

*Paper prepared for the First Euroacademia Global Conference*  
*Europe Inside-Out: Europe and Europeaness Exposed to Plural*  
*Observers,*

*Vienna, 22 – 24 September 2011*

*This paper is a draft*

*Please do not cite*

[Completely revised in the light of recently published Ricardo Duchesne's book], DRAFT

"European Miracle": Warrior Aristocrats, Libertarian Spirit, and  
Competition as Discovery Process

Andrei Znamenski  
The University of Memphis

Recently in the news I came across a small story with a photo, which produced 40,000 reposts and an avalanche of comments in a Chinese blogosphere. Gary Locke, a newly appointed American ambassador to China, on the way to his appointment, was spotted at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport by a Chinese-American businessman who happened to know him and who snapped and posted on his blog a picture of the ambassador standing at a Starbucks' counter with backpack, buying a cup of coffee. The posted picture fascinated Chinese bloggers. They wondered how it happened that the ambassador stood in line like a common man with a backpack (like some school kid) buying himself a coffee? This was genuine shock. In China things are simply not done this way. First, a person of his status never travels alone but with a retinue of assistants and subordinates, who are always around to jump to fulfill wishes of the superior. Second, such a dignitary does not stand in line and does not hang out with everybody else. He should be at least hidden from the eyes of lay people in VIP facilities. The gist of shared surprise of the Chinese at this news was summarized well by the above-mentioned businessman: "This is something unbelievable in China. Even for low-ranking officials, we don't do things for ourselves. Someone goes to buy the coffee for them. Someone carries their bags for them."<sup>1</sup>

The abovementioned story (to which I can add similar stories from social life in my former home land Russia) haunted me while I was reading Ricardo Duchesne's *The Uniqueness of Western Civilization* (Brill, 2011). In fact, such accounts highlight what Duchesne has tried to explain to us throughout his 500 page text and what is expected to be obvious to everybody: the historical presence at least in some pockets of Europe of mobile horizontal relations among autonomous individuals in contrast to many non-European and European societies where to the present day personal relations, political and social connections are frequently built on the basis of vertical hierarchical subordination with frequently an "enlightened master" or group of "masters" on the top of a power pyramid.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it appears that in human history, people more often than not resorted to this latter system as their basic organizing principle. That is what makes Europe so unique, stresses Duchesne: unlike the rest of the world, here something happened that gave rise to the liberty idea, which despite numerous obstacles, nourished horizontal relations among autonomous individuals. Going against mainstream humanities and social sciences scholarship, which for the past decades has been preoccupied with elevating non-Western "others" to the center of world history, Duchesne unequivocally wants to remind to us that it was Western Civilization with its idea of liberty that was to be the center, not vice versa.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Photo of bag-carrying ambassador charms China," *Yahoo News*, August 16, 2011, <http://news.yahoo.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Most recently such principle of organization was well articulated in the famous "vertical of power" promoted by Vladimir Putin.

His particular target is world history scholarship - an intellectual offshoot of multicultural ideology that came to dominate mainstream media and college scene in Western countries in the 1980s and the 1990s. In an attempt to combat Eurocentric biases that had infested earlier history narrative and to make the past "equal," historians, anthropologists and popular writers have rewritten history to catalogue and highlight contributions of non-Western "others," simultaneously playing down the contributions of Western Civilization. The founding father of the world history discipline is William McNeal, the author of the *Rise of Europe*, the scholar who was constantly fine-tuning his scholarship to the changing political trends. As early as the 1970s, he declared that the idea of liberty as the guiding principle in organizing history courses should be cast aside. Instead, learning from his anthropological colleagues, he suggested that cultures (as well as how they interacted with each other and how they responded to environmental challenges) should be the core element of world history courses. Duchesne for some reason has not mentioned another important name, anthropologist Eric Wolf, who with his influential and many other respects brilliant book *Europe and People without History* (1982), also helped to intellectually spearhead world history as an academic discipline.

In a course of time, attempts to correct the distorted Eurocentric lenses through which people had earlier read history naturally led to another extreme – an emergence of a new set of biases with a different twist. Duchesne has composed his book as an intellectual antidote that is designated to humble the scholarly arrogance of world historians. Trying to set the record straight, Duchesne does not shy away from asking many uncomfortable questions. For example, why did the Indio-European nomadic pastoralists who changed the face of Europe, Near East and Indian suddenly disappear from history books, while another group of nomads, the Mongols, are now repeatedly praised as cultures heroes and political geniuses who linked the East and the West into "Pax Mongolia," a web of cultural and trade networks? Why did in many non-Western societies people kowtow, kiss the feet of a ruler, crawl, prostrate, or bow down, whereas the Europeans hardly practiced these acts of subservience? Why are *Iliad* and Scandinavian sagas infested with personalized stories and names of various protagonists, whereas Oriental epic tales are centered on the great deeds of a great king? Why did some European societies manifest tremendous inquisitiveness about surrounding societies, whereas many non-Western cultures not only were not curious about their neighbors but considered them primitive barbarians from whom they had nothing to learn?

Duchesne does not intend to revive the grand narrative of triumphant march of Western civilization. In fact, he is not interested in exploring the economic and political rise of Europe, which secured its global domination in the world by the end of the nineteenth century. What he tried to look into is the roots of the unique tradition of liberty that made possible various intellectual, artistic, technological accomplishments of Europe, and, yes, contributed to their military and political hegemony. His goal is to bring to light a story about how in Europe through acts and deeds of heroic human actors, who were more concerned about their individual autonomy and prestige, a type of society had been created that held in high esteem individual liberty.

He reminds to us that too often scholars have operated with such big and faceless aggregates as social forces and classes and too much attention was paid to materialist circumstances that conditioned people's activities, whereas not enough room was given to individual human agency. To be exact, Duchesne is not the first to address this issue. As early as 1972, in his book on the causes of tremendous economic growth of Europe, economic historian P. T. Bauer and in 1982 historian Eric Jones stressed that that excessive emphasis on exclusively

economic causes handicapped our discussion of the rise of European hegemony in early modern time. Later, in 1997 libertarian historian Ralph Raico reiterated this argument by drawing attention to the roots of the problem: "there appears to be a methodological holism that prefers to manipulate aggregates while ignoring individual human actors and the institutions their actions generate."<sup>3</sup> Bringing to light political and cultural factors broadened the analysis of "European miracle." At the same time, the whole discussion evolved within the limits of so-called institutional approach that stresses the role of political fragmentation and decentralization as the major cause that allowed Europe to spread its economic wings. Although this is a well-taken and well-supported approach, it leaves without an answer a simple question about where that fragmentation/decentralization tradition came from.

There have been other explanations of "European Miracle." For example, in his bestseller *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (1997), which is now heavily used in colleges, geographer Jared Diamond ascribed the rise of Europe to its favorable geographical environment, which was certainly one of the reasons. Other authors tried to single out particular pivotal periods as responsible for jump starting "European Miracle," focusing on Renaissance or Reformation, or Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment. There are scholars who trace the rise of Europe to the beneficial influence of Greek and Roman tradition, or to powerful influence of Christianity. Finally, proponents of so-called dependency theory, who hold the West responsible for everything that goes wrong in the Third World, said that Europe rose in power simply because it benefited from ripping the Aztec and Inca off their gold and profiting from slave trade.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the abovementioned factors are valid but, but neither one of them separately can explain the origin of the unique libertarian ethos and the rise of Western creativity. For example, many classics scholars in the past took it for granted that Ancient Greece with its polis system and sparks of rational thinking stood at the very sources of that libertarian tradition. Suppose we accept this argument, but again the question remains: where might the concept of the democratic polis have come from in the first place? Duchesne takes the discussion of "European miracle" to a new historical and philosophical level by viewing such issues as the economic advancement of European in modern times and political decentralization as fractions of a bigger question – what are the general sources of the rise of European creativity. Digging deep into ancient history, he comes up with a provocative argument: the cultural roots of what later evolved into "European Miracle" should be traced back to the social ethos of Indo-European warrior aristocracy, which he considers an "unusual class with a strong libertarian spirit" (406). Duchesne does not dismiss the role of geographical, social and economic factors, but at the same time he stresses that the spark that ignited the whole process was this particular cultural ethos.

---

<sup>3</sup> P.T. Bauer, *Dissent on Development: Studies and Debates on Development Economics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972); Eric Jones, *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies, and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ralph Raico, "The European Miracle [1997]," *Mises Daily*, December 22, 2006, <http://mises.org/daily/2404>

<sup>4</sup> In this latter approach a natural question was avoided—how in the first place did the Europeans come up with tools and technology that, for example, allowed them to conquer the New World?

The bands of Indo-Europeans, who laid a foundation for modern German, Slavic, Roman, and Greek languages, had originally resided north of Black sea at the Ukrainian steppes, from where they moved to Central/Western Europe, to Near East, and to India. They had been migrating by several waves separated by long time periods somewhere between 4,000 BC and 1,000 BC. One of the last human waves was notorious Germanic "barbarians" who dislodged crumbling Western Roman Empire. The peculiar democratic ethos of the Indo-European warrior aristocrats, as Duchesne informs us, became a kind of the first "big bang" that initiated the whole chain of historical events that together molded "Western spirit" with its individualism and autonomous institutions: "The primordial roots of Western uniqueness must be traced back to the aristocratic warlike culture of the Indo-European speakers who spread throughout Europe during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium" (344).

Daredevil free spirits always ready to fight and prove themselves, and intolerant of any imposition on their personal status, these warrior aristocrats were adventurous folk, extremely mobile and physically strong horse riders well nourished by their meat diet. Unfortunately, in modern times, the history of these people was appropriated by the proponents of so-called Aryan myth, who labeled them as the Aryans and cast them into perfectly shaped blond blue-eyed creatures and (incorrectly) placed their original habitat somewhere in Nordic Europe. This explains the conspicuous absence of the Indo-Europeans in our history books after World War II. Sensing that it is an intellectual minefield, many historians and archaeologists simply avoid talking about this topic just in case. In all fairness, these Indo-European nomads and their descendants were not exactly nice people. From Scandinavian sagas we learn that this was essentially a bunch of selfish self-centered brutes obsessed with a megalomaniac quest for prestige and status, constantly searching to prove themselves in the eyes of their peers either by fighting each other or throwing feasts.<sup>5</sup>

The point Duchesne makes here is that out of this not attractive individualized "military democracy"<sup>6</sup> gradually grew out a strong sense of personal autonomy, which these noble aristocrats sought to codify and safeguard in such documents as famous *Magna Carta*. Later, new groups of "aristocrats" began claiming their personal autonomy, extracting from lords and governments their own "charters of liberty" (towns, universities, members of guilds, farmers, and eventually in modern times workers' unions). To safeguard their liberties, all these people later connected themselves with each other by a web of contractual relations. Thus, in the course of time, what had originally emerged as the selfish ethos of Indo-European warrior aristocratic later opened doors for a full expression of individual potential, being channeled into various economic, scientific, creative, and political pursuits. Duchesne describes this process by using a

---

<sup>5</sup> The most notorious in this respect, in my view, is a saga about *Arrow-Odd*, who, in addition to the customary quest for heroic exploits, is shown (without any value judgment on the part of a narrator) as plainly mean, self-centered and arrogant chap, although by the end of the story, when he grew older, he mellows a bit. Paul Edwards and Hermann Palson, *Arrow-Odd: A Medieval Novel* (New York: New York University Press, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> I have borrowed this expression from an old Marxist social science jargon. To me, this phrase captures well what Duchesne talks about. See Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/index.htm>

Kantian expression "unsocial sociability." Incidentally, long time ago many writers and philosophers already noted the beneficial presence of the "unsocial sociability" in Western tradition. One of the most known examples is famous Adam Smith's economic dictum about the invisible hand of free market, when people working for themselves, indirectly benefit entire society. .

This European libertarian ethos drastically contrasted with what had existed in many contemporary non-Western societies, where an individual initiative was suffocated and where people were ruled, using Ludwig von Mises expression, by "virtue of command and subordination or hegemony."<sup>7</sup> At the same time, we know that the Indo-European bands migrated not only to Western Europe but also to the Near East and India. Why did not in these areas their allegedly libertarian ethos never materialize? Duchesne explains this as follows. In India and the Near East, the Indo-Europeans represented a minority that was assimilated into local indigenous cultures that were heavily infested with a group-oriented ethics and lost their tradition of military democracy.

Moving further, Duchesne compares European heroic tales (*Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and Scandinavian sagas) with such Near Eastern epics as Gilgamesh. He finds that in Eastern tales, all characters except kings are faceless sidekicks frequently without names. All great deeds are performed by a great king or by great menacing gods who overshadow everybody else. In contrast, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are populated by individuals who have their own characters. They are enterprising people who are usually on a journey full of daring deeds. They interact with each other as comrades, and there is no trace of subservience or domination in their relationships.

Surely these epics somehow reflected contrasting social ways in two different civilizations. Using these drastic differences in two bodies of epic tales, Duchesne moves on, drawing attention to the examples of enduring tradition of despotism in the East and many other non-Western civilizations: kowtowing in Imperial China, nobles bending their backs when approaching an Inca in Peru, prostration before a monarch and a noble in India, subjects crawling in front of an Egyptian pharaoh, to name only a few. At the same time, he notes the conspicuous absence of such traditions in Western culture. Mentioning these facts might certainly offend cultural sensibilities of non-Western "others" (including my own, for I originate from a country with a strong "kowtowing" authoritarian tradition, which had included prostration among other things).

Clearly, under these circumstances, in old "Oriental" societies there was less room for creativity, insists Duchesne, who provides numerous illustrations to support his argument. My favorite one is the famous textbook example about the invention of printing in China/Korea. School and college textbooks inform us that printing was invented in China and not in Europe, forgetting to note that in China this invention stayed dormant and was never used to initiate a vibrant print culture. We are also sometimes reminded that metal-type press was invented not in Europe but in Korea in 1703, more than fifty years before Gutenberg printed his famous Bible. Yet, the historians who inform us about this fact forget to remind their readers that when twenty years later one of the Korean emperors decided to introduce a new script to organize mass printing, the Korean elite raised in the Confucian spirit of blind veneration of past tradition was

---

<sup>7</sup> Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 196.

petrified with a prospect of losing Chinese script and flatly rejected his project.<sup>8</sup> So the printing revolution never materialized there.

In the meantime, in Europe there was an explosion of book printing that did not emerge out of blue but had been prepared by the growth of towns and universities, which enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in their curricula. Printing revolution in Europe was also prepared in the Middle Ages by a gradual transition from the scroll to the so-called codex (that already had pages resembling modern books). On top of everything, the Europeans had at their disposal Roman alphabet that could be readily adapted to mechanical use in contrast to elaborate Chinese hieroglyphs. So, as Duchesne reminds to us, it was not about who was the first to invent something (although here Europe was the leader too). It was about available opportunities to exercise one's ingenuity, including free borrowing from surrounding cultures. The Europeans were traditionally curious about other civilizations and were eager "multicultural" learners unlike, for example, the Chinese. This definitely helped them spearhead their creativity and eventually raised them economically and technologically above their neighbors.

At the same time, I want to stress outright that the aristocratic libertarian spirit of military democratic chiefdoms, which, according to Duchesne, had woken up the creative potential of the Europeans, was not a uniquely Indo-European feature, and Duchesne seems to understand this well. Although he does not elaborate on this too much, he does note that at the dawn of history various societies had been developing along two different trajectories: individual-oriented chiefdoms that had been collectively ruled by groups of "big men" like among the Indo-Europeans and group-oriented, where one "big man" usually usurped all power. Duchesne points out that there were societies in world history that cherished similar values shared by ancient Indo-European warrior aristocrats. Thus, he briefly mentions the Indians of the northwest coast of North America (385), where decentralized chiefdoms were driven by the same megalomaniac quest for prestige and status, but, unfortunately, he does not compare them with their European counterparts. Instead, he contrasts the early medieval society of Denmark and its individualist-oriented ethos with two societies that were driven by a group-oriented ethos (Hawaii and Inca). Of course, medieval Denmark and its class of free spirit warrior aristocrats shine cast against such textbook example of "primitive socialism" as, for example, the Inca Empire, where an individual was totally subjugated to the interests of a redistributive state.<sup>9</sup>

The Duchesne book would definitely profited from a more detailed discussion of such examples as the abovementioned Northwest coast Native American bands (the Tlingit, Tsimshian, Haida and others) whose entire social and economic life was saturated with the quest for prestige and whose chieftains threw grand potlatch give-away ceremonies to prove their status. Even better example could have been the American Indians of the Plains (the Lakota, Blackfeet, Comanche, Crow, the Cheyenne and others), nomadic horse-riders and meat eaters,

---

<sup>8</sup> This particular example is also an interesting illustration of the fact that even the "Oriental" despot was constrained in his actions by cultural and political circumstances that were beyond his control.

<sup>9</sup> For more on the Inca "primitive socialism," see Louis Baudin, *A Socialist Empire: The Incas of Peru* (New York: Van Nostrand Company, 1961) and Igor Shafarevich, *The Socialist Phenomenon* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 132-142.

whose life style and even migration patterns very closely resembled that of the Indo-Europeans.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, Duchesne does not even mention them in his book. At the same time, to me, the Celtic and Germanic warriors aristocrat tradition of prestige-seeking, feasting, and constant combating each other that Duchesne describes in detail (369-377, 380-388) resembles something that comes straight from a playbook of an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Plains Indian warrior - so similar are the features of two civilizations. Like their Indo-European counterparts, the Plains Indians manifested the same megalomaniac ethics of glory-hunting, constant combat, decentralized political structure, in which a powerful "big man" could easily challenge his competitor and split away anytime along with his comrades and relatives. Even the format of their military parties (spontaneously organized groups of volunteer warriors in search of great deeds and booty) resembled those of the Celts and Germanic "barbarians." Like their Indo-European counterparts, berserks from American Plains threw themselves into combat to display their warrior spirit. Plains Indians also had special military societies that united "warrior aristocrats" of all ages.<sup>11</sup>

Like his European counterpart, the Plains chief was far from being an autocrat, sustaining his precarious status solely by continuous performance of glorious deeds. An extreme example of this practice is the Cheyenne, who, with a population of barely 4,000, were ruled collectively the council of forty-four.<sup>12</sup> We will certainly never know if these Plains "military democracies" would have evolved into something that eventually would have resembled the Athenian polis, simply because some of chiefdoms declined because of natural causes,<sup>13</sup> while others were overrun by the American bureaucratic state that put these "warrior aristocrats" on governmental welfare rolls by 1900.

---

<sup>10</sup> About the westward migration of the Lakota Sioux Indians to the Plains and their "imperialism," see Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 65, no. 2 (1978):

<sup>11</sup> Robert Lowie, *Indians of the Plains* (Garden City, NY: Natural History Press, 1963), 106-108, 117, 125; see also Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Comanche: Lords of the South Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952);

<sup>12</sup> E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Cheyenne: Indians the Great Plains* (New York: Holt, 1960), 37-49.

<sup>13</sup> For example, the famous "Comanche Empire," a highly decentralized collection of horse-riding and Bison-hunting chiefdoms that were ruled by "warrior aristocrats" and lived by war, collapsed by the 1840s because of drought, disease, and decline of the Bison herds through overhunting even before the Americans advanced and took over their lands. Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). As much as Duchesne hates talking about the influence of geographical, economic and other materialist factors, the fate of these chiefdoms shows how precarious the fate of the European libertarian tradition might have been if it had not been for the conflation of favorable geographical, economic, and political circumstances.

Most important, Duchesne did not drop a single word about what happened with those "Aryans" who did not migrate to Western and northern Europe but decided to remain in their "motherland," which eventually evolved into what became known as Kievan Russia, a collection of Slavic principalities whose Indo-European libertarian ethos had allegedly to receive a double boost when the Scandinavian warrior aristocrats joined their distant Slavic "cousins" and jumped started the Russian state in the early Middle Ages. Instead, as we know, Russia drifted along a different path, which eventually in early modern time led her to a despotic tsarist regime and later produced the most brutal totalitarian dictatorship that even the National Socialist regime, its twin brother, barely matched. Surely, there was here interplay of many unfavorable geographical, political, and religious circumstances that totally muted "libertarian ethos" if it had existed in the first place.<sup>14</sup>

The examples of Russia and especially Germany show well that even within its "European hub" the trajectory of "libertarian spirit" evolution was far from a linear progression. In modern times, in pockets of Europe it either eclipsed, or was greatly eroded, or at least was spread unevenly. It is also obvious that the spirit of liberty was more heavily represented and sustained in Anglo-Saxon tradition with its common law tradition than in continental Europe, which might explain why England and the United States did not "crack" in the 1930s under the assault of socialist and nationalist ideas, whereas Germany and much of Europe happily placed themselves under fatherly figures of dictators. In fact, to the present day it is still unclear if the spirit of liberty, apparently an accidental by-product of European multicultural mutations (Germanic, Greek, and Roman people and Judeo-Christians), will survive or not, now having to face suffocating bureaucratization of society and entitlement ethos that captured the minds of large segments of Western populations both in the corporate world and on a popular level.

To theoretically support his argument about gradual unfolding of the Western spirit of liberty, Duchesne turns to Wilhelm Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche. In his famous *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the first one wrote about the progression of human spirit through several stages, which Duchesne invites to read as the evolution of the Western spirit. The second one emphasized the role of heroic individuals as movers and shakers of history. The author is clearly fascinated with both philosophers. He stressed that he particularly fell in love with Hegelian philosophy when he was a graduate student by taking specialized courses and apprenticing with one of the big names in this field. I might have possibly misread or missed something, but upon finishing Duchesne's book, I came to a realization that the author's major argument would have stood well on its own without any Hegelian and Nietzschean backup.

---

<sup>14</sup> The first and foremost was the Byzantine tradition of centralized state that was absorbed by Russia along with its Greek Orthodox Christianity, where church and state were never separated. Another unfavorable factor was a prolonged three hundred year living in a tributary state under the Mongol Golden Horde – the status that killed all sprouts of aristocrats' autonomy and nourished instead the ethos of servitude. The only "libertarian" enclave of medieval Russia, so-called Novgorod merchant republic that was collectively ruled by merchant and nobility, lingered on until the 1400s before it was taken over and literally shut down by the autocratic Muscovite state. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 25-96.

If one is so eager to search for a theory that might help organize his or her thoughts about the evolution of Western concept of liberty, a better choice might be not Hegel and Nietzsche but libertarian scholarship, which is sometimes also called "Austrian school," and especially Friedrich von Hayek's concept of spontaneous order. Although preoccupied mostly with economic issues, this school of thought contains many useful insights that were recently used by scholars in various humanities and social sciences disciplines.<sup>15</sup>

Well in tune with what Duchesne argues in his book, the Austrian school is focused on individual human action. As such, it has been challenging various grand paradigms that operate with such large "aggregates" as classes, social forces and that claim to explain and predict economic and social processes. The basic premise of the "Austrians" is that in their analysis scholars should be biased in favor of spontaneous individual activities because the trajectory of social and economic events cannot be modeled or predicted – a stance that in fact perfectly fits the general current of so-called post-modern thinking. Out of chaos of their individual efforts more or less feasible tradition emerges that in turn affects human behavior. This does not mean that people become prisoners of their tradition. Since social and economic life is unpredictable, there is always room for active or, as Duchesne would have said, heroic individual activities that might change the course of events. Hayek's spontaneous order concept might help us understand both the rise of societies based on liberty tradition and societies grounded in various forms of despotism.

Directly related to the question about the origin of European creativity is Hayek's approach to knowledge. He suggests that in the course of their spontaneous development those societies where knowledge is not monopolized but dispersed in bits of incomplete and contradictory forms among many individuals, usually reach better economic and intellectual results and naturally become more creative. Incidentally, this approach to knowledge provides one of the major foundations for the libertarian critique of socialist, collectivist, and statist utopias, where activities of people are defined by one single rational plan in contrast to horizontal relations in a free market society, where many private "plans" collide and interact with each other. As history shows, the latter system, even though it is chaotic, messy, and imperfect, eventually outperform the former that, at least on the surface, appear to be well-ordered and organized.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Robert Higgs, *Against Leviathan: Government Power and Free Society* (Oakland, CA: Independent Institute, 2005); Ralph Raico, *Place of Religion in Liberal Philosophy of Constant, Tocqueville, and Lord Acton* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2010); Thomas E. Woods, *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2005); Paul A. Cantor and Stephen D. Cox, *Literature and the Economics of Liberty: Spontaneous Order in Culture* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2009). Even Marxist political scholars have recently become interested in using Hayek's methodology: Simon Griffith, "'Comrade Hayek' or the Revival of Liberalism? Andrew Gamble's Engagement with the Work of Friedrich Hayek," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 12, no. 2 (2007): 189-210.

<sup>16</sup> Friedrich von Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," in *The Essence of Hayek*, ed. Chiaki Nishiyama and Kurt R. Leube (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1984), 212.

Contrasting a horizontally organized society based on tradition of liberty with statist society based on central planning, Hayek concludes: "Which of these systems is likely to be more efficient depends mainly on the question under which of them we can expect that fuller use will be made of existing knowledge. This, in turn, depends on whether we are more likely to succeed in putting at the disposal of single central authority all the knowledge which ought to be used but which is initially dispersed among many different individuals, or, conveying to the individuals such additional knowledge as they need in order to enable them to dovetail their plans with those of others."<sup>17</sup> Hayek points out that he talks not only about scientific knowledge but about all kinds of "big" and "small" knowledge, including knowing of particular circumstances of the fleeting moment not known to others. It is reasonable to assume that since historically in Europe there was more room for individualized knowledge, we have an upsurge in creativity in contrast to various despotic societies where, as Ludwig von Mises noted, thinking and acting, the foremost characteristic of man as man, were the privileged of one man only.<sup>18</sup> As a result of "chaotic" activities of competing autonomous individuals, in pockets of Europe there existed better opportunities to utilize knowledge, which eventually pushed Europe ahead of other civilizations not only in the economic, scientific and military fields but also in various creative pursuits. Hayek has well analyzed this situation on a philosophical level in his essay "Competition as Discovery Process."<sup>19</sup>

The ancient Indo-Europeans, if they had indeed carried the traits of the libertarian ethos, might be considered unique not because they were the only ones who possessed this tradition but because of the efforts of their descendants and, because of favorable circumstances, this ethos was spontaneously cultivated through millennia. I want to repeat that what we usually call the West might have emerged as an accidental multicultural offshoot of social evolution – an offshoot that in modern time generated so many slurs and so much blessing from all over the world. At least, in my reading, the grand "libertarian epic" that might have started somewhere about the 4,000 BC and that Duchesne traced well into early modern times, is not about the Indo-Europeans and societies that sprang out from their bands. It is a story about how people spontaneously shape the conditions that either constrain individuals in their pursuits, or, on the contrary, allow them to spread their wings. As such, people deserve whatever government, culture, and social mores they might have.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>18</sup> Mises, *Human Action*, 152-153.

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich von Hayek, "Competition as Discovery Process," in *The Essence of Hayek*, 254-265.