

It's the Person, Stupid!

by Friedrich Hansen (February 2018)



The Sacrifice of Iphigenia

One cannot escape the politicization of groups today, which essentially militates against the person who emerges from the traditional family. Groupism is foremost an amplifier due to the human mimetic instincts. It is for this reason that we have genderism as the latest levelling identity group that contributes to the eclipse of genuine personality. Not only has gender been organized along the march of letter along the acrostics of LGBT—a faceless mix of group identities. In the last two decades and accompanying the rise of the political rainbow coalition, even the corporate world was anxious to be converted from a multitude of legal entities into conformist

“groups”. This is all about the modern obsession with replacing the transcendent “yoke of heaven,” manageable by our inner self and gifted with the classical freedom of conscience, with the “yoke of kingdom” that comes with surrogate freedom of “self-realization”: bodily expressions and libidinous experiments all of which are bringing us ever closer to becoming something not quite human. Within a decade, animal rights and human rights are likely to coalesce.

We should have detected the advent of the “yoke of kingdom” in early signs such as the spread of hoods and spiky dog chains with sadomasochistic gays, punks and gothic fans that were emerging in the 1970s. Pointing to the limits of the enlightenment as they certainly do, these types were equally square and obsessive responses to the sexual liberation of 1968. Today the “yoke of kingdom” has taken the form of invisible chains of globalized consumer brands, inserted deeply in our limbic systems and the unconscious sections of the mind. Apple recently introduced casino-style and very addictive digital games for four-year olds.[\[1\]](#) Brands are uniformly operating theatres like McDonald’s, Starbucks and the like—all of which cater to our “herd instincts” more than they look after our basic human needs. Yet clearly there is something missing, something loftier. Global brand outlets are killing off not only local business, they also foster wage dumping while eradicating the wholesome sense of human dignity as we see with the *#Metoo* revelations. The struggle about what human values actually mean has taken the form of a dramatic antagonism between centrifugal liberal globalism pivoting in the “Stop Trump” campaign and the centripetal pull towards nation and family by the real estate magnate from NYC who managed to upend the stereotype of the bullying white male by turning it into an issue of courage and character. Few figures in the liberal media have realized that President Trump has the guts and the personality to face them down. He is quickly

approaching the format of a Churchill. Liberals continue to underestimate Trump at their own peril just as Theodore Roosevelt did when he wrote to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Winston Churchill, stating Churchill “possessed such levity, lack of sobriety, lack of permanent principle, and an inordinate thirst for that cheap form of admiration which is given to notoriety, as to make them poor public servants.”[\[2\]](#)

Western liberals share with fascists not only their anti-Christian infatuation but also their sycophancy toward Islam. Incidentally, both depend for power on the reckless exploitation of groupthink and the spiritual tyranny of conformism, the backdrop of which is the emergence of surrogate sex, identities, and motherhood. After the collapse of religion, we are witnessing the return of chains as if confirming the inversion of the Jewish Exodus. Or will the “Trump storm” blow away rainbow groupthink like a bad dream? There are some hopeful signs on the horizon. Opinion leaders such as Peggy Noonan and Shelby Steele writing for the *Wall Street Journal*, or Myron Magnet and Andrew Klavan in the *City Journal* have commented favourably on the unexpected success of Trumpism. For the time being, it has somehow silenced the cacophony of the rainbow coalition. How could Donald Trump possibly accomplish such a cultural turnaround?[\[3\]](#)

History suggests that, in the long run, maverick personalities or individual fighters tend to succeed over conformists because groupism thwarts individual courage. Just think of the brilliant revolt led by a personality like Judas Maccabeus who castigated the haughty Greeks in the second century BCE and thus cleared the way for the rise of Rome. Or think of Moshe Dayan, the emblematic figure of the miraculous Israeli victory against all odds in the 1967 Six-Day-War routing four Arab armies. In both cases, courageous personalities subdued herd

instincts. In the same way, Trump's tremendous personal courage is bound to win over liberal conformism and PC. A telling detail is his ignorance of decorum and aesthetics in a postmodern society which has long given up on "form"[\[4\]](#) altogether. All Trump has to do is simply hold up the mirror for them. Even Trump's often castigated "narcissism" (as David Cameron reminded us) is minute in comparison to that of Barack Obama's. Again, Trump is particularly good at mirroring the notorious liberal elite's narcissist inclinations. Mirror thinking was once the bane of metaphysics and was the domain of Greece in antiquity. This makes it worth tapping into the wisdom of classical "liberal arts," banned from Western campuses by Millennials at their own peril. For I guess it was precisely the dropping of classical education that weakened adolescent resilience and turned Western youth recently into hysteric "snowflakes." Chained to political correctness, many of today's adolescents lack personality and courage and instead demand "trigger warnings" and "safe spaces." It would appear that the unique personality in the affirmative sense is bound to make or break the Western civilization in the decades to come since it has been the "life blood" of the Western arts and sciences. Against this, the conformist liberal mainstream gained the upper hand only after WW II yet it has shifted more recently toward the defensive mode of keeping the status quo which is always the losing approach. This is where Laocoön comes in: a giant in resilience—a resilience drawn from suffering if on slightly different terms as his congenial and contemporaneous fellow, Jesus Christ.

As both share a scenario of mortification, let me whisk you off to the Vatican Museums in Rome. There we find the Laocoön "group," as it is strangely called despite displaying a Trojan married priest and father of two sons. Surely the group label is biased and the sculpture ought to be described as "family," if incomplete. Western celibacy speaks for a bias against the

monotheist family for only in Eastern Orthodoxy, like in Judaism and Islam, a priest can marry. This Western abnormality goes back to Renaissance Hellenism when the Catholic Church obscured the family of the Jewish Jesus by canonizing a universal and unmarried Christ. Bernhard Starr would address this as “ethnic cleansing of Judaism in Medieval and Renaissance Art”.[\[5\]](#) The Renaissance reception of both Laocoön and Jesus Christ Hellenized them for the second time representing an anthropological regression from sublime guilt to profane shame culture. It was to be followed in due course by a dramatic loss of Western resilience.

Art history—for reasons of cultivating genius and artificial identities—has always been inimical to the concept of family, which brings us back to the risks of telling the truth in a shame culture and to Laocoön. He is being punished with two constrictors sent by the Greek gods for having divulged the stratagem of the Trojan Horse—the deceptive Greek gift to their opponents in war which was meant to overwhelm the Trojans by surprise. We might note here the parallel to President Trump, who like Laocoön, is constantly punished for confronting his fellow Trojans with inconvenient truths—to the horror of the cunning liberal media rattling with the constrictors of PC. It means that Trump is ceaselessly defending the Judeo-Christian guilt culture by braving some dire facts about American and Palestinian reality against the liberal ostriches with their heads shamefully hidden in the sand.

Now the provenience of Laocoön’s sculpture is well known, hailing from a workshop in Rhodos on the orders of a wealthy Roman in the first century C.E. It was only re-discovered around 1500 in the rubble of Renaissance Rome and went on to become the most admired and talked about exhibit of what goes for Western-Hellenistic art. Yet, at the same time, this

epistemological tradition is deeply flawed and presents a paragon of cultural appropriation. First of all, Laocoön was mistaken by art historians such as Johann J. Winckelmann as an example of Hellenism, dating him falsely in the 3rd century BCE. Clearly, the Trojan family man could not have been conceived without the biblical narrative and the monotheist concept of suffering. Being incarnated in terms of Christian guilt culture it is totally alien to authentic Greek shame culture. Greeks were too proud to openly admit infirmity and suffering.



Laocoön and his sons, 1st century C.E., Vatican Museum

This brings us to the heavily gendered aesthetics of Winckelmann, who is still celebrated as the founder of German art history. He was gay and overambitious due to being the son of a poor cobbler from Stendal in Anhaltine Saxonia. Winckelmann preceded Oscar Wilde with a very similar, i.e., lifestyle-centered, Hellenistic agenda, yet he is probably less known in the Anglosphere than Wilde. Nevertheless, his biased Hellenism has dominated the European Continent for too long and has been afforded a new boost with an expensive

exhibition in prestigious Weimar recently. The 2017 exhibition once more presented his views on Greek art as the final say on that matter. I hasten to add that the first wave of German Hellenism of the 18th century is rooted not in actual study of the real thing but second-hand and drawn from Roman copies only, as among others Wikipedia informs us. No doubt, an epigonal infatuation with imitation from a distance is fairly close to mirroring and good in keeping an illusion alive. It went on to become a sort of appropriated Hellenist life style “as if” rather than in sober academic study. This explained why, in the nascent academic discipline of art history, the self-made man Winckelmann succeeded: an autodidact under the wings of the Vatican. His unusual career came to an equally unusual end: his murder in Trieste in 1768 that reminds one of the end of the gay film maker [Pier Paolo Pasolini](#).

Much of Winckelmann's art theory was the result of poorly reflected group sensibilities. Take for example his paradoxical advice we should “imitate the old Greeks in order to become inimitable.” This mirror identity is like an outer echo of the self, born from Greek metaphysical thinking as it celebrates “sameness”. His intuition could only be nourished in the context of the Roman world of copies and would have fallen apart if confronted with the real thing: authentic Greek art. For Winckelmann and others would have finally recognized that Greek art does not consist of originals, unique pieces, but of serial works of arts, based on multiplication or quantity rather than quality. The same can be seen with the famous painted Greek vases for use in the house hold. We need to take note of the entirely different understanding of art in ancient Greece where the craftsmen ranged much higher than the artists.[6]



Apollo, the God of—take your pick: the sun, light, music or prophecy.

Yet German Hellenists in the mold of Winckelmann's school insisted on precisely the kind of delusional outward identity of sameness generated from metaphysical mirror thinking. To be sure, unlike Lord Byron and other English classicists, many of the earliest and most influential German Hellenists, like Goethe and Winckelmann never bothered to visit Greece under Ottoman rule. Admittedly, Greece at the time was an extremely backward country with almost no infrastructure. Yet German Hellenophiles contented themselves with second-hand evidence

from the rubble of Rome. And there is even a deeper irony here: Greek art knew no original precisely because it lacked any concept of the unique person. Quite the opposite, Greeks are best known for their idealized stereotypes, gods like Apollo or Venus. This explains why upon studying Greek mythology few can escape the many variants leading to confusions over who is who. The reason is there are too many competing lies, none of them authoritative. While the Jewish God is very personal, the Greek gods are many things and one needs to choose between them. This brings me to the main concern of this essay: Jerusalem invented the concept of the unique person, based on monotheism, and bequeathed it onto Rome, while Athens gave us only impersonal forms of art. Everyone who bothers to visit the National Roman Museum, [Palazzo Massimo](#) near Termini, will immediately recognize what I mean. For what is on display in the first section covering the founders of the Roman Republic from the third century B.C.E onwards are hundreds of busts or heads of outstanding citizens, mostly in chalk or marble, with their unmistakable spirited features.



Seated Boxer, 300-200 B.C.E, bronze, National Roman Museum

It is a shrine of unique figures with identities pointing inward with no names given of the artist who created them. This style is called Roman “realism” with inward personalities in contrast to Greek “idealism”, sculptures showing idealized heroes and gods, outwardly identified by attributes. With these Roman art features in mind, let’s return to Laocoön in the Vatican which fascinated Winckelmann immediately after he arrived in Rome in 1755. He wrapped up his judgement in the term of mitigated emotion—*affektdämpfung*—and by that, demonstrating his own ideal of coolness in hiding his true gay identity. Needless to say, his personal guilt feelings influenced his preference of the “noble lies” of Hellenist shame-and-honor culture over Judeo-Christian guilt culture. Another term that Winckelmann coined was *edle Einfalt, stille Größe* (noble simplicity and quiet magnitude)—which displays an

almost pious devotion to the visible world at the cost of the auditive. It is also a reference to Greek pride, the cardinal feature of shame culture. More accurate to my mind was his observation about Greek art as "unmarked" which is another word for impersonal or idealized in contrast to Roman republican art which we described as "marked": equally personal and realistic. Here we are in agreement with Winckelmann.

Winckelmann opines that the sculptures were "mute" meaning they cannot speak for themselves unless through attributes or in terms of group identities. His totally superficial perspective ignored the deeper empathy which in our experience of complementary emotions that usually flow from the missing auditive input. Informed by shared inner values, Winckelmann's denial of his own emotions is echoed today by Millennials, who are in denial of their celebration of sameness. It informed their resent mob performances such as when hundreds of them shouting and crying in unison over half an hour at Charles Murray, the distinguished sociologist [at Middlebury College](#) in Vermont. This only betrays their shame-and-honor credentials and the complete loss of empathy for the "other". In the same way Greeks in antiquity and Germans in the materialist 19th (culminating with the Nazis) tended not to reveal their personal inner feelings, rather replacing them with stereotyped group gestures or posturing. This is already present in Winckelmann's jargon which is full of "closed" protective nouns with rare use of open verbal expressions. This closed jargon of the German Hellenists is well known to have been suited for hiding personal emotions. It is for this reason that the Greeks identified with the lofty "true, beautiful and good" all of which together could not work in reality either. For the "true" has no place under the visible paradigm as for example in Greek concepts of reality which were marked by a split between "surface and depth" as observed

by Parmenides. The expression of pain that dominates the sculpture of Laocoön brings him close to the suffering of Christ, something that transcends Hellenism, which formally ended in 30 B.C.E.

Winckelmann also invented a new phallic-muscular style of prose consisting of a cyclic-hysteric performance: a “surging and decongestant flow of words.” It rid itself of structural elements or words meaningful in themselves by turning them in an equalizing series of elements into a semblance of causal chains. It is easy to identify his Greek credentials here. His style seems to be terrified by interpunction or separations, since he glorifies the Greek mix and incessant flow of words driven by the “horror vacui”—the nihilism of shame culture. Winckelmann certainly had no “inner self” or, more precisely, like most gender dysphorics, he fled for cover from his “bad” inner conscience and the voice of God. His idiosyncrasies revealed the typical pattern of the visual handicap: the feeling of being chased, which would become a paranoid feature of liberalism.

Psychosomatics of Shame

We might argue that psychosomatics was a genuine invention of the Greek shame culture, the case in point being the sculpture of Laocoön, which invokes the suffering of Jesus Christ. Jesus felt, just like Socrates, that he had to pay with his life for trying to tell the truth. Likewise, this seems to have inspired the artists from Rhodos who shaped Laocoön with the retrospective motive of “suffering for telling the truth” in a Christian fashion. This happened with the spread of guilt culture beyond the limits of Judaism, marked by the introduction of empathy. Winckelmann’s observation about

Laocoön as expressing “attenuated affect” is only true in a “psychosomatic” sense that overwhelming pain is extending from the facial expression and spread all over the body—an involuntary revelation in terms of shame culture. Yet this reckless visualization, also known under the epithet of late “Hellenistic baroque,” is not an “attenuation” in the eyes of the beholder; rather it becomes more shocking. It intensifies our pain when looking at it by speaking to our Christian empathy. This is missed by Winckelmann because he is fascinated more by the physical animation of the sculpture.

Winckelmann’s writings have been described as “granular” or “very dense and concise, close to being obscure,”[\[7\]](#) which betrays his censored, self-protective style driven by motives of shame—certainly congenial to his venerated ancient Greeks. For instance, describing Laocoön’s tortured facial expression as “sigh” would strike us as an understatement by Winckelmann. More appropriately we would conceive his face as “shocked” meaning he would be unable to cope; letting the magnitude of his emotions overflow into the body, since the brain alone could not cope with its intensity. This would be a classic case of “somatization” induced in the human experience when exposed to the crude powers of a visual shock. This effect was noticed in [Gotthold E. Lessing’s](#) famous essay on Laocoön of 1766. Without admitting it, Lessing drew heavily on Jonathan Richardson’s work “[Connoisseur](#)” of 1728, who introduced the principal distinction between the emotional effects of the shocking visual arts compared to the mollifying ways of poetry. He astutely observed that any narrative mitigates the shock of the visible experience as it embeds and relativizes it in the flow of time.

By comparison, spatial arts such as painting and sculpture do not offer us such relief exposing us to the acute moment of

mischievous which is depicted as the image of the “frozen moment.” Hence, the spread of psychosomatics can be blamed mostly on the marginalizing of the audible since the Renaissance and the ascent of the visual paradigm in modern Western history. Winckelmann may have gained valuable clues from Richardson too, whom he has studied intensely. Richardson was arguing that the rendering of the sculpture of Laocoön was “plus noble”— meaning less expressive and more restrained—than Vergil’s original narrative.[\[8\]](#) The narrative, he held, can be more expressive, even shocking because in turns it can hedge our emotions by relativizing the shock through context. This might be a fine explanation of the Trump effect on liberals. They are missing all their usual mollifying narratives for the Millennials, being increasingly uneducated, cannot be satisfied by grown up jargon and abstracts. They want everything to be related in broad redundant fashion Harry Potter-style. This demand for redundancy clearly reflects epistemological deficits on their part, the deflation of standards in the humanities, as well as the tyranny of modern visible culture reverting to shame culture.

The Greeks had to suppress the inner life by default because they let themselves be ruled by shame and visibility. This shows the vulnerabilities acquired by Millennials who dislike talk and are fond of “playing it cool.” It consists mainly in the constant roleplays of acting “as if,” which is drawn from Greek tragedy. Shame cultural settings imply that denial of truth is the best way for survival the spades of revenge and humiliation. For this they follow heroic types as personal templates, stereotyped as ideas and patterns of action. The only escape from this was somatization as expressions of hidden truths, which made medicine the most important contribution of Hellenism to modernity. In this way gender is little more than an escape route via medicalization, for only through gender reassignment surgery does their fiction become

organically manifest. This is about fostering cultural stereotypes through medicine and it panders to categorical groupism; and it is hostile to the divinely given and therefore unique person.

We can now see that shame cultures' preference of the plastic arts leaves individuals more irritable resulting either in somatization or in heinous acts of revenge because the visible paradigm is static and has only mirror thinking on offer for retribution. An altogether different matter is the guilt culture of Judaism with its protective image ban and firm reliance on language, negotiation, and flexible exchanges under the auditive paradigm. The benefit of the ascent from shame to guilt culture can be best described as the acquisition of personality or the inner self of moral Adam II in addition to the Greek outer self, known as Adam I. It gives us room for reflection, tolerance of the other, and interpersonal cooperation, all which makes for good resilience. Needless to say, guilt culture is the invention of Judaism and has its basis in the Torah or Old Testament.

At least the Greeks realized the danger of painting and preferred three-dimensional plastic art for something to hold on to. One of the rare Greek paintings that have been preserved into our times is [Timanthes](#) with his rendering of Agamemnon's [sacrificing his daughter Iphigenia](#). It is dated to the 4th century B.C.E. The suffering by Agamemnon, just as with Laocoön is so overwhelming, that it cannot be disclosed to the unassisted eye. The painter Timanthes must have been very well aware of the vulnerability of the Greek visible infatuation and therefore covered Agamemnon's head: the figure on the left side with a hood. Tradition informs us about the tragically misogynistic habits of the Greeks, as Agamemnon is said to have sacrificed his daughter merely for favourable

winds to be granted by the gods. This we learn from Euripides' play "Iphigenia in Aulis" which the artist spread on the bottom of the original painting, not available online, together with scrolls from Aeschylus und Sophocles who also wrote plays on Iphigenia as did Goethe. All this reminds us of the existential dependency of images on words, since only language carries human resilience and is better equipped for dealing with shocks.



The Sacrifice of Iphigenia, (original by Timanthes, 4th century B.C.E); here a Roman copy from 1st century B.C.E., discovered in Pompeii, now in the National Museum in Napoli.

This was later stressed by Cicero, when he argued that painting must be careful about dealing with horrible things in order not to pass the limits of decorum and decency.[\[9\]](#) This offers a perfect retrograde explanation for the Greek aversion to painting. Timanthes therefore abides to an aesthetic that avoids extreme suffering.[\[10\]](#)

The weakening of our resilience through extreme visual exposure seems to be a staple of the human condition, which is why we are seeing today vulnerable adolescents hiding their sights with hoods from the shocks delivered by the modern tyranny of visibility. The hood which is increasingly relied upon by young urban folks, more boys than girls for obvious reasons, is a good indicator for dwindling resilience. I would suggest that my concept of the depletion of resilience in shame cultural settings obsessed with visibility offers a good explanation for the return of modern hysteria among Millennials on campus. The other side of the same coin is the degeneration of verbal skills under regimes of liberal speech codes which leaves little room for expressing the truth.

Hysteria is but a bodily expression of anxiety and it also is evidence of a loss of personal composure. The term “snowflakes” for “cool” Millennials came into use because it properly describes their loss of resilience as a consequence of the strictures of PC and an illiteracy of the inner self. Like the ancient Greeks they find it extremely hard to admit any mistakes or weakness and thus have to resort to involuntary expressions of anguish such as hysteria. Like the same-sex avantgarde, to which they seem to look up with admiration, the Millennials have eclipsed their inner self and conscience and have put all their eggs in the basket of shifting outer “identities,” which have become increasingly negative under the umbrella of anti-discrimination or action *against* climate change. It is for this reason that they often experience panic driven by inner void.

The Millennials in their fragility as “snowflakes” are reminiscent of idealized centrifugal types. Jonathan Haidt, [in his recent Wriston-lecture\[11\]](#) at the Manhattan Institute, presented his project for spreading a heterodoxy of ideas on

campus. He called on professors at US campuses to attempt to collectively redress the problems of PC by reversing the liberal bias toward a “centrifugal” (visual) orientation. Well, as far as history informs us, this would be possible only if we return to the classical “centripetal” (auditive) values such as family, nation and religion. Well, that I think is precisely what the Trump presidency is all about anyway.

[1]

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/01/19/exclusive-child-ren-young-four-offered-highly-addictive-casino/>.

[2] <https://www.crisismagazine.com/2018/an-uncertain-sound>.

[3]

<https://www.city-journal.org/html/truth-behind-trump-storm-15676.html>.

[4] Martin Mosebach: “The Heresy of Formlessness,” 2008.

[5] Bernhard Starr: “Jesus Uncensored—Restoring the Authentic Jew,” NYC: 2013.

[6] Ernst H. Gombrich: “The Story of Art,” 1950.

[7] Helmut Pfotenhauer, Vortrag “250 Jahre Winckelmann,” Stendal: 2006, S. 16.

[8]

See:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8365.1984.tb00127.x/abstract>.

[9] Helmut Pfotenhauer: 250 Jahre Winckelmanns “Gedanken über die Nachahmung“, Vortrag, Stendal: 2006, S. 6.

[\[10\]](#) Pfortenhauer, a.a.O.S.8.

[\[11\]](#)

<https://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/2017-wriston-lecture-age-outrage-10779.html>.

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