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"Antibody Ideas in Intellectual History"

The theory of intellectual history as the working of antibody ~~theories~~ ideas, applied to the Monarchomachs, runs something like this: The function of the new theories was to immunize society against the excesses of monarchism by introducing a counter-theory to personal willful power of the ruler. All later political thought would have to take this into account, whether by propagating it or by feeling obliged to attack it. It was not monarchism itself that was being ~~annulled~~ annulled, but that part of monarchism which had relied upon the ~~personal will~~ personal will of the ruler as the decisive agent. Thereafter, Monarchism had to shift the premise of its validity. [So we may view Bodin's theory as solving that problem by abstracting the monarchical power so that the agent exercising it operates more in the name of the abstraction than in his personal right. What the MM said about the personal willfulness of the monarch is tacitly allowed to be true, but it is made to seem irrelevant by the new definition of how power is exercised.]

If this method is valid, then all the epochal works in political thought are ~~not~~ not innovative as much as sanitizing: they neutralize the potency of earlier traditional political ideas in some vital way. The innovations that follow may or may not be closely connected with the visions of the great thinker; it is not important whether they are close, for the important thing is that the grounds of argument have been forever changed, and how things will actually develop ~~after~~ after the writer's time is not anything that he could know, but only guess, in any event.

The impetus for the antibody idea would come to the writer in this way. He perceives that in some way the validity of ~~the~~ traditional explanations has been undermined, that it has turned from functional to dysfunctional. In the case of the MMs, society had developed so far along administrative-bureaucratic lines by the later 16th century that collective decisions arising from the mass

of magistrates was a safer and more reliable agency of decision making than the monarch's will. In an earlier time, when seigniorial rule was much more ~~xxx~~ prevalent, the personal and willful decisions of the ruler was functional because without alternative; by the 16th century this was not true. It is true, of course, that some crises would call finally for the single person to resolve the issue where the mass of magistrates were unable to agree; but in this case, the monarch acts as a contingent, ~~xxxxx~~ emergency crisis-resolver when he exerts his personal will, rather than as the regular and normal lord via his personal will. Another way to put it is that the monarch is much more passive, normally, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ^{allowing} the administrative corps to make decisions and run the state, than in the earlier time when his ~~dynamic~~ role was much more direct and dynamic.

The scholar, within this theory of antibody ideas, needs to discover in the historical actuality of the time what dysfunctions of traditional theory had developed--or, better, what kinds of functions in the old paradigm had become unnecessary or even noxious and thus ripe to be dispensed with. The previous paradigm's necessary/virtuous elements are not ever seen as just antiquated and necessary, however, but must be shown on a moral level to be noxious and immoral. That is to say, there must be a kind of overkill built ~~xx~~ into the ~~p~~ "intellectual antibody". ~~xx~~ ^{If} it is to have its effect it must mount a terrible offensive against the considered foe. This gives drama to the history of thought, as it mixes with the passions of the thinker with the issues of his ~~times~~, but from our vantage point, viewing what is the effective element in the new idea, the form it takes ~~ix~~ can seem mostly that of dramatic overkill. We can view the matter instead in sociological functionalist ~~germs~~, of what elements of an old paradigm were giving way to that of a new one. The moment of change may ~~xxx~~ mark the most violent and striking episodes in the history of mankind, as society makes its ~~px~~ adjustments to the new ideals, but for the analytic scholar that throbbing humanistic sides of the event can be separated from functional analysis of it.