ISSUE III

Aurea Chronica

SUMMER 2025

Classics ✱ 51.5074° N/0.1278° W ✱ Journal

AUREA CHRONICA

Power, Voice, and the Struggle for Justice

AD LECTORES - TO THE READERS

Dear readers,

We warmly welcome you to this issue of Aurea Chronica. The theme of this collection is Power, Voice, and the Struggle for Justice, a thread that connects myth, philosophy, and politics across time. These works explore how power is exercised, how voices are silenced or reclaimed, and how justice can be pursued across different eras and contexts.
Our creative writings reimagine mythic figures whose decisions and transformations speak to timeless struggles of agency and resistance. They examine the silence of women in myth, the cost of survival, and the courage to say no even when history records only submission. Other pieces use poetry and dialogue to reflect on persuasion, loss, and the human need for truth in a world of uncertainty.

Our scholarly works continue this exploration, analyzing how ancient leaders justified conquest through psychology, how modern thinkers reinterpreted classical frameworks for politics, and how deception erodes trust in governance. They also expand the idea of justice to include the rights of animals, reminding us that moral consideration extends beyond humans.

Together, these works demonstrate that the classical past is not distant or inactive. It raises questions that remain urgent: Who holds power? Whose voices are remembered? How do we define justice? We hope this issue inspires you to think deeply, challenge assumptions, and carry these conversations into your own lives.

Ad veritatem

Aurea Chronica Journal
Ivy Song
Editor in Chief

MEET THE EDITORS

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A senior attending high school in Southborough, MA. An art history enthusiast, she has studied both Latin and Greek. She is interested in intellectual pursuits through various primary cultural mediums, including literary and philosophical texts, visual art, and material culture. Her current academic focus is on the portrayals of Medea across different time periods.

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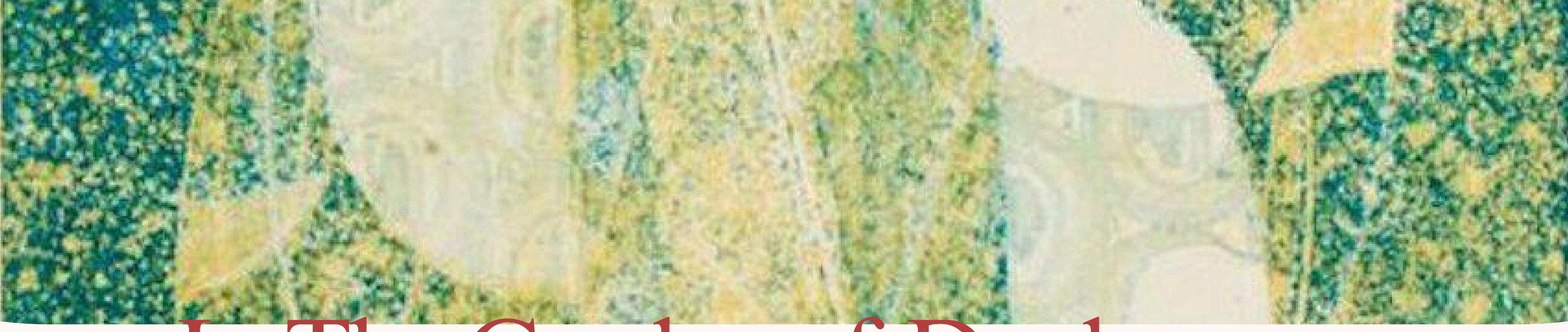
CREATIVE WRITING

Part 9

Never Again that Spring

Mary Xu

On the eternal sea of flowers,
a girl, burdenless,
danced light and free.
The daffodils seemed to bloom
forever beneath her skirt.
But obsidian horses rose, galloping,
and dragged her into the dark.
Her grieving mother,
day and night,
wandered the ends of the earth
in search of spring,
But spring had long since vanished.
A crown
Anointed
No longer a girl:
She was queen of the dead.
Yet she howled in sorrow
longing for the sweetness,
the quiet she had lost.
Starving,
She could not resist
She devoured six seeds:
blood and promise
Now she belonged to the underworld.
Her mother came to take her back
to a world of withered fields,
But she was trapped
by hunger's fleeting moment
Six months,
in shadowed corridors
Six months,
in her mother's arms
Six months,
 of biting cold
Six months,
 of tender spring
But to her—
None of it could be undone.



In The Garden of Daphne

By Euan Moffat

Once, I ran like her.
Barefoot, breath sharp, chased by
something I couldn’t name.
Freedom, maybe. Silence.
Or the echo of someone else's
desire.

The laurel trees still remember.
They don’t speak,
but their leaves twitch like they’ve
just seen her pass. Daphne.
She didn’t cry out—just ran.
Apollo called it love.
She called it escape.

What is godhood,
if it doesn’t listen?
If it stretches out its golden hand
and turns refusal into pursuit?

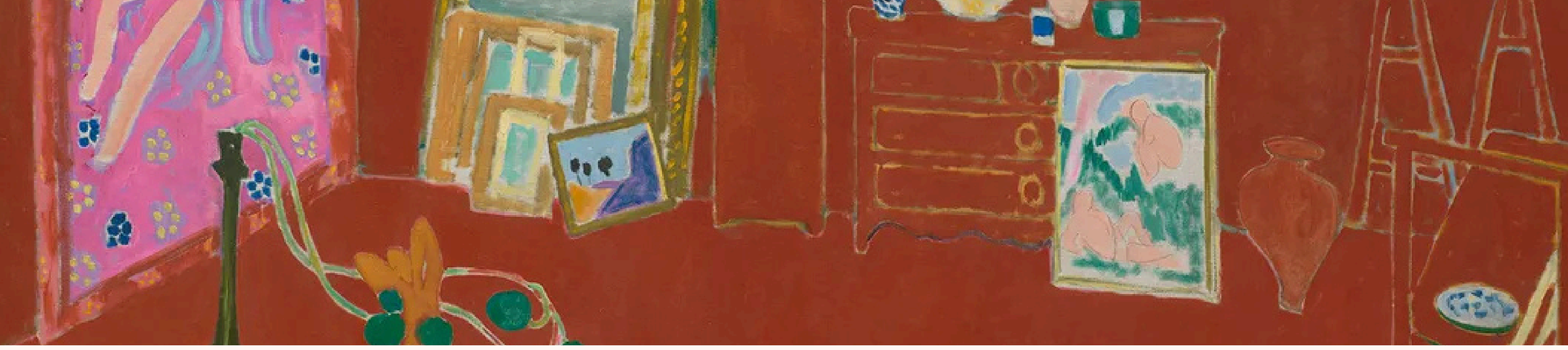
She became bark.
She became a myth.
Not victory, not surrender—just
stillness.
A silence deeper than the riverbed.

Now, we build him statues.
We call him music and light.
But her name? A footnote.
A crown for winners.

No one asks why she ran.
No one thinks of her pulse,
her ribs rising with fear.

I do.
Because I have felt that kind of chase.
I have pressed my heels to the ground
and wished for roots.

Daphne wasn’t cold.
She was burning.
She wanted to stay whole.
So I remember her.
Not as tree,
but girl—
sprinting, breathless,
choosing herself
over worship.
And in the quiet rustle of leaves, she
still says:
No.



One (Modern) Art

Ashley Deng

The past won’t tell you what the future holds,
Mistakes are made, no way to turn back in time,
The road ahead is where your story unfolds.

Do not let regret turn to rust or mold,
Time will scrub you clean through seasons so sublime.
The past won’t tell you what the future holds.

Friends drift, their voices growing cold,
Their names fade like words you can’t rhyme.
The road ahead is where your story unfolds.

Lovers, once close, now seem so far, so bold
In their departure, leaving nothing—not even a dime!
The past won’t tell you what the future holds.

Family’s gone, their words now stories sold,
Replaced by screens that blink and chime.
The road ahead is where your story unfolds.

Death comes softly, always late, too controlled,
Still (tell yourself!) still we march on, no matter how they pine.
The past can’t tell you what the future holds,
For the road ahead is where your story unfolds.

The Discourse of Rhetoric and Propaganda

(Dialogue in Kallipolis)

Sophie Chen

Setting: The sun-dappled colonnade of the Library of the Muses in the city of Kallipolis, several generations after Plato. Scrolls line cedar shelves, and the scent of papyrus mingles with sea air. Lysandra, a senior Archon (Guardian) responsible for civic education, reviews plans. Demetrius, a younger architect recently returned from observing distant republics, approaches.

Demetrius: Lysandra, your plans for the Agora's Discourse Quarter are impressive – spaces dedicated to dialectic, natural philosophy, even poetic recitation. Yet, I notice a conspicuous absence. Where is the chamber for civic persuasion? The place where leaders rally the people
in times of crisis, or instill necessary unity? Have we banished the tools Gorgias championed?

Lysandra: Greetings, Demetrius. Your travels sharpen your eye for omission. We have not banished persuasion, but we have drawn a definitive line between rhetoric and propaganda. The former may find a carefully measured place; the latter, none.

Demetrius: A distinction? In the bustling forums I observed, from Rome's alleys to the ports of Alexandria, the terms were nearly interchangeable. A skilled speaker moves the crowd; is that not the essence of both? Did not Mark Antony sway the Roman mob with Caesar's bloody mantle? Was that rhetoric or propaganda? It achieved its end.

Lysandra: Ah, Demetrius, conflating the tool with the wielder's intent and the truth of the material! Let us define our terms, lest we build on shifting sand. Rhetoric, at least within the ideal city, is the art of discovering and effectively presenting truth through reasoned discourse, tailored to the audience. It seeks understanding through logos, creates empathy through pathos, and ensures credibility through ethos. Cicero marshals evidence appealing to the Senate's reason and patriotism against a clear, present danger (Cicero, First Catilinarian). Catiline's conspiracy was real, Cicero's arguments verifiable. He sought to protect the Republic through truth. Propaganda's goal, conversely, is control. It thrives on repetition, fear, prejudice, and the suppression of counterargument. Juvenal exposes its grubbier face: the manipulation of the mobile vulgus (fickle crowd) by demagogues peddling simplistic solutions and stoking baseless fears (Juvenal, Satire 3).

Demetrius: A noble distinction, Lysandra. But is it sustainable? Can you truly separate them so cleanly? Does not Cicero's righteous fury employ manipulative pathos? Does not Antony's masterful speech use the tools of rhetoric – repetition, irony, emotional imagery – for a purpose some might arguably call propagandistic: vengeance against Brutus (Shakespeare, Julius Caesar)? Is emotional appeal inherently propagandistic?

Lysandra: Antony's speech uses rhetorical techniques, but its core is manipulation. He withholds full truth (Brutus's stated motives), deliberately inflames passion, and seeks not reasoned judgment but blind vengeance. Consider a philosopher explaining celestial motions, employing rhetorical appeals to enlighten the audience. Propaganda, by contrast, discounts truth and weaponizes those appeals.

Demetrius: Very well, grant the distinction. But would not clear, repeated directives – perhaps simplifying complex medical advice, appealing to collective sacrifice – save lives? Is efficiency not a virtue for the polis? Excluding all such tools seems like refusing a sturdy shield in battle for fear its gleam might distract.

Lysandra: Efficiency's allure is potent, Demetrius, like the Sirens' song. Recall Plato's warning: rhetoric untethered from truth and justice is mere flattery, a counterfeit art (Plato, Gorgias). Propaganda's efficiency comes at a devastating cost. Our strength lies not in blind obedience, but in informed, committed unity.

Demetrius: And the cons of excluding it? You risk chaos in a crisis, Lysandra. Without clear, forceful direction, the people may panic, like Vergil's Trojans buffeted by Juno's storms (Virgil, Aeneid). Factions may arise, peddling self-interested propaganda. Denying the leaders' rhetoric's potency and existential threats may open fault lines and lead to civic fracture. Surely some noble falsehoods, Plato's own "Myth of the Metals" perhaps, serve social harmony (Plato, Republic)?

Lysandra: The cons you cite are real dangers, Demetrius, but they stem from a lack of trust and education, not the absence of propaganda. Civic education grounded in dialectic can cultivate citizens capable of understanding complex truths. Leaders trained in ethical rhetoric, like physicians who must explain difficult treatments, can present harsh realities and necessary actions persuasively, honestly, and respectfully, cultivating resilient unity rather than fragile conformity. Cicero faced a true conspiracy; his rhetoric worked because it was truthful and addressed reasoning citizens. Thus, our rhetoric is taught only in conjunction with rigorous ethics and dialectic. It is a regulated tool, entrusted only to those proven virtuous, its use in public discourse always subject to scrutiny and counter-argument – within the Agora's designated spaces, of course.

Demetrius: And propaganda? You see no place for it?

Lysandra: None. Propaganda invites corrosion, treating citizens as children or subjects, not partners in the polis. It erodes the very reason we seek to cultivate. Once introduced, even for "noble" ends, it creates a precedent that may prove too tempting for future, less scrupulous leaders. It poisons the well of public discourse. Can you imagine Vergil's grand narrative of Roman destiny reduced to state slogans that ignore Aeneas's complex struggles? Propaganda simplifies and distorts; our city strives for understanding and truth, however difficult. Propaganda's efficiency is the chainsaw in a sculptor's workshop: it may clear the block quickly, but destroys the potential masterpiece: an informed citizenry.
Demetrius: So, rhetoric, the disciplined art of persuasion, is the statesman's true chisel. Its proper use requires skill and patience, knowledge of and respect for the material – the citizen's mind.

Lysandra: Precisely, Demetrius. The ideal city, Kallipolis, aims not for the obedient masses Juvenal mocked, nor the volatile mob Antony manipulated, but for the self-governing citizen Vergil might envision: tested by storms, yes, but guided by reason and duty. Rhetoric, ethically bound and transparent, serves the citizen. Propaganda, by its very nature, undermines and infantilizes them. We build not for momentary ease, but for enduring, enlightened harmony. The Discourse Quarter will echo with reasoned argument, poetic truth, and philosophical inquiry – the sounds of free minds engaging. The siren song of propaganda finds no harbor here. Our shield is not deception, but the cultivated virtue and reason of our people.

Demetrius: (Nodding slowly) A demanding vision, Lysandra. The weight of vigilance seems heavy. But perhaps it is the only weight worthy of bearing. I shall reconsider; perhaps a larger space for dialectic is needed after all.

ACADEMIC
Part 99
ESSAYS

Medusa Reimagined: How a Feminist Poet Uses Greek Myth to Expose Gender Adversity

Zongyue (Andy) Yang

About the Poet and the Poem

Carol Ann Duffy (b. 1955) is a Scottish poet and playwright who served as the UK's first female Poet Laureate (2009–2019), an honored position appointed to a poet by a government or institution. Known for her accessible yet layered poetry, she often gives voice to marginalized or silenced figures, weaving contemporary concerns—gender politics, identity, power—into works that also engage with myth and history. Her poetry collection The World's Wife (1999), where the poem Medusa appears, reimagines well-known myths, fairy tales, historical events, and cultural figures from the perspectives of the women—real or imagined—who are often absent or silenced in the original narratives. Through witty, subversive, and emotionally charged monologues, Duffy gives voice to wives, lovers, mothers, and mythical heroines like Mrs. Midas, Queen Herod, and Medusa. The collection blends feminist critique with sharp humor, revealing how patriarchal storytelling has shaped perceptions of women while offering alternative versions that foreground female agency, desire, and complexity. Its enduring appeal lies in its accessibility, vivid imagery, and the way it bridges ancient archetypes with contemporary social commentary, making it both a modern literary milestone and a text with "classic" staying power.

Original Poem

Medusa

By Carol Ann Duffy

A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy
grew in my mind,
which turned the hairs on my head to filthy
snakes,
as though my thoughts
hissed and spat on my scalp.
My bride's breath soured, stank
in the grey bags of my lungs.
I'm foul-mouthed now, foul-tongued,
yellow fanged.

There are bullet tears in my eyes.
Are you terrified?
Be terrified.
It's you I love,
perfect man, Greek God, my own;
But I know you'll go, betray me, stray
from home.
So better by far for me if you were stone.
I glanced at a buzzing bee,
A dull grey pebble fell
to the ground.
I glanced at a singing bird,
a handful of dusty gravel
spattered down.
I looked at a ginger cat,
a housebrick
shattered a bowl of milk.
I looked at a snuffling pig,
a boulder rolled
in a heap of shit.
I stared in the mirror.
Love gone bad
showed me a Gorgon.
I stared at a dragon.
Fire spewed
from the mouth of a mountain.
And here you come
with a shield for a heart
and a sword for a tongue
and your girls, your girls.
Wasn't I beautiful?
Wasn't I fragrant and young?
Look at me now.

Analysis/Commentary

"In a world where emotions are often weaponized against women, the boundary between victim
and monster blurs, as suppressed feelings twist into disaster." --- Chizuko Ueno

Reworked from the original Greek tale, Carol Ann Duffy's poem "Medusa" is narrated from Medusa's perspective, giving her a distinct female voice. The poet portrays Medusa's transformation from a beautiful bride into a violent, hideous monster driven by suspicions of her husband's betrayal. Medusa's overwhelming fury not only makes her dangerous but also causes her to become unrecognizable, even to herself. Consequently, Medusa explores gender adversity by suggesting that the patriarchal system can make a woman feel inadequate in physical and mental aspects, leading to rage and self-destruction that would eventually transform one's identity. Throughout the poem, Duffy employs carefully chosen metaphors, symbolism, and evocative diction to explore the theme of gender adversity.

Metaphors are effectively employed in Duffy's poem to convey gender adversity. In the beginning, the metaphor of Medusa's hair turning into "filthy snakes" suggests her painful and repulsive transformation, both physically and mentally: her former innocence is now poisoned by her virulent jealousy as the snakes hiss toward the other women who have stolen her lover. Compared to the once beautiful bride, Medusa is now ironically "foul-mouthed, foul-tongued, yellow-fanged," suggesting that she is a physically decaying, repulsive figure that everyone avoids like a spreading disease. Meanwhile, her "bullet tears" metaphorize her incapability of doing anything but hurting, as even her weakest moments are lethal to others. In fact, these tears, though real, reflect her gradual loss of humanity due to the lack of any true emotional depth. Close to the end, Medusa addresses her lover directly, who has a "shield for the heart" and a "sword for the tongue." The former metaphor showcases Medusa's belief in men's refusal to repent their unfaithfulness, while the second reveals the deep emotional wounds her lover inflicts through his cruel words, even though he has wronged her. Although shields and swords contrast as one protects while the other wounds, they are used in sync to symbolize how men can both shield themselves from responsibility while simultaneously using offensive weapons to hurt women with their behavior.

In addition to metaphors, Duffy also uses symbolism throughout the poem and allows readers to understand the hardship women face as a result of unjust treatment by men. By naming the poem "Medusa," the poet first evokes the image of a terrifying female figure representing danger and threat. The latter content, however, goes beyond the traditional symbol of Medusa. In fact, readers see Medusa's internal struggle, and the poet reveals her victimhood. She is shown as a suffering and ultimately pitiful figure, whose transformation is shaped by the undeniable male forces of the patriarchal system she is a part of. This duality highlights the complexity of Medusa, not just as a monster, but as a tragic character shaped by injustice and betrayal. Later in the poem, after turning a series of creatures into stone, Medusa stares at herself in the mirror. Here, the mirror symbolizes Medusa's spiritual reflection, as she grapples with the destruction her jealousy has caused. Her act of looking into the mirror can be seen as a final gesture of her remaining humanity—a moment of self-awareness where she recognizes her destructiveness and perhaps even contemplates ending it all through committing suicide. However, her failure to do so suggests the complete loss of her identity, signifying that she has become even more monstrous than the creature she was physically transformed into.

Throughout the poem, evocative diction also effectively conveys Medusa's mistreatment. The alliteration used to show her transformation as she describes her "bride's breath sour[ing] and [stinking]' adds an audible pause and gives the poem a lyrical effect. The alliteration of "b" changes to a harder "s" implicitly emphasizes Medusa's growing anger and hate towards men, highlighting her adversity and tragic fate as a woman. Later in a series of descriptions of Medusa turning creatures into stone, words of her eye expression turn from "glance" to "look," suggesting a change in her attitude: from the initial hesitance in which she fears her power to confidence in killing. A sense of playfulness can also be observed in this process as the poet uses demotic phrases like "dusty gravel" and "a heap of sh*t," which adds sarcasm to the fact that Medusa can only destroy and create waste. The poet chooses to end the poem on a stanza with only one sentence, "Look at me now" to the absent lover. Constructed with frank words, the message in this sentence, though, is complex: Medusa stands vulnerable and acknowledges with a tone of acceptance and even warning that she is now grotesque and revolting, all as a result of her all-consuming jealousy, which refuses to accept her husband's disloyalty, unfaithfulness, and lies.

In conclusion, Duffy effectively conveys gender adversity through her use of metaphor, symbolism, and diction. Medusa's self-destruction and identity transformation within the patriarchal system, though, is only a small piece of the entire matter. The true tragedy and desperation lie not in the wounds the patriarchal system has inflicted on women, but in the fact that gender stereotypes have become so deeply ingrained in society that many women—especially those with limited access to education—internalize these views, accepting the belief that they are weak and incapable. In fact, Medusa's identity was initially that of "beautiful bride", but when her anger overtakes her in response to her husband's infidelity, her emotions turn her into a "Gorgon" and she loses whatever status she held previously as a bride to her "perfect man, Greek God." Ultimately, Duffy suggests that when women define themselves through their marriages and play into patriarchal values, those very values can destroy them since men do not respect them.

The Psychology of Dominion: Caesar's Animus/Mens Dichotomy and its Machiavellian Afterlife

Sophie Chen

Caesar's De Bello Gallico represents an evolution in ancient ethnography, transforming observation into psychological critique. While predecessors like Herodotus documented customs with relative detachment, Caesar employs a binary framework—juxtaposing Gallic volatility against Roman rationality—to define barbarian identity. Focusing on a pivotal passage in Book 3, this essay contends that Caesar's explicit animus/mens dichotomy serves as the foundational framework for his psychological ethnography, reducing cultures to emotional impulses (animus) deficient in rational endurance (mens). He defines Roman virtue not merely as military superiority, but as the psychological integration of aggression and reason, enabling conquest—embodied by his leadership. This psychologizing of otherness distinguishes Caesar's work as a literary innovation and a foundational tool of imperial self-definition. However, the enduring power of this framework lies in its "afterlife," its reception and repurposing centuries later. During the Renaissance, Niccolo Machiavelli, drawing on Caesar, adapted the animus/mens dynamic into a cornerstone of his political philosophy, reshaping its context and purpose for the nascent modern state as seen in passages like The Prince Chapter XVIII.

The locus classicus of Caesar's psychological framework is 3.17, where he dissects Gallic temperament following Roman victory. It opens with tactical observations: Gauls attack "magno cursu" (with great speed) but arrive "exanimatique" (breathless), embodying impulsive animus without strategic foresight. Their disorder ("impeditis") under Roman counterattack and immediate rout ("statim terga verterunt" – they immediately turned their backs) demonstrate catastrophic cognitive failure and Caesar explicitly states his psychological determinism: "Nam ut ad bella suscipienda Gallorum alacer ac promptus est animus, sic mollis ac minime resistens ad calamitates ferendas mens eorum est" ("For just as the spirit of the Gauls is keen and eager to undertake war, so their mind is soft and resisting very little with regard to enduring disasters") (Caesar, De Bello Gallico).

Lexically, the passage frames Gallic character through inherent deficiencies antithetical to Roman ideals. Animus ("temper, spirit") is reduced to rash impetuosity (alacer ac promptus - swift and eager), while mens ("mind, judgment") is weak (mollis - soft) and lacks resilience (minime resistens - offering no resistance). His barbarians are cognitively fragile, losing reason when challenged. Crucially, Caesar universalizes this psychology ("Gallorum" - of the Gauls), transforming a specific military engagement into an anthropological axiom. The rapid surrender of the tribes ("civitatesque omnes se statim Titurio dediderunt" - all states immediately surrendered themselves to Titurius) becomes evidence of inherent fragmentation, legitimizing Roman intervention as necessary guidance for psychologically deficient subjects. Roman victory stems not merely from courage but from psychological integration: their exploitation of oportunitate loci" (advantage of position) and orderly execution synthesize aggressive spirit and strategic calculation to exemplify Roman disciplina.

While 3.17 presents this framing most explicitly, its core argument appears in other passages as well. The opening line, "Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres" (Gaul as a whole is divided into three parts, 1.1), and later echo ("omnes civitates in partes divisae" - all tribes divided into parts, 6.11), frame political fragmentation as symptomatic of the Gauls' deficient mens, manifested in 3.17's portrayal of rapid capitulation. Tribal disunity becomes evidence of cognitive poverty rather than political complexity, while technological achievements like the Venetians' seamanship (3.13) are divorced from cultural context as exotic anomalies. Triumphs become lessons ("docuit quid populi Romani disciplina atque opes possent" - [Caesar] taught what Roman discipline and resources could achieve, 6.1) and disciplina, the synthesis of animus and mens perfected through Caesar's leadership. In Caesar's ethnographic psychology, the empire is the inevitable triumph of integrated consciousness over fragmented cognition.

Centuries later, in a fractured Renaissance Italy, Caesar's text found new life through Machiavelli. Machiavelli explicitly cites Caesar as a model commander and politician, but his engagement is not antiquarian; he extracts and radically repurposes Caesar's framework, particularly the animus/mens dynamic presented in 3.17, applying it to the internal dynamics of statecraft and the character of the ideal prince. In The Prince Chapter XVIII, Machiavelli articulates his adaptation through a key metaphor:

> "A prince being thus obliged to know well how to act as a beast must imitate the fox and the lion, for the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten wolves" (Machiavelli, The Prince).

In Machiavelli’s transposition of Caesar’s dichotomy, animus becomes animo (lion-like audacity), while mens transforms into prudenza (fox-like foresight). Where Caesar used animus and mens to define the psychological deficiency of the external "other," Machiavelli frames these qualities as competing forces within the successful ruler. Machiavelli, like Caesar, emphasizes the catastrophic consequences of imbalance: a prince ruled solely by animo is reckless and impulsive, like Caesar's Gauls in 3.17, whereas a prince relying only on prudenza is weak and indecisive. The perfect prince integrates both the ferocity (animo) to inspire fear and crush opposition when necessary and the calculating foresight (prudenza) to assess risks and adapt to circumstances. Furthermore, Machiavelli adopts Caesar’s emphasis on disciplina as the outward manifestation of this internal psychological control, essential for maintaining order.

The shift in context between Caesar’s framework and Machiavelli’s reception is profound. Caesar’s target is external "barbarians," justifying imperial expansion and his autocratic position within the late Republic. Machiavelli’s is the internal character of the ruler and the psychology of political rivals within Italy's warring city-states. The "barbarian" is now the rival prince, rebellious populace, or indecisive leader operating within the same political sphere. Caesar’s purpose was legitimizing conquest; Machiavelli’s was providing pragmatic advice for acquiring and maintaining power in a fragmented Italy. His goal is survival and state security, not necessarily territorial expansion per se. Crucially, Machiavelli divorces political efficacy from traditional Christian morality: the animo/prudenza integration advocated in Chapter XVIII is judged purely by its success in securing power ("effectual truth"), a radical secularization and instrumentalization of Caesar's framework. The scale also differs: while Caesar deals with armies and peoples, Machiavelli focuses on the individual prince and his advisors (or rivals) within a smaller-scale political arena.

Whether Machiavelli's adaptation constitutes misuse requires careful consideration; after all, he openly engages with classical exemplars. However, this radical repurposing invites significant potential for misunderstanding. While Caesar used psychology to define enemies while maintaining a veneer of Roman civic virtue (virtus encompassing duty and reason), by stripping the framework of its original ethical context and focusing solely on efficacy in Chapter XVIII, Machiavelli risks reducing leadership to pure manipulation and force. The Prince's psychological integration serves power alone, potentially justifying tyrannical ruthlessness that Caesar framed as Roman discipline against external threats.

Furthermore, Machiavelli, like Caesar in his universalizing claim, can be accused of reductionism, simplifying complex political realities into a binary struggle governed by psychological traits (animo vs prudenza) and overlooking structural, economic, ideological, or other systemic factors. The most common misunderstanding stems from divorcing Machiavelli's analysis from his clear republican sympathies (evident in the Discourses) and his desperate historical context (Italy's vulnerability). His description of necessary traits for survival is often misread as an endorsement of pure immorality, ignoring his underlying goal of achieving a stable state capable of fostering civic life. The subtle integration he advocates (Fox and Lion) is frequently reduced to mere cunning or cruelty, leading to the enduring "Machiavellian" caricature.

The audience and accessibility of this classical afterlife differ markedly from the original. Caesar wrote primarily for the Roman senatorial elite and populus: politically engaged, literate citizens to whom his work was disseminated through recitations and manuscripts. Machiavelli, however, wrote for fellow humanists, educated elites, and potential princes and rulers (like Lorenzo de' Medici, to whom The Prince was dedicated). This audience was literate in Latin and Italian, engaged with classical history and contemporary politics, and circulating within Renaissance courts. The advent of the printing press increased accessibility across Europe. The concept of balancing force and cunning entered the European political lexicon, accessible to anyone engaging with theory or history, albeit often in simplified or distorted forms. The psychological framework for leadership, rooted in Caesar but adapted for modern statecraft, proved enduringly accessible and influential.

Caesar's De Bello Gallico pioneered psychological ethnography, most clearly articulated in passage 3.17 as shown above. Here, the animus/mens dichotomy explicitly constructs barbarian identity, and Caesar reduces complex cultures to psychological deficiencies to justify Roman dominion as the triumph of integrated Roman consciousness over barbarian fragmentation. Centuries later, Machiavelli performed a radical act of reception, extracting this framework from texts like De Bello Gallico and transplanting it to Renaissance statecraft as exemplified by the fox/lion metaphor in The Prince XVIII: Caesar's dynamic, reconfigured as animo/prudenza, became the internal psychology essential for navigating a world devoid of Caesar's Roman civic virtue and governed by Fortuna.

This afterlife is therefore a profound contextual metamorphosis, not simple misuse: Machiavelli adapted Caesar for the fragmented politics of Renaissance Italy, instrumentalizing the psychological model for state security. However, divorcing the framework from its original imperial justification and ethical constraints and focusing solely on efficacy, this adaptation facilitated the enduring "Machiavellian" caricature of amoral realpolitik. While offering insights derived from classical precedent, Machiavelli's repurposing of Caesar's framework demonstrates how classical ideas are reshaped to serve vastly different historical contexts and audiences, retaining analytical power but risking oversimplification and moral ambiguity. The journey from Caesar's battlefield ethnography to Machiavelli's courtly manual underscores classical thought's extraordinary malleability across epochs.

RESEARCH Part 999 PAPER

The Evolution of Animal Rights and Interest

Wei Xin

When cows and calves are cooked in the same pot, and when mice in experiments curl up like humans due to great pain, people often ask themselves out of compassion: do animals also have interests and rights like us, and if so, should we treat them better? To explore this topic, understanding both concepts is undoubtedly crucial. The definitions of "right" and "interests" in animal ethics have evolved from ancient Greece to contemporary times, shifting from rational anthropocentrism in René Descartes' Automata Theory to Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian framework. This means that moral consideration of animals changed from lacking any intrinsic value in Descartes' machine-like viewpoint to being granted moral significance by utilitarian theory. Definitions of animal interests and rights are now widely premised on sentience—an ability to experience feelings, sensations, or subjective awareness. This view is supported by studies in modern neuroscience, which analogize the neural matrices of mammals and birds to those of humans[1]. Therefore, minimizing suffering becomes an ethical imperative. From ancient Greece to modern times, philosophers have gradually refined their understanding of animal prerogatives by focusing not only on compassion but also on justice for sentient beings, grounded in their possession of both interests and rights.

Ancient Greek Philosophy of Animal Rights and Interests

The pathway toward animal rights and interests begins with the ancient Greek philosophers, who advocated for a shared ontology, or "being-ness," between humans and animals. Among them, Pythagoras (c. 570–495 BCE) pioneered a metaphysical breakthrough with the concept of metempsychosis. In this theory, humans and non-humans share homologous spirits and souls. Pythagoras asserts: "All souls are immortal, for they never die; they only change their dwelling place," thus breaking the barrier between animals and humans for the first time. This development implied two ideological breakthroughs. First, the suffering of slaughtered animals mirrors the pain of humans; therefore, meat consumption and animal torture ought to be considered cannibalistic. Second, vegetarianism is essential for spiritual purification, elevating and enhancing the soul through restraint.

Plutarch (c. 46–120 CE) bolstered this theory by documenting animal behaviors, especially emotional reactions. Elephants mourn their dead, and dogs demonstrate extreme loyalty to their owners. These behaviors reveal emotional and spiritual capacity, representing animals' natural interests in kinship. Plutarch poignantly asked, "When you see a calf trembling and wailing under the knife, how can you deny its fear of death?"4 This directly refuted anthropocentric ideologies that treated animals as "living tools." Yet Plutarch's compassion was still rooted in human moral preservation: kindness to animals helped maintain human virtue.

In summary, the novel insights of Greek philosophers promoted a more thorough understanding of animals' emotional awareness due to their capacity for sensation and shared ontology. Nevertheless, these ancient doctrines remain limited because they treated animal welfare as a tool for human moral refinement rather than recognizing animals as rights-holders and interest-bearers. Despite this limitation, they laid a foundation for later sentience-based ethics.

Judeo-Christian Philosophy

Hundreds of years later, Judaism and Christianity developed more specific treatments of animals, embedding protections into law. These doctrines appear in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, canonized by the early centuries of the Common Era.

Legal protection for animals, rather than mere moral exhortation, was demonstrated in Mosaic law. Two examples include prohibitions against boiling a young goat in its mother's milk and muzzling an ox while it treads grain. The first recognizes kinship between animals, while the second safeguards the ox's right to eat while working. Both laws incorporated animal suffering into legal codes.

Christian doctrine also acknowledged animal welfare. The commandment "On the seventh day, you and your livestock shall rest"6 established that animals, like humans, could not be overworked. Unlike Pythagorean vegetarianism, which relied on individual morality, this doctrine provided institutional protections.

Nevertheless, religious doctrines remained anthropocentric. While animals were permitted rest and fair treatment, they were still viewed as tools for humanity, lacking rational souls. The concept of "dominion" (radah) in Genesis suggested stewardship but also implied rule. Thus, animals remained divine property, not rights-bearing subjects.

Enlightenment Philosophy of Animal Rights

The Enlightenment marked the most transformative shift in animal ethics. For the first time, philosophers established a rational and systematic framework based on sentience rather than compassion or religious duty.

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) argued that the crucial question was not "Can they reason?" or "Can they talk?" but "Can they suffer?"8 Bentham thus established sentience —not rationality—as the core criterion for moral consideration. Suffering itself implied an interest in avoiding distress, making animals members of the moral community.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) advanced a similar idea. He wrote: "If I am bound to do no harm to my fellow man, it is less so because he is a rational being than because he is a sentient one."9 Rousseau shifted moral obligation from reason or religious command to natural instinct, extending ethical concern to all sentient beings.

Together, Bentham and Rousseau created a milestone in animal ethics. Yet their theories lacked specificity: animals were recognized as morally significant but not granted explicit inviolable rights.

Animal Rights in the Modern Era

By the twentieth century, public awareness of animal entitlements had expanded dramatically, shifting the debate from abstract theory to practical application. Unlike earlier periods, when animals were considered mainly through the lens of compassion or welfare, modern thinkers began to argue that animals must be recognized as moral subjects with enforceable rights.

Tom Regan (1938–2017) was central to this transformation. In his influential work, he proposed that animals are "subjects-of-a-life," meaning that they possess beliefs, desires, memories, and a sense of the future. These qualities grant them inherent value, making them holders of rights rather than mere recipients of human kindness. For Regan, animals are not simply to be treated well—they are entitled to specific, inviolable moral claims that cannot be overridden for convenience or utility.

This philosophical reorientation also inspired real-world legal change. In 2002, Germany amended its constitution to declare: "The state protects the natural foundations of life and animals by legislation and, in accordance with law and justice, by executive and judicial action." This represented a groundbreaking step: for the first time, animals were acknowledged not as property but as legal subjects with rights. Whereas earlier traditions emphasized stewardship or humane treatment, this modern approach elevated animals into the sphere of justice, placing their well-being within binding legal frameworks. In this way, Regan's deontological ethics helped move animal rights from abstract philosophy to enforceable law.

Conclusion

The history of animal ethics reveals a gradual but profound transformation. Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras and Plutarch emphasized shared ontology and compassion, while Judeo-Christian traditions incorporated protections into law, though within an anthropocentric framework. The Enlightenment brought a decisive turn by centering sentience as the moral criterion, with Bentham and Rousseau expanding ethical consideration beyond rationality.

The modern era carried these ideas further. Tom Regan's theory of the "subject-of-a-life" established that animals, like humans, possess inherent value and inviolable rights. This idea bridged the gap between moral argument and legal recognition, as demonstrated by constitutional reforms such as Germany's in 2002. The progression from compassion to sentience to enforceable rights shows an increasingly sophisticated understanding of animals as participants in the moral community.

Today, the question is no longer whether animals have interests and rights, but how societies can best safeguard them. The evolution from ancient metaphysics to modern constitutions underscores humanity's growing obligation to respect non-human life—not merely out of kindness, but out of justice.

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A Revolution in Rights: From Absolute to Constitutional Monarchy in Enlightened France

Ashley Deng

Introduction

Late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century France was a powerful kingdom under Louis XIV, famously known as the Sun King. It had replaced Spain as the most dominant kingdom of Europe, with much wealth and a well-trained standing army. Fittingly, King Louis constructed the ornate Palace of Versailles in his all-powerful image. For centuries, traditional absolute kings ruled France with both tremendous power and extensive responsibilities over their subjects.

Yet, the rights and responsibilities of a traditional French monarch changed drastically after the French Revolution, introducing France to an unprecedented form of governance: a constitutional monarchy. The French Revolution transformed the absolute monarchy of the ancien regime into the constitutional monarchy of revolutionary France. This transformation altered the relationship between subject and monarchy: it limited the monarch's power and authority, and it required parliamentary approval for lawmaking. No longer were the rights of the French king nearly absolute.

The Rights and Responsibilities of an Absolute Monarch

In the Bible, Matthew 6:24 states, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will devote to one and despise the other." This idea of absolute devotion reflects the essence of French absolutism during Louis XIV's reign (1643-1715), where power was concentrated in the monarch, who wielded sovereignty without legal limitations. Louis XIV saw himself as God's appointed representative on Earth, demanding absolute loyalty from his subjects. His authority was sacred and untouchable, and he had the right to try, convict, and execute anyone who threatened his power.

The French monarch's divine right was also articulated by theologian Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet in Politics Drawn from the Very Words of the Holy Scripture. According to Bossuet, the king held legitimate command granted by God. This "co-active force" was meant to prevent anarchy, as it was God alone who gave the sword of justice to the sovereign. Similarly, St. Ambrose emphasized that kings were above earthly laws, free from the punishments that bound ordinary criminals. Monarchs were answerable only to God, and their authority could not be undermined by laws or judgments of their subjects.

Bossuet emphasized that the monarch must be feared, for without this fear, "all is lost." This sovereign power was similar to the absolute authority given to Jewish leader Simon the Maccabee, who exercised dominion over military, civil, and religious matters, and was to be obeyed by all.

Yet, despite this concentration of power, the monarch's authority was not without some limitations. While Louis XIV ruled with absolute power, he was not free to act arbitrarily. As Bossuet wrote, kings must "tremble" in the exercise of their power, acknowledging that their sovereignty was a divine trust, not an ownership to be used for personal gain. Bossuet also emphasized that the monarch must act in accordance with the natural law, which protects the rights, freedoms, and property of all. Even Deuteronomy 17:16-20 placed restrictions on the king: "He shall not have many wives, nor immense sums of silver and gold." The monarch's power was thus bound by divine moral laws.

This responsibility ensured that while the monarch held nearly absolute power, he was still constrained by principles that required him to govern justly. The king's authority, while extensive, was meant to be exercised in service to God and the overall will of the people, offering stability for his subjects. Thus, under absolutism, the people were ultimately subject to the King's will, but their protection and well-being were protected by the monarch's sacred duty to govern righteously, according to the divine law.

Challenges to Divine-Right Monarchy

The age of Enlightenment began in Europe in the seventeenth century, emphasizing governmental and social reform as well as the primacy of reason. The Enlightenment created a new worldview that led to more liberty and equality. Generally, Enlightenment thinkers were reformers who looked for gradual change to improve the human condition. They opposed absolutism and tyranny, developing theories that used logic and reason to understand how the world worked.

Philosophers like John Locke, Baron de Montesquieu, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau questioned the authority of kings and also absolute power itself. They argued that legitimate political power derived from the consent of the governed, rather than from divine right or the will of a monarch. These philosophers also believed that progress is inevitable, that humans are naturally good and rational.

John Locke resisted the older ideas of Robert Filmer, an English philosopher, who, like Bossuet, argued for the divine right of kings, asserting that monarchs derived their absolute power from God. In Patriarcha, Filmer claimed that "Power is given by the Multitude to one man." Locke's political theories also diverged from those of Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes, in his seminal work Leviathan, presented a more pessimistic view of the state of nature, arguing that humans are inherently selfish and violently driven by instinct.

The state of nature argues that humans are inherently selfish and violently driven by instinct. This state is nothing but suffering. Life in the state of nature, Hobbes quipped, would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." To escape this chaos, an absolute sovereign is required to maintain order and enforce laws, asserting "where there is no common power, there is no law."

Locke, on the other hand, rejected the idea of absolute monarchy. Though governments were necessary to maintain order, Locke argued that political power should be limited and grounded in the protection of individual rights. Unlike Hobbes, Locke believed that people had the right to resist and overthrow a monarch if he violated their natural rights. In Two Treatises of Government, Locke wrote that the king's responsibility was to uphold the natural rights of the people and govern with their consent, essentially rejecting the "divine right of kings" concept. When the monarch denied the people's life, liberty, or property by putting them into a state of slavery under his arbitrary power, the monarch had "forfeit the Power." Thus, the people had a right to reclaim their rights "by the Establishment of a new Legislat[ure]…provide for their own Safety and Security." This could entail deposing the king and creating a new government.

While Hobbes advocated for a centralized authority and Locke supported a monarch to protect the natural rights of all citizens, Rousseau argued for a communitarian government espousing the general will. Rousseau's idea, as articulated in The Social Contract, emphasizes the collective will of individuals towards a "common good" as the way for them to achieve true freedom. Highly influential during the French Revolution, the French National Assembly incorporated Rousseau's philosophy into the Declaration of the Rights of Man: "Law is the expression of the general will."

Furthermore, French philosopher Baron de Montesquieu published similar theories that opposed France's traditional order. In The Spirit of Laws, Montesquieu discusses the separation of powers, an idea that the executive, legislative, and judicial powers of government should be independent of each other to prevent any one branch from wielding too much power. He holds that there are three types of governments: republicans, monarchies, and despotisms, and for a state to provide its citizens with the greatest possible liberty, the government must have certain features. Since "constant experience shows us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it…It is necessary from the very nature of things that power should be a check to power." Altogether, Locke and Montesquieu proposed ideas that challenged the divine right monarchy and traditional absolutism.

Influenced by these Enlightenment ideas, revolutionary movements directly challenged and even dismantled established monarchies. These challenges would, eventually, inspire the common people of France to question the ancien regime. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 in Great Britain marked a turning point against divine-right monarchy; during the Glorious Revolution, Parliament replaced King James II in favor of William of Orange and Mary II, after Parliament determined that James was a tyrant. This peaceful overthrow of God's Lieutenant on Earth demonstrated that monarchs could be replaced if the people were unsatisfied, setting a precedent for other countries. The Glorious Revolution demonstrated that monarchy was no longer an institution that could claim absolute power by divine right, but something subject to the will of the people and the rule of law.

Similarly, the American Revolution also redefined royal authority. The American colonies successfully rebelled against King George III, leading to the former colonies' independence. It proved that even powerful constitutional monarchies like Great Britain could be defeated by and for the will of the common people. The colonists' success not only meant independence but also the establishment of the United States and its republican government based on popular sovereignty.

These enlightened revolutions set precedents for calling into question monarchical power and the divine-right justifications for the monarch's authority. The French, who helped the Americans win their independence, paid close attention. It would not be long until the French Revolution championed individual liberty and equality for French commoners, who had been subjected to the absolute reign of the Bourbon monarchy for centuries.

By the time Louis XVI ascended the throne in 1774, France was in chaos. Commoners were angry at aristocratic privilege, and starved in their poverty due to high bread prices and unemployment. Following France's participation in the American Revolution, France was in debt. The upper classes refused to pay higher taxes because they considered low taxes their privilege. As a result, peasant taxes were raised to pay the debt. There was a general discontent with this old order, as it was staggeringly unequal. Enraged, the common people officially started a revolution against the privileged classes.

Constitutional Reform: A Reconfigured Monarchy

In this revolutionary context, Abbé Emmanuel Sieyès's pamphlet "What is the Third Estate?" galvanized the growing public discontent. Sieyès, a clergyman sympathetic to the commoners, argued that the Third Estate—the vast majority of the population—deserved equality.

His call for the abolition of privileged aristocracy and the creation of a separate Third Estate-run nation was revolutionary. Sieyès famously declared that if the privileges of the nobility were abolished, "the nation would be nothing less, but something more," incentivizing common people to act. By June 1789, delegates representing the Third Estate vowed not to disband until centuries-old inequality and power imbalances within French society had been reformed. This Tennis Court Oath eventually led to the formation of the National Assembly, which represented 96% of the population. In the same year, the National Assembly passed the August Decrees, "completely abolish[ing] the feudal system"– those ancient aristocratic privileges. These revolutionary acts marked a decisive break from the past, introducing the constitutional reform of the early stages of the French Revolution.

Louis XVI, the great-grandson of the Sun King, ruled when the French Revolution began. Despite inheriting the prerogatives of an absolute monarch, Louis XVI submitted to the constitutional monarchy created under the National Assembly's reforms. Under this new system, the King had to uphold the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, a legal bill of rights that limited his rights by expanding those of the French citizenry and enlarged his responsibilities. As an absolute monarch, Louis XIV exercised unchecked authority; by contrast, Louis XVI, now a constitutional monarch, was bound to the Declaration and the new constitution created by the National Assembly. Both documents emphasized Enlightenment principles such as the separation of powers and natural rights, originating from philosophers such as Locke and Montesquieu.

The Declaration declares that "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights." This Article 1 decree recognizes the equality of all French subjects, a stark contrast to the old order, where a rigid social hierarchy of monarchy and nobility ruled over the vast Third Estate. Furthermore, the Declaration emphasized that people participate in governing, as Article 3 declared, "The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation." No individual, not even the king, could exercise unchecked power.

Moreover, the king's responsibilities were enlarged to protect the rights of the people. Article 2 stated that "The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man," which included liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression. This legally allowed French subjects to demand their rights from the king. Louis XVI, who had once been the absolute authority of the nation, was now expected to abide by the law passed by the National Assembly as well as to protect the constitutional rights of his people. Additionally, he ensured that the law expressed the will of the people, not a particular class, because now, "Law is the expression of the general will."

The French Revolution was messy, complex, and filled with opposing perspectives. While the National Assembly championed liberty and equality, traditional institutions like the Catholic Church strongly resisted change. In 1791, French Pope Pius VI issued Charitas, a papal bull condemning the National Assembly for diminishing the Church's authority. For the Pope and clergy, this was not only a political upheaval but a "sinful, illicit, unlawful, and sacrilegious" assault on their sacred authority. He also denounced revolutionary efforts to force priests to swear loyalty to the State. In contrast to revolutionaries pushing for a just order, the Church held firm to the conservative vision of society, one rooted in absolute monarchy and divine authority.

Conclusion

The National Assembly abolished feudalism, limited the monarch's powers, and made more than half the adult male population eligible to vote. The ancien régime was replaced by a constitutional monarchy, separating France into départements administered by elected assemblies. The National Assembly tried to create a system by which the legislative and executive powers were divided between the king and the assembly.

However, Louis XVI did not accept the limitations on his powers, and his lack of faith in the revolution led to his cowardly attempt to flee the country in the hope of restoring absolutism. He was captured and brought back to Paris, where he was executed in 1793. But the Revolution continued.

The constitutional reforms of the first phase of the French Revolution gave way to the Reign of Terror (1793-94), where the Committee of Public Safety, led by Maximilien Robespierre, killed indiscriminately, accusing friends and foes of opposing the revolution. Aristocrats were executed as enemies of the revolution. Peasants who opposed war and radical reforms also met the guillotine. Finally, after decades of war, including Napoleon's seizure of power, France restored its constitutional monarchy in 1815. The French Revolution, though initially focused on abolishing the ancien régime, created a fragile constitutional monarchy. By the end of the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic wars, the relationship between monarch and nation had been altered, establishing a new era of constitutional reform where no ruler could again claim absolute power.

Under Louis XIV's absolute reign, the monarch wielded nearly unchecked power, seeing himself as answerable only to divine authority. The king's duties were to maintain order and protect his subjects, but his rule was ultimately defined by his own will. By contrast, the constitutional monarchy that emerged from the French Revolution dramatically limited the king's authority and shared its powers with the people. Louis XVI's rights were curtailed by the National Assembly, and his responsibilities extended to guaranteeing the people's natural rights.

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

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