trope insofar as this invocation shores up the apolitical nature of gaming precisely in maintaining the masculinist status quo.

More recently, changes in *World of Warcraft* have enflamed the playerbase in ways that testify to the gendered expectations of gaming. For most of the game's history, the central plot of each expansion tied into traditional male heroes. Regardless of Horde, Alliance, or expansion-specific enemy faction, the key agents of Warcraft history were mostly men. This narrative trend slows with the sixth expansion, *Warlords of Draenor*, where key female characters take a more robust role: the female relatives of male figures, previously a part of 'lore' but not seen in-game, became active participants in Draenor's history; and another figure, Yrel, becomes a Joan of Arc-like character central to the story's development. A fundamental shift occurs with the seventh expansion, *Legion*, which continues with the current expansion *Battle for Azeroth* and is set to continue with the forthcoming *Shadowlands*: male figures take a back seat almost entirely, or die specifically for the sake of female agency, and female characters become the standard-bearers of narrative change. Despite this attempt on Blizzard's part to bring more gender parity to Warcraft lore, the playerbase responded and continues to respond in conflicting ways. There persists a failure of the imagination to consider female stars as narratively complex. Sylvanas and Tyrande Whisperwind are core examples. Sylvanas is an undead elf who leads the undead race and, in *Legion*, becomes central leader of the Horde. Her narrative has remained consistent around her managing trauma and the complexities surrounding trauma largely guide her actions in making political choices. Likewise, Tyrande Whisperwind is an elf with an extensive past who bears significant trauma from world events. With *Legion* and *Battle for Azeroth*, both characters become balanced opposites: Sylvanus finally adopts a morbid kind of hope, while Tyrande, former priestess, abandons hope for militant opposition to Sylvanas's plans. Their interactions further complicate their own stories and sever them from the male agents that first

[459] Condis, 74; Jennifer Dewinter and Carly A. Kocurek, "Aw Fuck, I Got a Bitch on my Team!" 59, 63.

endowed with them narrative capital in the original Warcraft universe. In both cases, players – and mostly male players – actively demean both characters are purely evil, while invoking alternative male characters as more emblematic of emotional complexity. Interestingly, my own engagement with "general" chat has witnessed a handful of players making sense of how evil Sylvanas is through appeals to (not surprisingly) Hitler. Demeaning female complexity by linking them with concrete historical figures works to further cement the 'apolitical' and masculinist modality of gaming precisely because these kind of links constitute the foreground against which invoking, and praising, Donald Trump in trade chat becomes an accepted norm. Sylvanas and Hitler become unified; Trump becomes a morally good figure. Social justice and mass death become the shared object against which a stern masculine leader becomes normal.

Much more could be said of *World of Warcraft* and gender, but this brief discussion sufficiently illustrates the way that gaming as a medium and gender intersect around contemporary politics. Gaming is a virtual medium where men fantasize of their own masculine communities and need to police these boundaries for their own sake. Despite empirical evidence to the contrary that women and sexual minorities play, develop, and produce games, a significant male-only "gamer" identity persists. This identity since 2015 has found another medium with which to identify in Donald Trump. While quantitative work still waits to be done exposing the depths of this relationship, *World of Warcraft* illustrates a qualitative correlation between the masculinity that seeks refuge on the internet and the masculinity that sustains support of Donald Trump.

The Left Can't Meme

Besides gaming, another prominent virtual medium is "memeing." Memes proliferated as a force within American politics in 2015 as a testament to the grassroots support of candidates. While left candidates are more likely to have robust and active meme spaces than centrist candidates, Donald Trump emerged as a figure similarly propagated through memes. The role of memes within Trump's support and the roles governing memes as a genre illustrate, like video games, how the virtual becomes a masculinist space.

"Meme" culture, through anonymity, preserves a racialized (white) and gendered (masculine) community through sustaining a medium that enables *uninhibited* (as

opposed to merely "free") speech. The freedom of "free" speech becomes a value meant to enshrine a subject's ability to offend and antagonize rather than merely express an opinion. All topics are available and susceptible to mimetic exchange: in essence, memes and the forums they spread within perform a "social libertarian ethos."[460] But the very possibility that *all* topics are available becomes translated into an affective need to reiterate the denial of any boundaries, encouraging masculinist and far right groups to constantly perpetuate offensive or anti-democratic views.[461] Memes as a medium are not essentially anti-egalitarian but become a medium of masculinist antagonism precisely at the moment the male community on the internet needs to manifest itself through the explicit denial of perceived social justice boundaries. In other words, external social pressures that form an imagined male identity necessitate the need to antagonize through memes; and the repetitive nature of memes, whereby the humor is understood only to those who recognize the ways a specific meme becomes circulated as meme, constitutes a kind of community. Memes are a preferred medium for trolling.[462]

Like video games, this medium operates through various but constantly shifting logics of internet discourse. As a political aesthetic, its difference consists of means through which mimetic repetition creates the boundaries of community. There persists a similar inside, outside group to those who identify with the "gamer" identity but with different formalities of engagement. The meme economy consists of those who take an image and alter it, those who view and subsequently alter it, those who view and reproduce it through sharing, and those who simply view it. There is no social interaction except through both adapting, exchanging, and viewing. At no point in the meme process are participants directly engaging with one another. Nonetheless, memes mediate our social relations[463] through amplifying the mundane subjects of memes and circulating them within an in-the-know community which sustains a thin form of aesthetic community. The more people engage in exchange, and the more memes they participate

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[460] Manivannan, Vyshali. "FCJ-158 Tits or GTFO: The Logics of Misogyny on 4chan's Random - /B/." *The Fibreculture Journal*, no. 22 (2013).
[461] Condis, Megan. *Gaming Masculinity: Trolls, Fake Geeks, and the Gendered Battle for Online Culture*, 50.
[462] Leaver, Tama. "FCJ-163 Olympic Trolls: Mainstream Memes or Digital Discord?" *The Fibreculture Journal*, no. 22 (2013).
[463] Varrato, Rory. "The Revolutionary Power of Memes." *Critical Theory Research Network* (blog), June 22, 2017.

in, the greater their perceived belonging to a like-community. "Lulz" is a specific logic of memeing where the pain and distress of others is the explicit purpose of disseminating a meme. "Doing it for the Lulz" often justifies explicitly racist, homophobic, and sexist atttitudes while simultaneously reifying the white, masculinist in-group of the virtual-masculine community.[464]

Memes played an important role in spreading the messages of candidates, constituting communal boundaries between candidates' bases, and antagonizing political opposition. *Bernie Sanders Dank Meme Stash* entered the field first, followed by *God-Emperor Trump's Dank Meme Stash* (now known as *God Emperor Trump*) and then by a Hillary Clinton-oriented group. In 2020, meme groups continue to proliferate for candidates, with fringe and strongly partisan candidates having the most successful (in terms of popularity, activity, and membership) groups. Unlike other, especially "ironic" memes that attempt to reflect on the meta-logic of memes by generating endless, subtle aberrations of form that often diminish the importance of content entirely, these Trump memes are united by a shared conceptual form that furnishes relatively similar content meant to disseminate Trump's body as a material locus of sovereignty and masculinity's co-constitutive relationship.

Below is a selection of Trump memes accumulated by the author since Trump's election. In some instances, one can observe supporters' comments and reactions to the meme. Some memes are juxtaposed with political cartoons in order to illustrate the key visual strategy at work in disseminating Donald Trump: as a masculine, sovereignty body whose capacities as male-sovereign are made visually present through the fact that Trump antagonizes gender, racial, and sexual minorities. The logic of Donald Trump memes does not merely repeat the standard behaviors of trolling and "lulz" that sustain a masculinist, virtual community; but they proceed one step further in recognizing a link between masculinity, sovereignty, and suffering. Through Trump memes, a celebration of Donald Trump's sovereignty becomes a simultaneous celebration of his masculinity and his hostility toward those who need to suffer.

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[464] Milner, Ryan. "FCJ-156 Hacking the Social: Internet Memes, Identity Antagonism, and the Logic of Lulz." *The Fibreculture Journal*, no. 22 (2013).

Figure 1. God-Emperor Trump, posted to a 4chan politics thread in December of 2015.[465]

[466]

Figure 2. Anonymous Trump Meme 1.

[465] "God Emperor Trump," https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/god-emperor-trump, Last Accessed 21 August, 2019.
[466] Facebook, God Emperor Trump (Official) II, May 18 2018. Last Accessed 21 August, 2019.

[467]

Figure 3. Monodweiss Political Cartoon

[468]

Figure 4. Donald Trump Tweet

[467] Carlos Latuff, *Mondoweiss*, 15 August 2019, https://twitter.com/LatuffCartoons/status/1162053117619388416. Last accessed 21 August, 2019.
[468] Donald Trump, Twitter, 21 August 2019.

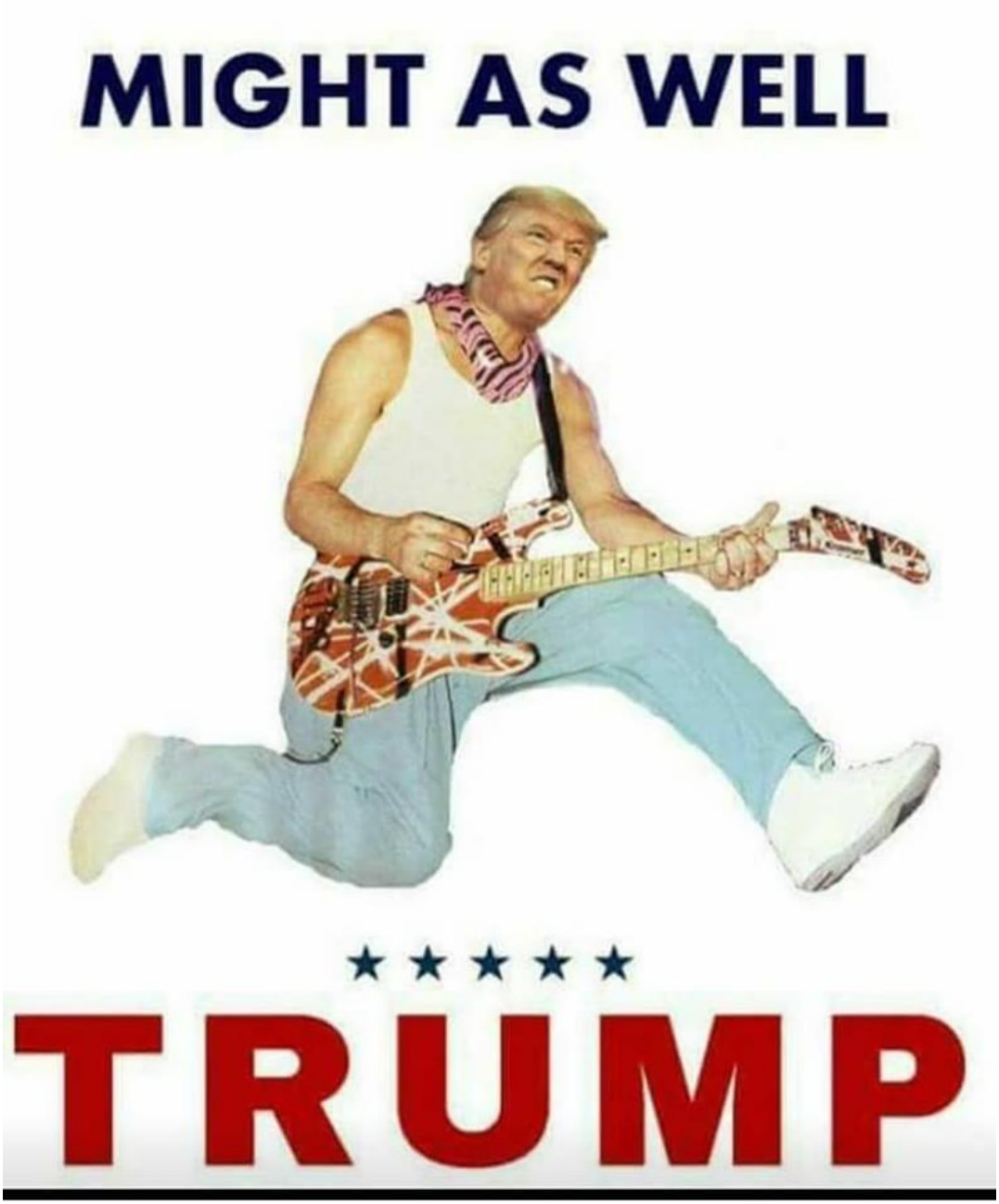
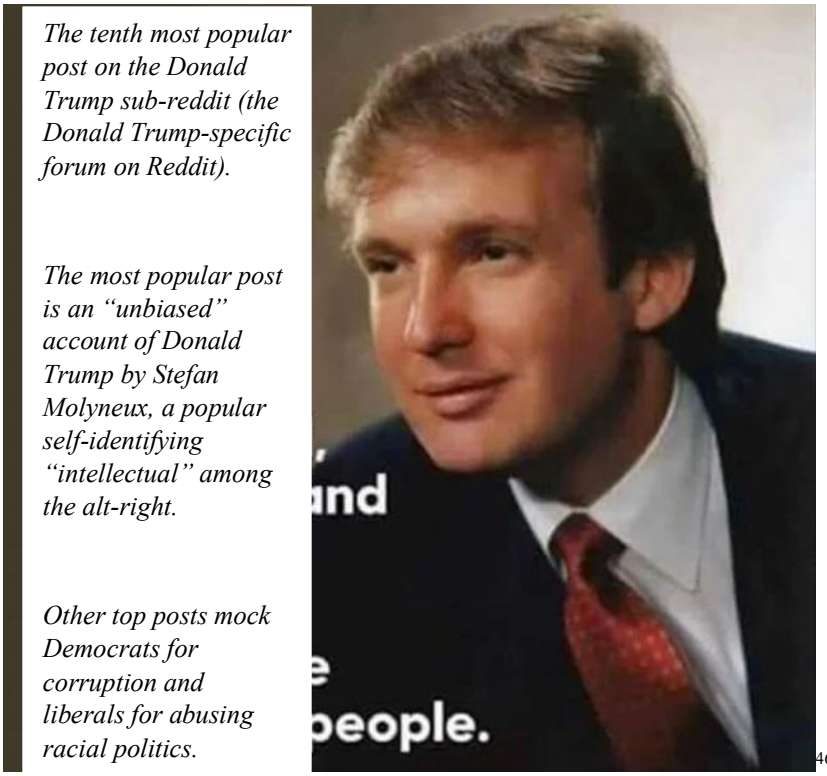


Figure 5. Rockin' Trump

Figure 6. Anonymous Trump Meme 2.

Figure 7. Anonymous Trump Meme 3.

Figure 8. Trump Disciplining Merkel Meme.



[469]

Figure 9. Reddit Trump Meme.

Of course, we cannot presume that enough people have access to the internet, and that enough of those people who do are engaged in meme economies, to claim that meme trends represent a cause of Trump's victory. Nonetheless, the successful dissemination of the God-Emperor trope speaks to a clear conceptual trend within the young, technologically inclined Trump demographic that imagines sovereignty and masculinity to be united in Donald Trump. The aesthetic logic of memes couples with the politics of Donald Trump to constitute a clear political aesthetic of masculinity where sovereignty and masculinity are made explicit through the ways they redistribute suffering.

Conclusion: The New Conservative Masculinity

In conclusion of her analysis of late twentieth century white power movements, Kathleen Belew notes that the same institutional infrastructure – particularly online forums – that awakened reactionary white men likely connects the alt-right to these other

[469] Untitled meme, *Reddit*, https://www.reddit.com/r/trump/top/?t=all last accessed 21 August, 2019.

movements.[470] In other words, ultraconservative men's activism in the late twentieth century might be understood as a predecessor to the alt-right rather than perceiving the alt-right as a movement altogether unique or different. The same post-Vietnam conditions that give rise to white nationalists, however, also sustained a traumatic imaginary among American men generally. Lynda Boose describes late twentieth century American masculinity as a

> narrative…stamped with the intensity of a generation stuck in its own boyhood and now playing out, with increasing violence, an unconscious cultural myth that attempts to recover the father…a mythic self-image that allows the nation to behave in just such massively irresponsible ways as its foreign polices reflect.[471]

Both Belew and Boose see late twentieth century masculinity bound up with the nation's sovereignty and racialized notions of security. And this assemblage persists through the advent of the internet, as masculinity grapples with its expansive fantasies of conquest through claiming the internet for itself.

Throughout this discussion, I have used the gender politics of the internet to contextualize the way that the virtual becomes a medium for masculinity to perform sovereignty through strategies of making others suffer. The specificity of this process begins with masculinist notions of play as they transform throughout the twentieth century. These styles of play encourage boys and young men to think of spaces as places to dominate. This playstyle conditions the masculinist orientation toward virtual media, particularly the internet and video games, when they emerge. The competition and aggressive games of dominance transform into policing the gender boundaries of the internet, trolling, and online antagonisms.

Putting these transformations against cultural approaches to American masculinity at the end of the twentieth century reveal the diffusion of masculinity and conservative politics as they move from dominating the internet toward global dimensions. The same

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[470] Belew, Kathleen. *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*. 238-239.

[471] Lynda Boose, "Techno-Muscularity and the 'Boy Eternal'," in Kaplan, Amy and Donald E. Pease. *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993. 602, 610.

orientation toward virtual play that antagonizes gender and sexual minorities proceeds from the same masculinity that imagines itself the anchor of sovereign order. The same men drawn toward trolling for lulz on web forums are the same men drawn toward Donald Trump's performance of masculine sovereignty. Men do not support Donald Trump because Trump promotes socially exclusive policies that sustain men's domination. Men support Donald Trump because he antagonizes others. In him they find the image of themselves.

Conclusion: Tombs

Throughout this project, I have attempted to present the mutually constitutive relationship between masculinity and sovereignty in the West. Both are aspirations toward the other dependent on exclusions which enable their operations. And precisely for these reasons, both emerge from a place of anxiety, constantly hostile to the threat of vulnerability. This dilemma ultimately politicizes suffering as the conditions which require masculinist-sovereign order. The suffering of the world *is* vulnerability and must therefore be contained and managed. But to recognize suffering as suffering is to engage in the sovereign act of intervening within life and death and, as such, to reproduce the masculinist dialectic of sovereignty itself. Gender is the modality through which we experience and recognize suffering; masculinity claims for itself the sovereign prerogative of recognition; and the non-masculine becomes banished within and beyond order as that which needs contained. Donald Trump's election, as well as so many other strongmen around the world, illustrate this dilemma.

Here I intend to briefly summarize what is at stake in recognizing sovereignty and masculinity as co-constitutive concepts in the Western tradition, besides the tragic outcome of liberal elections. What might a queer and feminist political theory that builds upon Agamben bear toward the resurgence of hyper-masculinist populism?

Feminist political theory has insisted on the need to rethink how politics manages the difference between the domestic, private, seemingly pre-political space of the home and the public space of formal politics. Susan Moller Okin invokes the need for feminist theory to work toward a political community where "child-rearing will be equally shared between sexes" and "men share equally in such tasks as housework" so as to value feminine tasks "equally" with "masculine tasks which society presently acknowledges to be productive."[472] A few years later, Jean Bethe Elshtain noted that most iterations of feminist political theory were unable to achieve this task insofar as they insufficiently dealt with the necessity and value of spaces and labor deemed feminine, privileging masculinist values or striving too hard towards gender neutrality and universality at the

[472] Okin, Susan Moller. *Women in Western Political Thought.* 300-301.

expense of erasing the beneficial contingencies of care labor.[473] Adriana Cavarero picks up the task of recuperating the feminized spaces of domestic and care labor by way of a methodology that privileges Aristotle's female without essentializing 'woman.' For Cavarero, "emancipation" consists of identifying and thinking within a "symbolic order" of the female, one that critiques the "unchanging symbolic framework [of the West]" by methodologically privileging an orientation distinct from the "masculine."[474] What I identify as the masculinist orientation that animates and justifies western concepts like sovereignty and freedom she similarly critiques as a universalizing tendency to "rescue the particular from its finitude" in pursuit of the "spectacular" exhibitions of male heroes.[475] A constructive, democratic political theory will not only seek a feminine symbolic framework but privilege the contingencies of "the feminine art of narration" in spite of man's inclination toward the universal.[476] This methodology leads Cavarero to critique Aristotle's "logocentric and masculine substance of politics" as well as the essentially masculinist metaphor of sovereignty, the "metaphor of the body" which figures "the political order" through its expulsion of the woman and the bodily.[477] The masculine body politics, masculine sovereignty, constitutes itself by a vertical hierarchy over others[478] that we might reject through cultivating a "sexual and emotional inclination" toward other persons – the orientation of the 'female' that anxiously plagues masculinist western political theory.[479] Cavarero's project is one that privileges the contingency of her own person as one constituted as 'woman' by masculinist theory but that nonetheless finds a value worth retaining and not conditioned by masculinity and sovereign justifications. Her project cannot be said to essentialize any figure of 'woman' because it insists on operating in the active spaces external to what Aristotle and the West

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[473] Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought*. 214-216, 241-246, 265.
[474] Cavarero, Adriana. *In Spite of Plato: A Feminist Rewriting of Ancient Philosophy*. Translated by Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio and Aine O'Healy. New York: Polity Press, 1995 [1990]. 2-3.
[475] Cavarero, Adriana. *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*. Translated by Paul A. Kottman. New York: Routledge, 2000 [1997]. 33, 53-54.
[476] Cavarero, ibid., 54.
[477] Cavarero, Adriana. *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy, and the Question of Gender*. Translated by Robert De Lucca and Deanna Shemek. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002 [1995]. Vii.
[478] Cavarero, ibid., 95-99, 106;
[479] Cavarero, Adriana. *Inclination: A Critique of Rectitude*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016. 3.

define as properly political rather than proceeding from a coherent definition of 'woman.' For Cavarero, much as the masculine citizen is the ideal mode for western political theory, the role of the domestic female is a 'mode' of social belonging which is open to all regardless of gender and sex. Masculinity qualifies this activity as feminine and subsequently insists on restricting this orientation and its related labor to the female figure. For Cavarero, the radically egalitarian potential embedded within this 'female' is the fact that its work is necessary to the reproduction of social life, embodies an alternative phenomenological orientation from which we might derive value, and – most importantly – is a mode of social being that need not be attached to specific bodies but is equally *a call to men sexed and gendered as men*. She theoretically picks up the project of valuing the domestic through a celebration of contingency that calls on men to cultivate this contingency and inhabit the feminine.

Cavarero's reading of Antigone represents a call to productively reject the masculine orientation of existing over and against the world and instead celebrate the limits fate imposes. Hegel, masculinist philosopher of freedom par excellence, reads Antigone as a tension between the pre-political, feminized family and the masculine space of politics and the city.[480] Creon's expulsion of Antigone for desiring to bury her brother embodies the proper western hierarchy between political justice and woman's emotions, mirroring the broader western trend to expel the woman from the polis as a means for constituting itself as properly rational, male, and political. Cavarero subverts Hegel's terms. She admits the feminine operations at work in Antigone's decisions: Antigone values the family (*genos*) and appeals to a "maternal" identification in justifying her overriding Creon's decree.[481] But Cavarero uses this fact to re-narrate Antigone as a hero precisely because of the manner in which she dies. Antigone adheres to "an absolute and unconditional bond" which connects the "brothers who kill each other as enemies by the Theban walls" as all worthy of burial.[482] Rather than see the masculine decree as the source of all value and subordinate Antigone as an object moved by Creon's will, Cavarero revives Antigone as a hero motivated by an alternative kind of political

[480] Cavarero, *Stately Bodies*, 13-14.
[481] Ibid., 26-27.
[482] Ibid., 49.

authority, that of the motherly bond, who willingly abides death in order to deny absoluteness to the sovereign self-constitution of male law. The friend-enemy distinction of masculine politics cannot persist if one thinks first from an orientation inclined toward the other where even enemies are unconditionally loved because of what is shared between them, however small. Antigone's death is tragic rather than heroic only within a masculine logic that sees the law and vertical authority as the tools around which politics should emanate. To understand her death as heroic, as a means to deny masculine sovereignty, is to deny the usefulness of total freedom that masculinity insists on in order to perpetuate its relations of glorification to sovereignty. Men specifically need to imagine Cavarero's Antigone as a hero to emulate in order to cultivate an orientation toward care and inhabit the modal contingencies of the Aristotelian female; we need to see ourselves as willingly submitting to others, even if in such instances we find ourselves dying.

At stake in the conservative resurgence of populism in the West is the very fact that they understand democratic and egalitarian challenges to be challenges to the essentially gendered order of Western politics. They perceive all political opponents, left or liberal, as seeking to subvert the masculinist dynamic of vertical authority that allows them to not only make sense of the world but find value in themselves. Whether global currents that challenge the rigidity of national boundaries, domestic claims for minoritarian rights, or broader cultural shifts that otherwise intrude on the masculine's prerogative to unhindered dominance over reality, contemporary conservative coalitions interpret the political field as one in which challenges to male authority are challenges to political authority and national sovereignty. Cavarero's call for men to be like Antigone is precisely they kind of anxiety that animates the conservative's animosity toward social and political change. Right populism is a phenomenological condition, a desire to preserve the space where certain men can be men and all others accept their rightful place beside the properly political in maintain reality. Sovereignty and masculinity are evidently mutually constitutive in this orientation. In order to return to a reality that makes sense and also preserves masculine sovereignty, the People manifest themselves in a masculine voice that reflects their interest in order. The hypermasculine dimensions of right populism, and the social fact that most of these have taken the form of authoritarian

men (and, in the female exception, women who either ride on the masculine family name of their predecessors or inhabit a virtual masculinity sustain only by their cultivation of feminine virtue), cannot be discussed apart from the essentially masculinist operation of sovereignty in general. Donald Trump is the response to the perceived feminization of politics.

But there persists another dimension to masculine sovereignty, one redressed by a queer political thinking. The sovereign decision over to live or let die transforms into the decision to both recognize and intervene in moments of suffering. The fact that sovereignty both claims this right for itself and that politics sustains this operation ultimately occurs because of the way death and dying constrain our phenomenological field. We inhabit a precarious world wherein living, first and foremost, constitutes the ground of political concern only because politics has entrenched living in its barest mode as politically contested. For Agamben, this fact risks *thanatopolitics*: the sovereign right to decide becomes the sovereign's valuing specific kinds of life and living, thus mandating the expulsion of improper bare life from political order.[483] Achille Mbembe suggests that the politics of death is more extreme. The sovereign decision so deeply structures the reasoning of subjects that politics now occurs on the plane of death, the necropolitical. Subjects are already dead but have their death deferred;[484] sovereignty makes death immanent rather than merely allows subjects to live. Against this totalizing phenomenology of life queer theorists intervene. Various meditations on the insecurity of the AIDs crisis and how biopolitical governmentality has weaponized dying in order to discipline ideal subjects grounds a shared rejection of death as a limit on our horizon.[485] In other words, queer theory liberates us from the need to emphasize security; vulnerability might simply be more pleasurable, regardless of the risk.

Democracy is not just a coming community or something to constantly make happen. Democracy is also a risk. We should cherish risking ourselves even in moments where death becomes more imminent, if only because we shouldn't deny ourselves the

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[483] Agamben, Homo Sacer, in Omnibus Homo Sacer, 126.
[484] Mbembe, J. Achille. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 40.
[485] Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave?*, 27-28; Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, 22-26; Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader*, 147, 154, 170; Gregory Tomso, "Viral Sex and the Politics of Life," 181-184, 190;

ability to do otherwise. A major impetus of Trump's success is precisely his base's willingness to risk everything to see their dreams made manifest. Particularly working-class whites, who are more interested in redistributing suffering than they are alleviating their own condition. The attachment to Trump is one that politicizes death as a weapon: the suffering that might lead to my death is worth bearing if it means I can take you out with me. For those with commitments toward democratic kinds of justice, we might need to admit that the insecurity constituted by Trump's masculinist sovereignty is precisely the precondition necessary to risk something new. We cannot let the fear of figures like Trump hold us back without sustaining the same relationship between masculinity, sovereignty, and suffering. As long as we allow the new strongmen to manipulate our anxiety, we abandon democratic possibilities.

Despite the sovereign's orders we might still yet be buried in the tomb. But for others to live in a different kind of polis, maybe bearing that command in pursuit of something more is precisely what democracy looks like in practice.

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