12-2017

Aristotle, Redemption, and the Conquest of the Americas

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ARISTOTLE, REDEMPTION, AND THE CONQUEST OF THE AMERICAS

A Thesis

by

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Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

December 2017

Major Subject: History

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December 2017

ABSTRACT

Buentello, Luis Angel, Aristotle, Redemption, and the Conquest of the Americas. Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (M.A.I.S.), December, 2017, 148 pp., references, 34 titles.

The central question addressed in my thesis is the claim that even though the conquest of the Americas by the Spaniards was a brutal and murderous process, the Spanish imperial project in the Americas, based on Aristotelian ideology, resulted in the most beneficial and least harmful form of conquest conceivable in comparison to the next great empire of the age, the British Empire.

The founding pillars of Spain's overseas empire in the Americas, based on an Aristotelian framework, produced a synthesis of political thinking that brought about greater benefits to the native populations, and slave populations, subsumed under the Spanish banner of imperialism compared to the British counterpart a century thereafter. The Spanish Empire model was the epitome of overseas imperial building during the Age of Exploration.

DEDICATION

The completion of my master's studies would not have been possible without the daily support of my family. My father, Luciano Buentello, and my mother, Dorotea Lopez de Buentello, kept me motivated to complete this degree. My father instilled in me the ability to discern the value of achievements in order to forge a more prosperous future based on our innate capacities. My mother, a hundred times more creative than I could ever hope of becoming, taught me to use my creative abilities to my full potential. Never in my lifetime could I ever repay them for all the love, understanding, and friendship that they have given me. If I were to live my life with my father and mother over and over until the end of time, over and over, until the end of time, were I to live my life with my father and mother. I love you.

Life is what happens when we are busy making our own plans. Oftentimes we may not notice the small building blocks that form our individual stories. But life has a way of making us pause from time to time to reevaluate our existence. Events, people, and emotions come and go with the passing of time, until only an autumn of memories is what remains. I will always be thankful for those moments that make us pause and reflect on our legacy and help us dream of what we can give to posterity. I will always reach into my autumn of memories so that I may find the right event, the right person, or the right emotion, that will help me continue forward until my autumn becomes a peaceful winter.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I will always be thankful to Dr. Irving W. Levinson for having taken me under his tutelage to produce a master's thesis, and for whole-heartedly having accepted to be the chair of my thesis committee. He worked tirelessly to keep me motivated to read what seemed an endless stack of books, and always made time to answer my questions, whether they be academic or general inquiries about life. I am equally thankful to my thesis committee members: Dr. Gregory Gilson, and Dr. Thomas Pearson. Their advice, commentary, and dedication helped to guarantee that my work would be of substance and quality.

I would also like to extend a warm thank you to Dr. Charles Waite for welcoming me into his office whenever I stopped by to say hello, unscheduled, just to have a conversation about a myriad of topics that may, or may not, have been related to academia. Hook 'em Horns!

In the same spirit of gratitude, I would like to thank all my graduate professors for helping me each step of the way to become a better scholar and a better person overall. Likewise, I thank my fellow graduate peers for making our graduate school years worth a lifetime of memories and friendships. May you all succeed in making our world a better place.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"I will not allow the Athenians to sin twice against philosophy," stated a gray-haired 61 year-old man, with determination in his aging face. His protégé, the would-be master of the known world whom he had tutored since he was a boy of thirteen years old, Alexander the Great, was dead. The year was 323 B.C.E. in the Hellenic world. Under Alexander, Macedonia had conquered its' enemies, and ruled an empire that stretched from the Indian subcontinent westward across through the golden sands of old Persia and ancient Egypt, and northward across the Mediterranean towards the Greek world. The passing of Alexander signaled the end of the height of the Hellenic world, its culture, its philosophy, its learning, its empire. Alexander's generals would soon war against each to fill the void left by their master. As Alexander's empire fell apart, once conquered lands rebelled against Macedonian power, and those close to it. Greece was one of those lands.

Athens held strong anti-Macedonian sentiments. As the old man saw these events unfold, he chose to leave Athens and head towards Chalcis, on the island of Euboea. Like a prophet driven from his own land, the old man arrived at his destination to avoid Athenian persecution, like they had done against his predecessors in learning, Anaxagoras and Socrates.[1] There, one year later on the island of Euboea in 323 B.C., the old man would also pass away at the age of 62. He dedicated his entire life to learning and teaching, as a gifted youth in Plato's Academy,

[1] Julian Marias, History of Philosophy, 60.

engaging in debates with Plato himself, to the founding of his own school, the Lyceum, as a rival school to that of his old master. His works laid the foundations for many academic disciplines such as biology, logic, physics, economics, zoology, and ethics, to name a few. His influence would be immeasurable for generations to come. In posterity, he would be known as "the master of those who know."[2] This old man was Aristotle, or, quite simply, "the Philosopher."[3]

Throughout the millennia, Aristotle's ideas would be in constant competition with those of his teacher Plato. Arguably, however, Aristotle, not Plato, was the philosopher to guide the foundation of the early modern world, along with the first empire of modernity, the Spanish Empire under King Fernando II de Aragón and Queen Isabel de Castilla. It was an Aristotelian framework that bridged the Old World and the New World in 1492 A.D. He was the father of international relations that were born in that era at the hands of his intellectual heirs at the legendary School of Salamanca. Indeed, Aristotle's framework in his political philosophy was the very cornerstone used to determine international relations between Europeans and the inhabitants of the Americas.

But apart from being the dominant master of the first modern European empire, Aristotle was much more than that, for it was thanks to these Aristotelian principles that the most benevolent and beneficial form of empire was achieved by Imperial Spain in its conquest of the Americas. To prove these points, a comparison of Imperial Spain will be laid out against the next major historical empire, that it, the nascent British Empire a century thereafter. Perhaps it can be said that the 115 years, or so, that separate the origins of Imperial Spain and Imperial Britain pose an unfair comparison between the two, but it is not necessarily true that such a comparison

[2] This phrase is attributed to Dante Alighieri.

[3] For Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle was simply "the Philosopher."

is unfair, for there are similarities and contrasts that allow for a subjective examination of the foundations of both empires.

In order to understand the emerging connections between the Old World and the New World, it is necessary to look at the works of Aristotle himself, especially his *Politics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, and *Metaphysics*, and analyze the chain of studies, commentaries, and influences (for instance, in the writings of Thomas Aquinas and Francisco de Vitoria) that came about after his death until the very advent of Spain as a global empire, for only then will the primacy of Aristotle be understood for the development of the early, modern world.

The pinnacle of Aristotle's role as philosopher of Imperial Spain begins, arguably, with the end of the Spanish *Reconquista* in 1492 and ends with the foundation of Jamestown in 1607. The chain of events that culminates in Jamestown in 1607 bridges different eras, challenges social institutions, and links ancient history with the origins of the Spanish Empire in 1492. After having established beyond doubt that Imperial Spain carried out its conquest of the Americas following Aristotelian principles, it will be proven that such Aristotelian principles culminated in the ideal foundations for establishing the best available alternative for organizing an overseas colonial system compared to the British model.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE CLASSICAL WORLD TO 15th CENTURY SPAIN

Aristotle's works have been controversial, influencing philosophers, politicians, poets, artists, musicians, economists, scientists, in their own studies. Along with his teacher Plato, and Plato's teacher Socrates, Aristotle is part of most famous succession of philosophers in history. Only Plato's teachings rival those of Aristotle, with each influencing different generations throughout western history. After Aristotle's death in 322 B.C.E., Greek thought and culture found a new direction in the post-Hellenic world. New schools of thought emerged, such as Stoicism under its founder Zeno of Elea with its central view of living a life of virtue and strict service to others; Epicureanism, named after Epicurus, and its philosophy of hedonism, indulging in life's pleasures and avoiding pain; and Cynicism under Antisthenes and its rejection of social conventions. These schools of thought, one way or another, had Socratic roots for their founders had known or studied under Socrates and Plato. Their interests, however, were mainly over questions of right behavior, or ethics, and therefore ignored the larger framework that incorporated metaphysical doctrines into the ethical teachings of Plato and Aristotle. It would not be until the high Middle Ages and early modern period that Plato's and Aristotle's political writings would surface once again and pit empire against empire, chancellor against chancellor, king against king.

For years during the dawn of the Roman Empire of the 2nd century B.C.E., Aristotle's and Plato's metaphysics gave place of prominence to their ethical teachings. Metaphysics is a word of Greek origin that simply means "after the physics," and referred originally to the fact that after Aristotle wrote his work the *Physics*, a work came out afterwards called the *Metaphysics* which dealt with questions of nature and ultimate reality. This questioning of what constitutes ultimately reality came to be referred to as metaphysics. For centuries, the Roman Empire was not concerned with metaphysical speculation. However, all that changed with the advent of Christianity as the official religion of the empire, and Plotinus' fusion of Platonic and Aristotelian thought in a new synthesis called Neoplatonism during the 3rd century C.E. Whereas the schools of thought that came after the death of Aristotle competed with each other in teaching the correct way of living, Plotinus saw them as far away from the true teachings of Plato as they possibly could. Plotinus started with Plato's dialogues in order to uncover the truth about life. But Plotinus was also knowledgeable about Aristotle's teachings. In a moment of brilliance, he combined Platonic mysticism with Aristotelian materialism.

In his most metaphysical work, the *Timaeus*, Plato presents a vision of the nature of the universe, its creation, its order, and structure. The revelations in the *Timaeus* expound the Platonic teachings of the One, the Ideal, the Eternal. Here, one encounters the influence of Pythagoreanism and the highest level of metaphysics. Take for instance an idea, e.g. numbers, as the starting point. Numbers by nature are immaterial, ideas that exist in the imagination. As numbers progress from 1,2,3, etc., one sees a logical order to this immaterial existence; that is, something that is not part of the material, physical existence, has order and structure. Thus, the logical extension of this Platonic principle is that an ordered, immaterial reality exists that is separate from material existence. Centuries later during the early Enlightenment era, thinkers

such as Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton would discover that the material universe is governed by physical laws, thus giving more authority to Plato's mysticism.

But Plato does not stop with his account in the *Timaeus*. In his *Republic*, Plato applies his metaphysical concepts of reality to a political framework, a framework that would differ dramatically with the framework developed by Aristotle in his *Politics*, the work that would radically affect the destiny of millions with the rise of the first modern European intercontinental power, the Spanish Empire of the 16th century.

In one of the most memorable chapters of the *Republic*, (chapter VII) Plato has the character of Socrates narrate the myth of the cave. Imagine that inside a cave a group of people are tied up facing a wall, writes Plato. Behind these people is a raging fire. The light of this fire is used by their captors to cast shadows on the wall that the people are seeing. These shadows are a manipulation of the captors (masters) over the captives (slaves). By manipulating the images, the masters are able to show the slaves what they want them to see, thus manipulating the reality that the captives are perceiving. In terms of politics, this allows the captors (the few) to conquer the captives (the many) and control their lives. Thus it is in politics, as seen with the Athenians during Plato's own lifetime.

When Socrates (Plato's teacher) was unjustly condemned by the Athenian government on charges of corrupting the youth, not honoring the gods of the state, and inventing new gods, he was found guilty and sentenced to death by drinking hemlock in 399 B.C.E. Plato became deeply disillusioned with Athenian democracy. The masses of a democracy cannot grasp the truth, like Socrates had done, and for this he had been executed. Thus Plato chose to remove himself into a life of searching for the truth, in the spirit of his own teacher. It would not be until Plato met Pythagoras that he would find a second father figure. With the teachings of Pythagoreanism,

Plato became deeply steeped into the mysticism of numbers and mathematical proportions. The *Republic* is arguably a product of this profound synthesis of a Socratic worldview and Pythagorean metaphysics.

Pythagorean mathematics revealed to Plato the innate, eternal structure of reality, a reality that does not change, that is governed by mathematical laws. These eternal structures are what Plato called the Forms. Plato's theory of Forms plays a crucial role in chapter VII of the *Republic* and the myth of the cave. Plato expands the myth of the cave to encompass society at large, with the captors representing those in power and the captives representing the masses in chains seeing a manipulated reality by the captors. The only way to understand the higher truth, the eternal reality, is to escape from this pit of darkness and shadows out into the light of philosophy and understanding, as is the case with one of captives in cave. This captive was able to escape from the cave and see the light of truth and contemplate it.

Upon understanding actual existence, this captive returns to the cave to tell his fellow captives everything that he had witnessed. Understandably, his fellow captives thought him mad and delusional, for the only reality, the one they had always known, was before their very eyes. He offered them truth and understanding, yet he was rejected because the captives (the masses) did not understand what he was talking about. As long as the captives remained chained in the cave, they will only see imperfect, decaying copies of the actual forms. Thus, in Platonic teaching, material reality was itself an imperfect copy of the eternal Forms that are governed by the One.

With this myth, it is not hard to find a connection to the democratic masses of Athens, for unjustly executing Socrates. From this experience, Plato places democracy as the fourth worst form of government, just above tyranny, in his *Republic*. Freedom is the enemy of order and

structure, has Plato had witnessed in Athens. In order to combat it, a strong monarchy, headed by philosopher-kings, was needed, and the rest of society was to be ordered according to determined principles. Since the philosopher-kings have knowledge of the Forms and the eternal, they are most prepared to guide society and legislate the laws for this utopia of order. However, the cost for this achievement was freedom and liberty of will, an idea that appalled Plato's best student, Aristotle.

Aristotle recognized that the work of his teacher was a near impossibility to achieve in actuality. As the son of a doctor, Aristotle had learned the value of observation and practicality over theorizing. As a response to Plato's profound teachings in the *Republic*, Aristotle wrote the *Politics*, an empirical work based on actual observation and study of several types of governments throughout Greece, arguably, the work of political philosophy that began the school of thought grounded in realpolitik. Whereas Plato's *Republic* offered an ideal utopian government based on theory, Aristotle chose to focus on what is available to work with and built his *Politics* around this notion. But it would not be until the 13th century in Europe that Aristotle's *Politics* would come to the foreground of practical governmental institutions at the national and international level.

As aforementioned, Plato was not the only thinker to whom Plotinus is greatly indebted. Plotinus owes an equally large debt to Aristotle, especially to his *Metaphysics*. From this work, Plotinus borrowed Aristotle's "built-in-scale for ordering all reality."[4] In chapter six in Book XII of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle states that every motion must have been caused by something other than itself. It is here where Aristotle introduces the notion of an invisible Prime Mover as the original creator of all motion in the universe. Aristotle affirmed that it was "necessary that there

[4] Arthur Herman, *The Cave and the Light: Plato Versus Aristotle, and the Struggle for the Soul of Western Civilization* (New York: Random House Trade, 2013), 139.

should be an eternal unmovable substance."[5] This primary substance "is something that moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality."[6] After the primary substance

> comes the visible but imperishable realm of the planets and heavens. Next comes the realm of substances, informed matter, starting with man, then animate animals and inanimate plants, followed by the inorganic world of rocks, dirt, and water, as Aristotle's life-giving, purpose-giving form gradually loses out to matter.[7]

The genius of Plotinus lays in bringing the eternal power of Plato's world of Forms trickling down through Aristotle's chain of being, thus combining Platonic metaphysics with Aristotelian materialism. The life force emanating from Being-Itself flows downward through the Chain of Being into the very atoms that form the universe.

Living things such as mankind and animals are between Being-Itself and prime matter, the lowest form in Aristotle's metaphysical system, partaking of both things. The soul, says Plotinus, is part of the eternal life force, while man's body is part of the prime matter. All this movement of life energy, transcending from the eternal, the perfect, the One, down to the smallest speck of dust, was felt through the World Soul. The World Soul is the life giving energy that flows throughout the world. For Plotinus, this was the way out of the cave. During the same time that Plotinus was expounding his own teachings of Neoplatonism, another way of thinking was offering a similar conclusion: Christianity.

Christianity offered to the masses what the select few at Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum were learning. To the Greco-Roman world, the teachings of Christianity were almost identical to the framework provided by Plato in his dialogues. What Plato had expounded through intellect, Christianity preached through faith. Thus, the Christian faith was equally respectable, intellectually speaking, as the highest truths of Platonic teaching. The eternal God of

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[5] Aristotle, "Metaphysics," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 2001), 877.
[6] Ibid., 879.
[7] Arthur Herman, *The Cave and the Light*, 139.

the Christian faith seemed as the same eternal, the One, in Plato's *Timaeus*. Plato's ancient authority became fused with the revealed religion of Christianity.

As Aristotle's teachings became lost to the west more and more, Plato's metaphysics seemed to enjoy a place of prominence in the advent of Christianity. In fact, Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in the first decades of the 5th century C.E., was of the mind that Plato's philosophy came closest to the revelations of the Christian faith, and that if having been given the chance, he would have been a Christian.

During Augustine's lifetime, the unimaginable was happening. The Roman Empire was en route to falling apart, and 46 years after Augustine's death, the last Roman Emperor of the West (Romulus Augustulus) would be dethroned in 476 C.E. This, historically speaking, signaled the definitive end of the Greco-Roman world, of old institutions and customs, and the start of a new civilization. Ironically, 1,055 years later, a man dressed in Augustinian robes, Martin Luther, would be the one to bring about a new social revolution in the midst of the Holy Roman Empire under Charles V, challenging social norms, political and religious power, and questioning Aristotle's authority in the social institutions throughout the imperial realm, reaching all the way to the New World.

For more than 600 years, beginning with the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 C.E., Platonism and Christianity went hand in hand, that is, until Aristotle's works were re-introduced into the western world by Arab scholars. Arab thinkers, such as Avicenna and Averroes, wrote extensive commentaries on the works of Aristotle, including his *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. These works slowly made their way to Western Europe during the height of the Middle Ages as the Islamic Empire spread from the Middle East into Europe. However, it can be asked, if Aristotle's corpus of works were lost or forgotten for over 600 years, how is it

possible that he was the dominant intellectual figure destined to guide Imperial Spain? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to look at the history, events, thinkers, that lived and worked during these clouded years, these middle ages.

The Philosopher's Last Words to the West

Rome, the Eternal City, fell to the invading Vandals in 410 A.D. The Romans thought that Rome would never fall from its glory. But the year 410 A.D. proved to be a turning point in world history. The world itself seemed to be falling apart, with people seeking answers for what to do or what to believe in henceforth. Pagan Roman turned against Christian Roman, claiming that the meekness and unpatriotic-ness of the latter had brought the downfall of mighty Rome. The old, pagan gods had abandoned Rome due to the introduction of the Christian God who asked to seek him loyally rather than offer loyalty to the Roman state. If the Christian God was the one true God, how could he have allowed the destruction and sacking of Rome? Romans sought answers. One bishop, Aurelius Augustinus, known today as Saint Augustine, dared to provide them during these times of darkness. Augustine's response resulted in his massive work the *City of God*. Augustine's most famous passage in this work, arguably, is his explanation of the downfall of Rome through Platonic metaphysical dualism.

In Book XI of his *City of God*, Augustine lays his teaching on the two of types cities, one heavenly (metaphysical) and one earthly (material). (Platonic metaphysics become virtually indistinguishable from Christian theology in Augustine's argument regarding this point.) As an earthly and material city, Rome was bound to decay, change, and corruption, as per Christian and Platonic teaching. Rome was but an imperfect copy, a shadow, of the perfect form of a city found in the heavenly realm of the everlasting and unchanging. The stability, peace, and happiness,

provided by Rome were, too, but imperfect ideas that trickled down from the unchangeable realm of invisible and perfect order. Thus, not only did Christian theology confirm Augustine's teaching, but Plato's ancient, pagan authority was also supportive of this explanation of Augustine. As Augustine's time came and went, and the fall of the Western Roman Empire gave way to new Roman-Germanic institutions, Plato's philosophy had reached a place of honor in Christian thinking, while Aristotle's name and legacy had become clouded and almost entirely forgotten, almost, if not for the efforts of one Roman during the early decades of the 6th century A.D.

Marcus Anicius Severinus Boethius, or better known as Boethius, came from a prominent and ancient Roman family. As he contemplated the post-Imperial Roman world around him, he realized that "classical learning… was disappearing in the western lands formerly governed by Rome."[8] For Boethius, "the decline of the old educated aristocracy and a widening cultural rift dividing the Greek East from the Latin West [meant that] the sort of education he … had enjoyed was becoming a rarity."[9] This meant a catastrophe for the western world, for it implied the loss of disciplines on which Greek thinkers had written, such as mathematics, medicine, engineering, and philosophy. Educated Romans were fluent in Latin and Greek and therefore there was no need to translate works between the two languages. But with the end of the Western Roman Empire, classical learning was on the brink of disappearing. Boethius contemplated the impending digression, and resolved to avert it. He declared to himself, "I will translate into Latin every work of Aristotle that comes into my hands, and all the dialogues of Plato."[10] In addition, he vowed to include the works of Neoplatonists, such as Plotinus, to his translation endeavors.

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8 Richard E. Rubenstein, *Aristotle's Children: How Christians, Muslims, and Jews Rediscovered Ancient Wisdom and Illuminated the Dark Ages*, 1st ed., (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 2003), 61.

9 Ibid., 61.

10 Ibid., 62.

Despite his ministerial responsibilities to the court of the Gothic King Theodoric, Boethius "managed to translate the six books of Aristotelian logic known as the *Organon*, as well as treatises on logic by Cicero and the influential Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry."[11] Besides these translations, Boethius also produced five original commentaries on Aristotle's works, a "number of important essays using Greek philosophical techniques to defend Christian doctrines, and several short texts on subjects basic to the classical curriculum – arithmetic, music and astronomy."[12] Boethius, in addition, included an original masterpiece, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, written while being imprisoned by Theodoric under suspicions of betrayal. Taken together, the "translations and essays of Boethius, along with two or three short summaries by other writers and a compendium of texts by Cassiodorus[13], would be all that the West would know of Greek philosophy."[14] Thus, Aristotle's works on logic as interpreted by Boethius were to become part of posterity in Western Europe. Boethius' career as Master of Offices under Theodoric came to an end in 524 A.D. when Theodoric had him imprisoned on charges of conspiracy to overthrow his rule.

Because of his efforts, it was thanks to Boethius that Aristotle's thought did not disappear entirely from Western Europe, thereby safeguarding the philosopher's everlasting link to 15th and 16th century Imperial Spain. But while Boethius secured one of the pillars that would later support Spain's colonial project in the Americas, it was Isidoro de Sevilla, during the early 7th century, who established the other pillar upon which Spain's conquest of the Americas came to be realized: the establishment of the Catholic Church as a major force in Spain.

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Along with Boethius, Cassiodorus was a junior and fellow Roman aristocrat tasked with serving Theodoric as chief speechwriter and propagandist.

14 Ibid., 63.

Isidoro was born in Cartagena in 556 A.D. His father and mother passed away when Isidoro was still a child. His oldest brother, Leandro, took over the raising and education of his younger siblings. Both Leandro and Isidoro entered the priesthood, with Leandro acting as the example for Isidoro to follow. Before long, Leandro became the bishop of Sevilla while Isidoro became the abbot of a monastery. Leandro was renown for his intellect and political wisdom, especially within the circle of the Gothic king Leovigildo. On his deathbed, Leovigildo told his son Recaredo that in Leandro he had a trusted advisor. Because of the good will between Leandro and Recaredo, Recaredo established peace with the Catholic Church within his Gothic domains. In 587 A.D., shortly before the death of the old king Leovigildo, Recaredo declared himself a Catholic. Because of his actions, Leandro would dare say that Recaredo was a new Constantine, come to defend the church of Christ during those turbulent times of chaos and widespread uncertainty. Isidoro watched as his brother Leandro took the first steps in establishing a united front between the Church and the state.

While Leandro was entangled with affairs of state, Isidoro was starting to make his own name by defending the Catholic faith with his pen and actions against heresies and false "monastic" groups. One of these groups were the *Circunceliones*, professional vagabonds that travelled across the lands telling their fake tales of their saintly lives so as to capture the attention of townfolk. They sold common bones as the relics of saints and martyrs in order to cheat the people, and did so going from town to town. However, Isidoro knew that this was a symptom of the times, of the massive confusion pervading clerical order and organization. Isidoro set out to fix this problem, to write, explain and model the proper organization that the Catholic faith was to follow.

As an abbot, Isidoro was well versed in the writings of Augustine, Jerome, Hillary, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Eusebius, and others. He relied on this long line of Apostolic tradition, and the Bible, to compose his works on the proper organization for church administration. As a teacher, furthermore, Isidoro was well read in the works of the Roman satirist Juvenal, the lawyer Cicero, the dramatist Terrance, the poet Catullus, the Stoic philosopher Seneca, and other luminary Greeks and Romans. One of those Greek luminaries was Aristotle. Since by the time of Boethius (writing two generations before Isidoro) the ethical and political works of Aristotle had been forgotten in the West, Isidoro became an ardent admirer of the philosopher through his *Organon*, that is, Aristotle's works on logic. Armed with the immense knowledge of the Judeo-Greco tradition, and the theological-philosophical framework of the Christian-Roman era, Isidoro set out to re-shape the organization of Catholicism within Spain. He even started his own revision of the Bible, putting his massive linguistic skills to use and pouring over ancient codex of scripture and commentaries, but in this endeavor, he relied heavily on the biblical translation of St. Jerome.

In May 599 A.D., Leandro passed away; Isidoro took his place as bishop of Sevilla. Herein is the start of Isidoro's program of Catholic reform on a massive scale. On top of Isidoro's list was the reformation to have qualified clergy, from priests all the way to fellow bishops. For Isidoro, education was everything, and proper instruction in the Catholic faith relied on having a properly educated clergy to administer the rites and sacraments. This was his cornerstone to fight the ignorance that was widespread across Gothic Spain. In fact, his work the *Etymologiae*, is a thesaurus of Greek and Latin vocabulary designed to impart knowledge on the ancient meaning of Greco-Roman vocabulary. It was not before long that word of Isidoro's reforms were gaining fame across the lands, and simultaneously, his fame grew as an educator

and teacher. As bishop, he even presided over ecclesiastical conflicts involving clergy members and laymen alike.

The reforms written by Isidoro were put into practice across Sevilla and ten other dioceses that were under his supervision. His reforms, slowly, were re-organizing the Catholic faith in Gothic Spain, with the approval of the Gothic Catholic King Recaredo. In fact, Isidoro, at this point, preferred the company of Goths to that of Byzantines, being wary of the intentions of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian. Education, however, was Isidoro's life mission. Apart from his *Etymologiae*, Isidoro produced his massive work *Hispana*, which was a collection of papal epistles, observations on clerical organization, ecclesiastical council judgments, letters regarding the proper conducts of priests and bishops and other church members, canon laws, and translations from Greek, African, Hebraic, and Roman documents.

On that morning on December 5, 633 A.D., the mist was still set over the early dawn of day. Noblemen and church officials, high and low ranking members alike, arrived at the city of Toledo to take part in the Fourth Council of Toledo. The presiding member would be Isidoro himself. King Recaredo, along with his attendants, would be present as well. It was at this council that the spheres of Church and State began to cross and become blurred. Isidoro's political thought was that Church and State should work together to safeguard the commonwealth of the nation.

Isidoro was fervently Catholic and Spanish, one and the same. The Church and the state needed, in his opinion, to reflect the same unison. As the council attendants listened and debated the ideas being presented, one by one, each dignitary agreed to the passing of reforms to form a new Gothic Spain unified with Church and State under one banner. At the end of the Fourth Council of Toledo, Isidoro felt that he had finally achieved his goal of safeguarding Spain by

having the Church and the State work side by side. At this point, Isidoro knew that his life would not last much longer. He lived his last years in a monastery and prepared himself to meet the Creator. It was on April 4, 636 A.D., that Isidoro breathed his last in his beloved Sevilla.

The contribution of Leandro and Isidoro is of prime importance to Spanish history. Leandro established the first steps upon which Isidoro built. Leandro and Recaredo formed the closeness between Church and State, while Isidoro brought the framework for reform on a national scale. The Catholic Church in Spain had been established as a dominant political institution at the end of 633 A.D.

But, as history shows, peace and prosperity do not last. Unbeknownst to Gothic Catholic Spain, a new challenge was about to come forth from the South through North Africa, a challenge that would last for more than 700 years under the banner of a quarter moon and a star, and ancient Hispania had less than 80 years to prepare for the invasion.

The Light from the East

While Aristotle's works on logic survived in the West, the rest of his philosophical works, and influence, were in the process of transforming the mystical lands of the East. The story of how Aristotle's works reached the East, and eventually back to Europe, is the stuff of legend. The year is 529 A.D. in Athens. The Byzantine Emperor Justinian has ordered the formal closing of Plato's Academy, the blueprint, arguably, of today's universities. Through the doors of the Academy passed the greatest minds of classical Athens, driven by their insatiable appetite for learning and discovery. But the Academy shall never see a new generation of pupils and masters pass through its doors. Militant Christianity had finally succeeded in silencing Lady Philosophy, or so it seemed.

Around three hundred years before the decree of Emperor Justinian to close the Academy, the Christian writer Tertullian had stated that "philosophical speculation had become an aid to heretics and an inflamer of disputes among Christians."[15] By the time of Emperor Justinian, fierce arguments regarding theology and orthodox Christian teaching had become life-threatening for supporters on all sides. The intolerance for dissenting views had forced Greek and Christian thinkers alike to migrate further east to the lands of ancient Mesopotamia and Persia. Just as Greek culture had been transferred to Rome, now Hellenic culture and learning had been forced to seek shelter in the home of the ancient lords Hammurabi, Sargon, Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes. This is how, in the 7th century, Greek learning entered the Persian and Arab worlds.

Among the refugees seeking shelter in the East, two groups of Christians, Nestorians and Monophysites, carried with them manuscripts of Greek learning and wisdom. Their plight is strangely eerie to that of the survivors during the burning of the Library of Alexandria, once a shining beacon of knowledge in the Hellenic world. The Nestorians "who were famous linguists, had already translated much of Greek philosophy… into Syriac, the lingua franca spoken in Syria and Mesopotamia… and now into Persian."[16] During the 7th century, the expanding Muslim Empire from Saudi Arabia invaded the old lands of Mesopotamia and ancient Persia. The Muslim lords "asked the Nestorians to help them translate the famous books of wisdom into Arabic… and [they] were glad to comply."[17] And so it also happened in Alexandria, Damascus, and Antioch, where Arab forces came upon the works of Greek philosophers written in Syriac and Coptic. Through this new, vast attainment of Greek philosophy, Muslim scholars were

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15 Ibid., 77.
16 Ibid., 78.
17 Ibid.

bringing forth a new synthesis of Aristotelian, Platonic, and Islamic thought, a synthesis called *falsafah*.

As Muslims continued to expand their empire towards the West, it was through them that Europe recovered the forgotten works of Aristotle and other Greek philosophers. By 643 A.D., Muslim forces had taken Alexandria and slowly marched across North Africa, spreading their faith and culture in their new territories. In 711 A.D., Moorish forces (Muslims from northwestern Africa), engaged Christian forces in battle at Rio Barbate, southwest from the city of Cordoba in the region of Cádiz in Spain. In that same year, the Moors won major victories throughout the region, including battles in the cities of Ecija, Jerez de la Frontera, and Cordoba. A year later, the city of Toledo fell to the Muslim armies. In 713 A.D., the city of Segoyuela in western Spain and Zaragoza in the east followed suit. Only the region of Asturias held firm under Christian control by 718 A.D. The Muslim juggernaut seemed unstoppable, until 732 A.D. when forces of the Frankish Empire dealt a definitive halt to the forces of Islam at the Battle of Tours. However, the new Moorish lords brought with them more than just conquest.

In 756 A.D., Moorish Spain became the Cordoba Caliphate, ruled by a dynasty that would last almost 800 years until 1492 A.D. During the era of Moorish Spain, new contributions and discoveries in the sciences, mathematics, medicine, and philosophy, would reshape Western Europe once again. The Moors introduced Western Europe to Arabic numerals (originally from India). Algebra found its way into mathematics. The use of the astrolabe became widespread. In the 12th century, long awaited, philosophy would re-emerge once again through the re-introduction of Aristotle's thought from Arabic translations into Latin. But the rediscovery of Aristotle's lost works would cause a major struggle between faith and reason that would forever change the socio-political atmosphere of Europe. The rediscovery of Aristotle's works in

Moorish Spain came about as the efforts of one man in particular during the times of the Spanish *Reconquista*, the Archbishop of Toledo Raymund I.

The Spain of Raymund I may have seemed like a scene from the glorious age of Alexandrian Egypt where scholars from the East and West ploughed through scrolls seeking knowledge from diverse disciplines. It was Raymund's idea "to create a translation center in Toledo and to recruit the best scholars available to work there, whether they be Christian, Jew, Muslim, Latin, Greek, or Slav."[18] The result was an astonishing scene of utopian cooperation working to achieve and classify knowledge between sages of different faiths, races, languages, and nationalities. This citadel of knowledge was the very cathedral under Raymund I. There, "bearded Jews, tonsured Christian monks, turbaned Muslims, and dark-haired Greeks"[19] worked side by side translating manuscripts and scrolls from Syriac into Aramaic, from Arabic into Hebrew, or Greek into Latin.

These polyglot scholars translated the original works of long forgotten sages such as the Greek physician Galen and his *Art of Healing*, Ptolemy's *Almagest*, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, his *Nicomachean Ethics*, *On the Heavens*, *History of Animals*, *On Generation and Corruption*, and his *Politics*. In addition to these lost works, the scholars at Toledo had the advantage of reading the vast corpus of commentary on Aristotle by Muslim and Jewish thinkers such as the founder of Muslim Neoplatonism Al-Farabi, the Persian Ibn Sina (Avicenna), the Cordoban Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides and his fellow Cordoban Muslim intellectual Ibn Rushd (known as Averroës). The commentaries of these scholars would prove invaluable for the translators at Toledo, for it would provide them with guidance for interpreting Aristotle's teachings where they came into conflict with orthodox Christianity. Judaism, Christianity, and

[18] Ibid., 17.
[19] Ibid., 12.

Islam share the same belief in the same God, the God of Abraham. Jewish and Muslim scholars had wrestled with Aristotle's propositions long before the Christian scholars involved in the translation project at Toledo. They had produced vast commentaries and treatises that lineated classical thinking towards their own commitment to a monotheistic faith.

However, not all archbishops or Christian thinkers were as enthusiastic about welcoming Aristotle's pagan philosophy to the same level of integrity as orthodox Christianity. In fact, embracing Aristotle's formal logic to scrutinize the higher mysteries of Jewish, Christian, or Islamic teaching could be the end of a prestigious career as a scholastic thinker. But the appeal of applying Aristotle's reasoning to understand revealed religion proved too tempting for scholastic thinkers during the 11th and 12th centuries, an appeal deemed atrocious for committed believers. It must be noted, however, that returning Aristotle to Europe was far from being the only debt to Muslims. Their influence was far from over, an influence that would flourish with the discovery of a new world across the Atlantic.

The Master of Logic

Around 1100 A.D., the Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm, the greatest logician of his generation, embraced Aristotelian reasoning to find another path towards the truths of orthodox Christianity. Arguably, this was a major step towards the merging of Aristotelian logic with Catholic teaching, hailed by many and condemned by others. As a devout Christian, Anselm did not doubt the existence of God. What he doubted was if logical reasoning itself could come to the same conclusion as belief. In a form of personal mediation, Anselm wrote in his *Proslogion* such logical proof demonstrating the existence of God. His proof has become one of the most

controversial pieces of philosophy and theology ever written known as *Anselm's Ontological Argument*. Anselm's argument runs as follows:

Proposition 1: There is an idea of a Being than which nothing greater can be conceived.

Proposition 2: Since it is possible to conceive of such a Being, it follows that such a being exists in the understanding.

Proposition 3: It is possible to conceive of such a Being existing outside of the understanding, for existing outside of the understanding is greater than existing only in the understanding.

Proposition 4: Thus, a Being than which something greater cannot be conceived must exist outside of the understanding.

Opponents to Anselm's ontological argument rushed to answer the logician of Canterbury. One such critic was a contemporary of Anselm, the monk Gaunilo. Anselm answered the monk. This marked a historical moment in philosophical and theological history. Anselm answered Gaunilo by defending each of his points and attacking each of Gaunilo's. The exchange between Anselm and Gaunilo set a precedent for future scholastics to follow, that is, how to talk about God using reason. Faith, however, was in no way being downplayed by Anselm; rather, reason came to be seen as another path towards the eternal truths of Christian revelation. The use of Aristotelian logic, however, could be taken too far and inquire the wrath of the powerful authorities, as it happened with the Breton Peter Abelard, born one generation after Anselm.

Like Anselm, Abelard was a master logician, perhaps the greatest of his generation. He is famous for having boasted that he never met his intellectual equal during his lifetime. As a young man, Abelard headed to Paris to study theology under one of France's most renowned logicians, William of Champeaux. To the disgrace of William, the young Abelard proved his intellectual superior, publically defeating and humiliating William in debate. For debating,

Abelard's weapon of choice was Aristotle's *Categories*, backed up by his tremendous understanding of theology, the Bible, and his fierce intellect fused with egoism. During his third decade of life in 1115 A.D., Abelard met his always and impossible love, Heloise, the niece of the Canon Fulbert of Notre Dame Cathedral. Not long, their lessons as teacher and student turned into lessons of the flesh. Soon, Heloise found herself with child, and to avenge the disgrace done to his family, her uncle Fulbert orders for Abelard to pay dearly for his transgression. Abelard declared that his attackers "cut off the parts of his body whereby [he] had committed the wrong of which they complained."[20] Thereafter, Abelard urged Heloise to take vows as a nun, and he took the vows of a priest. Regardless of his misfortune, Abelard kept writing.

Abelard was not far from being the sole wielder of Aristotle's *Categories*. Roscelin de Compiègne was a "radical theologian with whom Peter had probably studied as a teenager."[21] Roscelin was critical of Plato's theory of universals and the world of forms. Since the time of the Neoplatonists, the Church had long embraced Platonic metaphysics as supportive of Christian truth. Universals reside within the world of forms, thus laying outside of a material reality and are, therefore, superior. Roscelin argued that universals were not the primary realities. Abelard recognized that Roscelin's position was that of nominalism, which states that particulars, rather than universals, are what can be grasped through categories. For instance, this horse or that tree would be particulars. The idea of universals states that regardless of their appearance, horses and tress can be grouped together because of their partaking in the form of the universal horse or the universal tree, the horse and the tree.

While Abelard was critical of the Platonic idea of universals, he was dismayed by Roscelin's staunch defense of his idea of nominalism. Without a certain type of universals, it

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[20] Ibid., 98.

[21] Ibid., 110.

becomes impossible to explain why Abelard is more similar to Roscelin rather than Abelard being more similar to a tree. Thus, universals are not just mental objects, but rather have an essence for actually existing and uniting particulars. Abelard's writings eventually took him a step too far. The mysteries of faith were no longer seen as being outside the scope of logical understanding. Abelard tasked himself with applying Aristotelian logic to discuss the Holy Trinity. It was this piece of writing that would be the beginning of the end for the hero of many young scholastics.

The belief in the Holy Trinity is one of the central tenets of the Christian faith. Roscelin used his nominalism to stipulate that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were separate individuals. But this conclusion leads to the idea of tritheism rather than monotheism, having three gods rather than one. At the opposite end of tritheism was the doctrine of Sabellianism (named after Sabellius of Rome during the early 3rd century), heretical towards orthodox Christianity, which stated that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were aspects, rather than separate persons united as one. Abelard answered that the three persons of the Trinity were in fact separate persons but not in the sense of saying person one, person two, and person three. He affirmed that God is a single being. Either or, this caused massive problems for Abelard, for his enemies were at the ready to be done with him.

On one hand, his "insistence that the persons of the Trinity could not be thought of as truly separate exposed him to the charge of Sabellianism."[22] On the other, ranking the Father above the Son and above the Holy Spirit exposed him to Arianism, which stated that the Father was greater than the Son and the Holy Spirit. Abelard was opposed by a Church council in 1112 A.D. He had ventured too far using Aristotelian logic for too long. A famous theologian, William

[22] Ibid., 118.

of Saint-Thierry, deeply despised Abelard. The problem was that William had extremely powerful friends in the highest ranks of the Church, his personal friend being Bernard de Clairvaux. William asked Bernard to put an end to Abelard once and for all. Bernard, a full-blooded Church traditionalist, studied the works of Abelard and in "the winter of 1139 – 1140, he wrote a series of letters denouncing Abelard as a heretic."[23] To make matters worse, Bernard was a close friend of Pope Innocent II. In 1140 A.D., Bernard was bound for Paris to attend a massive gathering of high officials and churchmen, along with King Louis VII and a group of nobles and bishops. For Abelard, this was his one chance, and the perfect audience, to confront Bernard. Unknown to Abelard, Bernard convened a secret meeting of bishops a few days before the confrontation and gained their support in condemning Abelard. The day had arrived. Like in a trial in a courtroom, Abelard was to defend his positions. But he never did.

Bernard read a list of Abelard's "heretical" doctrines. Afterwards, Abelard was to do what he did best, take Bernard apart piece by piece. With the esteemed audience watching him in silence at the center of the hall, Abelard stood in quiet. The tension was unbearable. At last, Peter Abelard spoke. To the surprise and anger of the audience, Abelard deferred the matter to be resolved by Pope Innocent II. Thereafter he walked out of the hall, silenced once and for all. Why? Why had Peter Abelard not defended himself like always? Perhaps he sensed that it was a set up. Perhaps he felt that no matter what he said, he would ultimately be condemned. Only the 62 year-old master logician knew why.

A few weeks afterwards, Pope Innocent II declared Abelard a heretic, "excommunicated his followers, ordered his books to be burned in Saint Peter's Square, and commanded him to

[23] Ibid., 121.

retire to a monastery, there to be perpetually silent."[24] Abelard's health was quickly fading. Peter the Venerable, Abelard's friend, wrote to Pope Innocent II stating that he had acted as mediator between Abelard and Bernard, and that the former "desired to remain in Cluny as a monk."[25] There, at Cluny, Peter Abelard spent the last of his days. Upon his death, his lover from his youth, Heloise, requested his body to be buried at the Convent of the Paraclete, where she was the abbess. Twenty-one years later, in 1164 A.D., Heloise closed her eyes and was laid to rest with Abelard. Centuries thereafter, their bodies were moved to rest at Père-Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, where they rest to this day.

With the passing of Abelard, the Church had reaffirmed its position of faith over reason. Bernard of Clairvaux could boast of having defeated the most famous logician in Europe without a battle. Aristotle's authority was put in its place once more. Logic had taken its rightful place below faith, never to be wielded again. Or so it seemed.

The Dumb Ox

As a student, Thomas Aquinas was extremely silent and kept to himself. The young Thomas was of heavy built, sat in his classes listening attentively to his teacher Albert the Great. Because of his demeanor, Thomas' fellow students used to call him the "Dumb Ox." Albert overheard this in class, and fell upon his students and declared, "You call him a Dumb Ox; I tell you this Dumb Ox shall bellow so loud that his bellowings will fill the world."[26] For his classmates, Thomas may not have seemed like a smart individual, but as history shows, his work would lay the definite stepping stone to place Aristotle firmly within the Catholic orthodox

[24] Ibid., 125.
[25] Ibid., 125.
[26] Ibid., 195.

framework, a framework that still persists. But during this task, Thomas was seen as a hero by his supporters, a heretic by his opponents, and an intellectual force that commanded respect by everyone. Arguably, without Aristotle there would be no Thomas Aquinas, and without Thomas Aquinas there would be no Aristotle.

Thomas was born into a well-to-do Italian family. His father, Count Landulf, was a man of politics, papal and imperial. Count Landulf hoped that his son Thomas would become a high-ranking member of the Church, perhaps a bishop or even a cardinal. He had not anticipated that Thomas would be lured into the preaching of the Dominican friars. Count Landulf would not see his son become a dark-robed mendicant. He ordered for Thomas to be brought before him. But unknown to his family, Thomas had joined the Dominican order in 1243 A.D. With the help of his Dominican brethren, a plan was hatched to prevent Thomas from reaching home. Thomas, instead, was to take a horse towards Rome and arrive at the Dominican's monastery. News of this plan reached the ears of Thomas' parents.

His mother, Countess Theodora, ordered Thomas' two brothers to foil this plan and capture him before he ever reached Rome. The two brothers succeeded in intercepting their brother Thomas. He was then imprisoned in a family castle. He was to remain there until he came to his senses and abandoned his folly wish of becoming a preaching friar. But Thomas' will proved stronger than the dark, stone walls of the family castle. On one occasion, Count Landulf and Countess Theodora invited a "temptress" into Thomas' chamber. Thomas responded by driving her away with sticks and fire. However, Thomas' sister understood the desires of her brother, and would sneak books into Thomas' chamber, including the Bible, Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, and… Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Thomas' family relented, and allowed Thomas to continue his quest.

Thomas made his way towards Paris with his fellow Dominicans. Albert the Great was soon to arrive after Thomas. In 1252 A.D., with his studies completed, Albert urged Thomas to become a teacher in his own right at the University of Paris. However, Albert knew that Paris would prove a hostile territory for Thomas. The order of Franciscan friars, including their leader Bonaventure, were in power in high positions at the university. As Thomas was bound to discover, the Franciscans did not share his admiration for Aristotle. But, more often than not, the Franciscans and Dominicans would join together to combat the even more radical movements of Christian preachers arising throughout the region. Furthermore, non-religious masters at the University of Paris resented the power held by the friars, whether Franciscan or Dominican. During this time, the university ban on Aristotle's works of natural philosophy was losing force. In fact, within years, the faculty at the University of Paris voted to have all of Aristotle's known works become required reading for undergraduate and graduate students alike. During the 1260s, the political situation at the university would take a turn for the worst. Around those years, a controversial figure would enter the scene, a student who would push Thomas to his intellectual limits both as a Catholic thinker and as a devout student of Aristotle.

Siger de Brabant had come from a region in the Low Countries, which would later become Belgium. As the writings of Aristotle became widespread at the university, different interpretations of his writings competed for dominance. Siger read Aristotle without the urge to reconcile the Philosopher's thinking with orthodox Catholic teaching. In fact, Siger sought an end to the link between Aristotle's natural philosophy and traditional Christian beliefs. Siger's group of supporters had no connection to the Church, and thus were free to interpret Aristotle as best they could. To the Franciscans and Dominicans this was their worst fear come true, the

divorce of faith and reason. It was not until 1270 A.D. that Thomas Aquinas would engage Siger directly in debate with his essay *On There Being Only One Intellect*.

Thomas was resolute in his belief that theology and philosophy were not at odds. In fact, philosophy would reveal the truths of theology through reasoning. For the Franciscans, including Bonaventure, this extreme flirting with Aristotelian logic was out of bounds from theological limits. Theology did not need philosophy's support. Faith was complete by itself. The Parisian bishop, Bishop Tempier, prohibited the teachings of several Aristotelian doctrines at the University of Paris in the Condemnations of 1270. The consequences for disobeying this decree would pit the outlaws against the force of the Roman Inquisition, instituted in 1231 by Pope Gregory IX. The Franciscans, Dominicans, and secular masters were ready to accuse each other of breaking rules and thus eliminate them from the university for good. But Thomas would not see the end to this battle between friars and secularists. In 1272 A.D., Thomas left Paris for Naples. Two years later, Thomas passed away.

After his death, Thomas' influence increased exponentially. Bishop Tempier would go on to condemn a handful of Thomas' writings. But Thomas had fused Aristotelian logic with Catholic metaphysics. The debates between Franciscans, Dominicans, and secular masters at the University of Paris had opened the door for secular interpretations of Aristotle, free from religious hegemony. Thomism (named so after Thomas' original thinking) continued to be debated for decades until, centuries later, it became the de facto theological framework of the Catholic Church. Thomas had made Aristotle's ideas his own. However, Aristotle had more to teach the world.

What Thomas had achieved in the field of theology would be but a portion of Aristotle's legacy. The next battlefield to involve Aristotle's children would be the nascent movement of

humanism, the last Aristotelian conflict to be fought solely on European soil. The humanist movement would shift Aristotle's influence in theology towards a focus on literary and cultural achievements. From the University of Paris, Aristotle travels to a newborn republic at the heart of central Italy, Firenze (Florence). From Firenze, Aristotle would finally make his way to Spain… and on to conquer the New World.

Aristotle's Last Stop in Spain

The movement of humanism originated, arguably, with the establishment of the Florentine Republic in 1293 A.D. Florence promoted civil participation in the arts and civic life, which gave Florentine citizens the freedom to develop their natural, intellectual talents. The father of Florentine humanism can be said to be none other than Francesco Petrarca (1304 – 1374), Italy's crown laureate poet. Petrarca was a pioneer in using vernacular language to promote works of literature. As a poet, Petrarca argued that the beauty of the Italian language could rival the prestige and elegance of Latin. Petrarca did not seek to supplant Latin or discredit its usage, but rather promote the view that the vernacular language did not necessarily need to be excluded from public usage. As with his fellow humanists, luminaries that included Leonardo Bruni and Giovanni Boccaccio, he engaged in the translation and interpretation of classical texts such as those by the philosopher sage Plato, the epic storyteller Homer, the Greek playwright Sophocles, the legendary Roman orator Cicero, the Roman Cordoban Stoic master Lucius Annaeus Seneca, and – as expected – works by the master of those who know: Aristotle.

Humanism placed humankind as a focal point of human civilization, that humanity and its achievements are worthy of consideration and study. By establishing such a framework, the Florentine humanists devoured the newly arrived works of ancient authors from the Byzantine

Empire and Asia Minor. As the humanists poured over these ancient and classical texts, they could not help but compare their contemporary civic life and sociopolitical institutions with those of the ancients. A central tenet of humanism was to elevate their faulty institutions to be on par, or perhaps surpass, those of the legendary civilizations of Greece and Rome.

The influence of the growing movement of humanism soon extended beyond Florence. Humanist ideas began to spread around Europe through commerce, trade, travel, and politics. Just as Petrarca had been given place of honor as the father of humanism in Florence, so too did Spain have its founding humanist, Alonso de Cartagena.

Alonso de Cartagena (1384 – 1456), was – according to Ottavio Di Camillo in his work *El Humanismo Castellano del Siglo XV* – "*en su tiempo muy estimado fuera de España… el primer humanista español*."[27] Whereas Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas had been well versed in Aristotelian metaphysics, Alonso de Cartagena was more inclined towards understanding Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. Cartagena was, however, no stranger to Aristotelian metaphysics, for he was a Jewish convert to Roman Catholicism, a scholar, a Castilian politician, and eventually the Catholic Bishop of Burgos. Regardless of being a fellow humanist, Cartagena had bitter arguments against Petrarca over the latter's "faulty" translations of Aristotle.

One of the major problems encountered by the humanists was their role of translator vs. interpreter. If the humanists kept to the exact translation of ancient texts, their modern languages lacked precise words to complete the translation. Thus, it was preferable to use similar words to the capture the meaning of the original classics, but this approach meant the loss of precision.

Linguistic accuracy was, however, far from being the only concern faced by the humanist project, but it certainly went hand in hand with the approach of proper living. The ancient

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[27] Ottavio Di Camillo, *El Humanismo Castellano del Siglo XV*, trans. Manuel Lloris (Valencia: Burjasot, 1976), 16. Cartagena was considered the first Spanish humanist, and highly regarded outside of Spain.

authors did not agree on their doctrines and upheld differing philosophical viewpoints. As the humanists discovered the potential hidden within humankind, they also discovered the limitations and vulnerabilities as human beings. Thus, this began a discussion "*tan abundantemente tratad[a] en la literatura española del siglo XV*."[28] The idea of human achievement and potential was countered by the idea of human limitation and frailty. The humanists were torn between the propositions of Aristotle regarding human potential and the Stoic view of Seneca regarding human limitations. The central question was which of these two frameworks provided the best route towards living the good life: Aristotle's *dynamis*[29] or Seneca's stoicism? Aristotle's dynamic framework leads towards a life of virtue, while Seneca's stoic philosophy kept in mind the role of *fortuna* in life's workings.

But whether the humanists followed Aristotle's or Seneca's teachings, all sides could agree that mankind, through virtue, could find a protective barrier against the misfortunes of living, or at the very least, make misfortunes bearable. Furthermore, the humanists like Petrarca, Bruni, Boccaccio, and Cartagena advocated the new morality about an active life at home, in communities, or in matters of state, a mindset that closely mirrors Aristotle's civic life in his *Politics*. In fact, Aristotle stated in his *Politics* that the city was the entity that gave meaning to its lower components such as the household, that "the city is by nature prior to the household and to each one of us taken singly. For the whole is necessarily prior to the part."[30] To illustrate his point, Aristotle uses the analogy of the body and a human foot. He says "there will neither be foot nor hand when the whole body has been destroyed."[31] It is only in connection with the body

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28 In Spanish, this means a discussion "so widely treated in the literature of XV century Spain."

29 This is a Greek word that is central to Aristotle's philosophy in his active polis in the *Politics*. *Dynamis* can be translated as the energy, the drive, the spirit that animates human beings to engage in a polis. It is this clash of energy that brings life, in a sense, to an active city.

30 Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Peter L. Phillips Simpson (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 11.

31 Ibid.

that a foot or hand serves its purpose. "Everything," continues Aristotle, "is defined by its work and by its power."[32] It follows, therefore, that "the city exists by nature and that it has priority over the individual. For if no individual is self-sufficient when isolated, he will be like other parts in relation to their whole."[33] Thus, the Aristotelian teaching is that an individual that is part a city is defined from being a member of a civil community. It is civil society, therefore, that defines its members. Although, is it possible to live outside of a civil community? Aristotle says that "anyone who lacks the capacity to share in community, or has not need to because of his self-sufficiency, is no part of the city and as a result is either a beast or a god."[34] The humanists embraced this Aristotelian teaching and that man "*como miembro de una sociedad, concebida en términos de un todo orgánico, integrada por una multiplicidad de partes igualmente esenciales, es el deber del hombre el ser de utilidad a los demas*."[35] As a result, the humanists promoted an active role in the city in a pure Aristotelian spirit.

As the first humanist in Spain, Cartagena had the opportunity to shape the movement in his image. The art of rhetoric – the use of words and language in a discourse and its effects on the listener – became of primary importance for Cartagena. Rhetoric was the primary means to achieve political, social, and moral goals in the community. Cartagena conceived of rhetoric as "*un instrumento en pro de la justicia, de la salvaguardia de las institutionces y de la defensa del estado en caso de guerra*."[36] The advocacy of rhetoric by Cartagena in ethical and civic matters is "*solamente un aspecto de las reformas intelectuales y pedagógicas, más complejas y de mejor*

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 12.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ottavio Di Camillo, *El Humanismo Castellano del Siglo XV*, 39. "As a member of a society, conceived in terms or an organic whole, integrated by a multiplicity of parts equally essential, it is the duty of man to be useful to others."

[36] Ibid., 58. Cartagena conceived of rhetoric as an instrument in favor of justice, to safeguard institutions and defense of the state in a chance of war.

alcance, que este autor inicia en la tradición cultural española."[37] While Petrarca hailed Cicero as the great hero, Cartagena proclaimed that in matters of rhetoric, "*el pensador más profundo en esta materia es Aristóteles.*"[38] Nonetheless, Cartagena was not entirely a committed Aristotelian.

As a Catholic thinker, Cartagena disagreed with Aristotle in matters of obtaining knowledge. Aristotle was the first proponent of a scientific method of knowledge, far predating the English Francis Bacon. Through the use of reasoning, Aristotle postulated that it was possible to gain knowledge of the Unmoved Mover, the originator of all movement in the universe. During the Middle Ages, however, St. Augustine's view that it was God who gave divine knowledge to humanity was embraced by the Church. It was not until Thomas Aquinas reconciled Aristotle with Augustine that the Church began to accept the former's rationalistic approach. Surprisingly, Cartagena rejected both views. Cartagena's own theory of knowledge was a mixture of New Testament framework with Stoic philosophy.

Towards the end of his life, Cartagena aligned himself with the thinking of the Church Fathers – Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Irenaues, Tertullian, Jerome, Augustine, etc. – and embraced several aspects of Cicero's thinking. Cartagena's pioneering spirit helped to bring Aristotle out of the university discussion halls into public life to transform the community towards more civic involvement. The man who had opened the door for humanism to flourish in Spain passed away in 1456 A.D. By the time of Cartagena's death, the future couple that would help Aristotle cross the Atlantic Ocean, Fernando and Isabel, were but children; he was four years old and she was five. Within the next decade, they would be married.

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[37] Ibid., 57. …"only an aspect of the intellectual and pedagogical reforms, more complex and with greater reach, that this author initiated in the Spanish cultural tradition."

[38] Ibid., 58. "In this subject matter [rhetoric], Aristotle was the most profound thinker."

CHAPTER III

DAWN OF THE ARISTOTELIAN EMPIRE

In the morning of October 19, 1469, the eighteen-year old princess Isabel would marry a seventeen-year old prince. She was heiress to the lands and power of the Castilian crown and he was the heir to the throne of Aragón. Their marriage needed to be carried out in secret in Valladolid, away from the plotting of their political enemies. Henry IV, brother of the Castilian Princess Isabel, had tried to prevent the marriage ceremony. But the Archbishop of Toledo intervened to help her escape to Valladolid. Prince Fernando de Aragón, too, undertook a discrete journey towards Valladolid accompanied by court attendants disguised as merchants. In Valladolid, on October 15, they met for the first time. Four days later, they would marry. Their marriage would reshape the Iberian Peninsula, shake Europe, and transform the soon-to-be-discovered New World.

The royal marriage was a cause of celebration for some, but a nightmare for many. Within Castilian territory, some did not approve of the newfound strength resulting from the union between the Castilian and Aragonese crowns. Isabel's enemies "were now rallying to the cause of Henry IV's alleged daughter, Juana *La Beltraneja*, whose claims to the throne had recently been set aside in favour of those of his sister, Isabel."[39] However, Henry caved in to Isabel's supporters in Castilla, seeing that peace was the ultimate reward. Furthermore, the Castilian factions had doubts regarding the paternity of Henry's daughter Juana. Juana's moniker

[39] J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain, 1469-1716* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 18

La Beltaneja (the Beltranite), came about from her supposed legitimate father Beltrán de la Cueva. Juana may ultimately have, indeed, been legitimate daughter to Henry.

Henry IV was not the only one to oppose the marriage of Isabel and Fernando. Louis XI of France feared that the union between the crowns of Castilla and Aragón would pose a formidable threat to his French domains and expansionist agenda. Fernando's father, Juan II de Aragón (1458-1479), had faced the expansionist empire of Louis XI, and revolutionary threats from the region of Cataluña right next to the French border. But Juan did not have the necessary resources or manpower to face these threats. If he wanted to save his throne, he would have to form an alliance, a political marriage of convenience.

Hand of the Queen

The political aims of Juan II were a direct response to the situation surrounding his kingdom. The main objective for Juan was to make allies. This made his son, Fernando, a suitor for the hand of the Castilian princess Isabel. Fernando, nonetheless, was not the only contender for the princess' hand in marriage. Alfonso V of Portugal, also, was a suitable party for Isabel, a marriage that would result in uniting the crowns of Castilla and Portugal. By contrast, a marriage to Charles of Valois, prince and son of Charles VII of France would have restored the medieval Franco-Castilian alliance. Isabel was a young woman of self-confidence. Even though she faced intense pressure from all parties to side with a specific suitor, she made her decision; she would marry Fernando de Aragón.

The crown of Castilla was much stronger than the Aragonese. Juan II and Fernando did not have political leverage to negotiate the terms of the marriage contract. Thus, Isabel had freedom to shape the marriage arrangement to her liking. Fernando

> was to live in Castile and fight for the Princess' cause, and it was made clear that he was to take second place in the government of the country. The terms were humiliating, but the price before Fernando seemed so great and the necessity so urgent that refusal was out of the question.[40]

The land properties of Castilla covered two-thirds of the Iberian Peninsula, about three times the size of the Aragón lands. The population in the kingdom of Aragón was no more than one million, while that of Castilla numbered between five and six million habitants. The kingdom of Aragón, nonetheless, was not without its merits.

Fernando proved an avid supporter of the political policies of Isabel. In addition, the young, royal couple had the wisdom of Fernando's father, Juan II. In rallying Spanish forces – including the anti-Isabelline factions within Castilla – under the royal banners of Castilla and Aragón, Queen Isabel would need as much support as she could muster from her husband and his house. For this cause, Fernando brought his top military experts into the service of Isabel and helped to instruct the Isabelline troops in innovative military combat.

In the western part of the Iberian Peninsula, the military forces of Alfonso V of Portugal had suffered massive military defeats, thus reducing the threat of a Portuguese war against the crowns of Castilla and Aragón. It was not "until 1479 that all Castile was at last brought under Isabella's control."[41] Juan II de Aragón had given all to secure the marriage between Fernando and Isabel. But as fate would have it, it was during the early months of 1479 that Juan II de Aragón would breath no more. As his gift to posterity, and because of his efforts, soon all of Spain would be politically united under the dual crowns of Castilla and Aragón, reminiscent of the two ancient Roman divisions of Hispania (Spain), *Hispania Citerior* and *Hispania Ulterior*.

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[40] Ibid., 22.

[41] Ibid., 23.

The final step in uniting all of Spain would be the restoration of Catholicism as the dominant religion of the peninsula… whether by personal conversion or the laws of iron.

With the passing of Juan II de Aragón, Fernando truly became the King of Aragón, thus achieving the same royal title as his wife, the Queen of Castilla. Henceforth began the days of *El Rey Fernando de Aragón y La Reina Isabel de Castilla* (King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile), the royal house that would see the fulfillment of *La Reconquista Española* and the discovery of a new world across the Atlantic Ocean under their banners. One thing was for certain: days of war were at hand for the Catholic Kings.

La Reconquista (literally, The Reconquest) is a phase in Spanish history that was underway, arguably, since 711 A.D. when the Moors – Muslims from North Africa – started to take over Iberian territory in the south of the peninsula. Henry IV, Isabel's brother, responded to papal callings for renewing the *Reconquista* in 1455 A.D. For Henry, this was an opportunity to extract more taxes from his subjects throughout Castilla. Years later during the ascension of Isabel and Fernando to their respective thrones, they found a fervent crusading spirit awaiting for new leadership. The new King and Queen of Spain found widespread support among their subjects for ending the Moorish presence once and for all. The troops rallied to the call of war horns and drums. This event brought the monarchs of Spain closer to the their subjects, whether civil or military.

In 1482 A.D., Fernando and Isabel unleashed their troops against the last Moorish kingdom in the Iberian Peninsula, the lands of Andalucía in the south. The Spanish forces slowly chipped away at the Moorish kingdom until only the city of Granada remained standing. The King of Granada was the aging Mulay Hassan.

In the campaign of 1485 A.D., the Spanish armies focused their advances on the western portion of the kingdom of Granada. The Spaniards made tremendous advances into the territory that by the end of the siege, much of western Granada was under Spanish control. With the capture of the city of Málaga in 1487 A.D., the conquest of the western part of the kingdom of Granada was complete. With a final push, the monarchs of Spain proceeded to eliminate Moorish authority once and for all, and would soon achieve the unification of Spain as a political entity.

In 1490 A.D., Fernando and Isabel besieged the city of Granada. The sheer size of the Spanish forces and the vast preparations for the siege were enough to cause a major drop in the morale of the defending Moorish forces. Within the Moorish camp, the feeling ran rampant that "honourable surrender was preferable to military conquest."[42] Discussions for terms opened between the two sides on October 1491 A.D. By November, terms had been agreed upon. Two months later, on January 2, 1492, Granada was under Spanish control. Boabdil, son of the old King Mulay Hassan, personally presented "to Ferdinand the keys of the Alhambra [the palace/fortress complex in Granada], and the crucifix and the royal standard were raised above its highest tower."[43]

With the end of *La Reconquista*, the unification of Iberian Spain was complete. The crowns of Aragón and Castilla were the dominant powers in the peninsula, with the kingdom of Portugal being but a minor force compared to them. As destiny would have it, 1492 A.D. was a massive turning point in world history. All of Spain was unified under the Catholic Kings – Fernando and Isabel –, Moorish rule in Spain had come to an end after 781 years, and a new world was about to be discovered. 1492 A.D. was a year of ends and beginnings.

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

Nuovo e Vecchio

Six years before 1492 A.D., in 1486 A.D., the Genoese merchant Christopher Columbus made his first appearance at the Spanish court before Fernando and Isabel. Columbus approached the Catholic Kings with a proposal that seemed to be the rambling of a madman: for them to sponsor his voyage as he circumnavigated the world. The proposal must have struck the monarchs as nonsensical and maddening. In 1486 A.D., European society knew that the world was flat, that to sail too far into the edge of the world would mean certain death, regardless of the fact that all death is certain. But to support his mad proposal in the dark halls of the Spanish court, Columbus embraced the discovering spirit of a Greek sage. Long before Columbus, a man of science had written that "the evidence of the senses further corroborates [the sphericity of the earth, for] eclipses of the moon [are] always curved."[44]

In addition, "it is the interposition of the earth that makes the eclipses, the form of this line will be caused by the form of the earth's surface, which is therefore spherical."[45] Furthermore, the same author wrote that "there is continuity between the parts about the Pillars of Hercules [the Straits of Gibraltar] and the parts about India, and that in this way the ocean is one.[46] The author of these words is the master of those who know, Aristotle.

Aristotle wrote these observations in his treatise *On the Heavens*, one of the Aristotelian works that had disappeared from the Latin West and survived in the Greek East. This particular work of Aristotle was "translated into Latin from the Arabic in the 12th century be Gerard of Cremona, [and was] quoted approvingly and commented on by numerous scholastic philosophers,

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44 Rubenstein, *Aristotle's Children*, 272.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.

including Pierre d'Ailly, a 15th century theologian and scientist."[47] Interestingly enough, an "annotated copy of d'Ailly's *Image of the World* was found in Columbus' library. During medieval times, the common folk may well have believed that the earth was flat, but virtually no educated European credited the flat-earth hypothesis."[48] Even though Aristotle's observations and propositions had been taking ahold over Europe for the previous 300 years, many of his philosophical doctrines still clashed with official church theology. Aristotle's doctrine of a spherical world was a heretical doctrine for the Church. Columbus, however, sided with Aristotle, insisting that the round world theory was sound. But regardless of that fact, Fernando and Isabel had other reasons to reject Columbus' daring proposition.

The Catholic Kings rejected financing Columbus not because of philosophical differences, but because of political and financial circumstances. In 1486A.D., when Columbus first approached them, the crowns of Aragón and Castilla were in the midst of a war against the Nasrid dynasty. The royal exchequer faced uncertain times. To finance an overseas expedition would be to place more strain on the wartime treasury of Spain. From this perspective, it is understandable as to why the Catholic Kings rejected to finance Columbus' voyage across the Atlantic. But in 1491 A.D., the monarchs of Spain changed their minds.

Regardless of the unknown variables in such an expedition, a circumnavigation of the globe made sense to the Catholic Kings. Firstly, a successful voyage would allow Columbus to return with plenty of treasure to refill the treasury of the crown. Furthermore, the voyage might "bring back Columbus by way of Jerusalem, opening up a route for attacking the Ottoman Empire in the rear."[49] After expelling the Moors from Spain, the anti-infidel fervor was running

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Elliot, *Imperial Spain*, 60.

high. The Byzantine Empire had fallen in 1453 A.D., just 33 years before Columbus made his proposition to the Catholic Kings. The fall of the empire was fresh on the memory of Europeans. *La Reconquista*, in this perspective, was but a stepping-stone for crushing the Ottoman Empire. At last, final negotiations were made between the Catholic Kings and Columbus. To Columbus was granted the hereditary title of Grand Admiral, and a tenth of the merchandise and produce of the new territories. Terms were agreed upon, and on August 1492 A.D., Columbus, three caravels (*La Niña*, *La Pinta*, and *Santa María*), and eighty-eight members of the crew, sailed across an uncharted passage to the edge of the known world looking for a route to Asia.

After two months at sea, sailing across the uncharted waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Columbus and his crew reached Asia, or so they thought. Unbeknownst to them, the crew had arrived on a land unknown to Europeans, a lost world that lay between their original destination and their home world. On October 12, 1492 A.D., Columbus and his crew reached land. Thinking that he was exploring Asia, Columbus was, in fact, charting new terrain on what was to become Cuba and the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean. Interestingly, the land discovered by Columbus was not named after him, but rather after the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci, hence the name of America.

By 1508 A.D., Hispaniola was entirely "under Spanish control, and would replace Spain as the base for future expeditions for the discovery and conquest of Cuba and the Antilles."[50] The years "1519 – 1540 A.D. [were the years of] the *conquista* – the years in which Spain won its great American empire."[51] As Spain became the new ruling power in the Americas, questions of proper government and dealings with the native inhabitants became a matter of deep concern for the Spanish crown.

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[50] Ibid., 62.
[51] Ibid.

As the first generation of explorers in the Americas returned to Europe and told their stories, the European imagination became filled with dreams of exotic lands inhabited by mystical creatures and hidden treasures. These stories inspired new waves of explorers to sail to the Americas in the name of God, gold and glory, or religion, riches, and fame. Historically, this was one reason why so many Spaniards fought in *La Reconquista*, for glory, riches and fame. The generation of explorers after Columbus would be greatly inspired by these ideas, including the conquerors of the Aztec and Inca Empires, Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro respectively.

Cortés, Pizarro, and their contemporary *conquistadores* of the Americas, were heavily influenced by their medieval heritage. These explorers thought of the unexplored lands of the Americas as adventurous as the stories of Marco Polo's travels, or the stories in the works of Ibn Battuta. The *conquistadores* imagined themselves as heirs to the legends of Prester John and his mythical Christian kingdom in the East, or as adventurers seeking the famed Island of Men and Island of Women, populated by giants and Amazons respectively, or as men of destiny bound to find the Seven Cities of Cíbola. Some conquistadores had heard the Celtic legend of Saint Brendan of the sixth century, of how the Irish saint boarded a ship with a group of monks in search of islands that were destined to be settled by holy hermits. When Saint Brendan reached his goal, he "found not only the Earthly Paradise, [the] first dwelling-place of Adam and Eve, but also the neutral angels who accompanied Lucifer in his fall."[52]

The power of these legends from the Medieval Era held tremendous interest in the imagination of explorers in the Americas. Some explorers were inspired by the legend of *El Dorado*, a man made entirely of gold. Others went after the White King (supposedly the white came from the fact that he was covered in silver) in South America, as far away as the

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[52] Luis Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, trans. Frances M. López-Morillas (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 17.

southernmost points of modern Argentina and Chile. To the north, Juan Ponce de León sought the Fountain of Youth c.a. 1514 A.D in present day Florida and the Bahamas. This legendary fountain had the properties to make old men young again. The first mention of it is under the name of *Fons juventutis* about "1165 in a letter attributed to Prester John (in whose mythical realm the foundation was supposedly located)."[53] According to a French work of literature, the *Romans d'Alixandre*, the "fountain flowed from one of the rivers of Paradise; and when they bathed in it, fifty-six of Alexander the Great's soldiers recovered the appearance of their youth."[54]

The *conquistadores*, however, were not inventing these legends; rather, they were trying to confirm ancient beliefs that had been passed on to them from classical antiquity and the Medieval Era. Without a doubt, the rich and extensive heritage of these stories, myths, and legends, inspired the *conquistadores* to go beyond their known world, ready to conquer lands in the name of God, seeking fortunes, and burned with a desire to make a name for themselves and posterity. Legends did not only inspire the *conquistadores*, however. Legends played a major role in the conquest of the Americas by the Spaniards. Furthermore, the personal claims to owning the precious metals and minerals of the Americas was a practice that originated within the world of Islam, not Europe. The Spanish practice of claiming gold and silver was a relic passed down from Moorish Spain.

When it came to conquering the Americas, the European empires of the Spanish, French, and British differed in their aims. The English, for instance, had "conquered property, …

[53] Ibid., 34.
[54] Ibid.

deni[ed] the natives' true ownership of their land… [while Spaniards] had conquered people, allowing sedentary natives to retain their terrain in exchange for social humiliation.[55]

When Europeans set eyes on the terrains of the Americas, they saw "seemingly endless woodlands promising unending supplies of timbers for ships, charcoal for heat, and logs for construction."[56] Furthermore, the quantity of precious metals such as gold and silver encountered by the Europeans was simply overwhelming. "Accustomed to endemic shortages of coins, the Europeans found that the New World contained quantities of silver and gold not simply for money but for decorative objects and even buildings."[57] Europeans began to covet these resources laying before them, and slowly, their wants turned to slaughter and disregard for Amerindian lives. However, it was the Spanish form of empire that would provide lessons in administration to its English counterpart in the North.

The difference in conquest ideology between the European empires comes in part from their geography. For instance, the English mainland is many times smaller than the French or Spanish mainland. Thus, from their perspective, the English reasoned that the main objective of conquest was the attainment of territory in the New World; for the Spaniards, the objective of conquest was to control people and the power of their potential labor. In addition to geography, cultural traditions further shaped the approach towards owning, buying, and selling goods. In northern Europe, Scandinavian and Germanic conquests re-shaped local customs, while southern Europe was influenced by Arabic and Berber customs. Thus, in taking lands and resources from people they had not known of prior to 1492 A.D., "colonists and their supporters extended this amalgamation by describing their reasons for seizing economic assets as fundamental

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55 Patricia Seed, *American Pentimento: The Invention of Indians and the Pursuit of Riches* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 2

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

international maxims."[58] However, it can be said that what Europeans "characterized as 'international' or 'universal customs' were simply their own distinct European cultural traditions applied overseas."[59]

By equating regional European customs with concepts as universal or international, European empires established an ontological[60] framework that guided their proceedings. From a Freudian perspective, Europeans were projecting their own wills on a grand scale that encompassed every new territory brought under their respective empires. However, if this perspective is accepted, then it must be pointed out that this framework brings about a deontological[61] problem that inhibits a proper analysis of the ethical dilemmas regarding the conquest of the Americas.

If the idea of projection is granted, then it follows that an objective analysis of the European conquest of the Americas is in order, for this talks about regional European values (subjective) being at play on a global scale (objective). In this case, subjective values are akin to being particulars, whereas objective values fall under a universal category. In her work *American Pentimento: The Invention of Indians and the Pursuit of Riches*, historian Patricia Seed makes the observation that, indeed, Europeans were supposing that their own particular ideologies had a universal equivalent.

Seed's framework puts forth the notion, based on the European example, that there is indeed no connection between a universal morality and particular morality. However, by denying a connection between particulars and universals, then there is no paradigm under which to evaluate the conquest of the Americas on a deontological scale. The conquest of the Americas,

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[58] Ibid., 4.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ontology refers to the question of that which constitutes ultimate reality: worldly (physical) or otherworldly (metaphysical).

[61] Deontology deals with questions of right and wrong, good and bad.

therefore, becomes ahistorical, and is elevated to be outside of history, and thus outside of analysis. Under these circumstances, any frameworks that propose to study the ethical dimensions of Americas' conquest have no feasible foundation to build an analysis of good or bad, moral or immoral, right or wrong.

The solution to this problem is to solidify the connection between regional European values and their global ideologies, that indeed Europeans were not projecting their own ideas on another culture, but were fulfilling the inherent connection between particulars and universals as interdependent categories.

By adhering to a universal ideology, Europeans were able to "justify seizing the assets of peoples in distant lands – peoples whose resources they had never dreamed existed prior to 1492."[62] Europeans saw that the natives did not use or exploit their own resources, and were thus ineffective and unworthy users of their own riches. Thus, Europeans felt entitled to remove the Amerindians from their own territories because the natives did not conform to European expectations of social protocols. However, having established the inseparable connection between particulars and universals (rather than eliminating such a connection), it is possible to frame a critical analysis of the conquest.

In their work *Commonwealth*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri use the Shakespearean character of Caliban from *The Tempest* to discuss the role of "the Others" at the crisis of modernity. According to Hardt and Negri, the crisis of modernity began in the early, modern period, that is, at the birth of the age of European exploration. In William Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, Caliban is a deformed being, a monster representing "figures of sublime disproportion and terrifying excess, as if the confines of modern rationality were too narrow to

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[62] Ibid.

contain [its] extraordinary creative powers."[63] Hardt and Negri use Caliban as the representative of any beings, or cultures, that were outside of European society at the beginning of the age of exploration. These beings (for they were not even considered human) were seen as forces that were opposed to modernity and were

> cast as monsters in order to rein in their power and legitimate domination over them. Stories of human sacrifice among Amerindians serve as evidence for sixteenth-century Spaniards of their cruelty, violence, and madness, just as the notion of cannibalism functioned for African colonizers in a later period.[64]

In *The Tempest*, the magician Prospero "recounts that he tried to befriend and educate the monster, but once it threatened his daughter, Miranda, he had no choice but to restrain the brute by imprisoning him within a tree."[65]

In the dialectic of the conquest, the Spaniards embodied the character of Prospero, educated, knowledgeable, wise, while the natives were embodied by Caliban, a brute, deformed, inhuman, uncultured, threatening monster. In order to maintain civilization, the Spaniards saw it necessary to restrain the Amerindians, just like Prospero had done with Caliban. And just like Caliban, the natives could not be simply killed, for they provided labor, fetched the wood, and toiled for the benefit and profit of the Spaniards.

Furthermore, in Hardt and Negri's framework, imperial dominion over the Amerindians gave the Spaniards biopower over the natives. Biopower "refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself."[66] Once firm control has been established over biopower, it can be set to work for the production of the dominant power, which is exactly what happened between the Spaniards and the Amerindians.

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63 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University of Press, 2009), 95.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 97.
66 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 24.

Hardt and Negri put forth the claim that there is a crisis at the heart of modernity, a crisis that was born the moment Europe discovered the outside world on different shores. It was at this historical moment that Eurocentrism became crystalized as ideology. The crisis is as follows. The Renaissance, coinciding with the discovery of the Americas, started a revolution in European mores regarding human equality, community, fraternal cooperation, and dignity. The problem arose when non-European peoples were discovered to be outside of these newly proposed mores. The discovery of new peoples prompted Europeans to expand their new mores on a global scale.

Indeed, the Spaniards found a massive force of biopower within the natives, for soon the Spaniards would impose their authority to claim the resources of the Amerindians, whether in terms of biopower or natural. The Spaniards' ideology of claiming the precious metals and gems of the New World came directly from their Moorish legacy. Muslims conquered nearly the entire Iberian Peninsula, except for the northern region of Asturias.

However, it was because of Islamic jurisprudence that the Spaniards received the specific ideas about claiming precious metals and stones. In Islamic jurisprudence,

> buried precious stones and metals were called 'treasures' (*rikaz* in Arabic). They were considered neither geological accidents nor abandoned goods. Rather, Muslims believed that God had planted or embedded [them] firmly in the stomach [belly] of the earth.[67]

As a result of this teaching, precious metals and stones become a gift from God to be shared by his people (Muslims, in this case).

The Moors had several regulations regarding precious metals. First, "only God-given rules could regulate what God had provided for his people from deep in the earth,"[68] and not what was on the surface lands. Second, private individuals could not lay a claim to such

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[67] Patricia Seed, *American Pentimento*, 59.

[68] Ibid.

resources, even a ruler. Thus, the ownership of such resources became communal to the people of God, or the believers of Allah in this case. Lastly, since God had buried these riches within the earth for believers, a "significant portion of the profits from mining these resources was to be spent on the welfare of God's people."[69] The portion to be spent for the welfare of the community was the *khums* in Arabic, or "fifth" because "classical Islamic tradition suggested that twenty percent of the profits be spend on God's people."[70] In this practice, however, Islamic tradition was divided between the Shia and Sunni branches, which each tradition determining what "religious leaders [were] entitled to manage the mining of the mineral deposits as well as receive and redistribute the community's share of the resources."[71] In the Shia branch of Islam, the Imam (religious leader) collected the fifth; in the larger Sunni branch, the Amir, a political and religious leader such as a "caliph or sultan would be entitled to them."[72] The Moors that took over the Iberian Peninsula belonged to the Sunni branch of Islam.

During the 11th century, when Spanish forces slowly began *La Reconquista*, they slowly began to incorporate similar Islamic economic customs into their own practices. The Islamic idea of setting aside a fifth of newly discovered riches for the leading authorities became *el quinto real* for the Spanish crown.[73]

By the time the Christian Iberians reclaimed all of the Iberian territory from the Moors, they had adopted the idea that God had buried resources in the bowels of the earth for his people: themselves. This idea of being God's people became deeply embedded within the Spanish psyche during the late 1400s, and also with the British Empire about 100 years thereafter. When

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69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Of interest were the Islamic practices of having municipal oversight of weights and measures to prevent cheating and unfairness, and the close supervision of butchers to prevent food contamination and assure religious standards of food preparation.

the Spaniards arrived in the Americas, this idea played a massive role in their claim to wealth. Just as the Moors had seen themselves as Allah's servants while they controlled Iberia, now the Spaniards saw themselves as God's servants in the Americas; just like the Spanish had not been considered people of God under Moorish rule, now the natives were not considered people of God under Spanish rule.

As the true people of God, the Spanish (and the Portuguese, since they were also from the Iberian Peninsula) understood themselves to have been endowed with "a God-given right to the gold and silver of the New World."[74] This idea from Islamic jurisprudence made its way into Christian dogma. For instance, the sixteenth century Jesuit José de Acosta espoused the "traditional Islamic theological principle that God had buried gold and silver in the earth for his people, substituting the Christian God for Allah."[75] Thereafter, the 17th century Iberian jurist Juan Solórzano Pereira "justified the Catholic monarchs' permanent and inalienable dominion over buried precious metals in the New World with exactly the same phrases as did classical Islamic jurisprudence."[76] This adoption of Islamic thinking into Christian dogma added further credibility to the cause of the Spanish conquest of the Americas.

The idea that God had created treasures within the bowels of the earth became a conduit for the eventual religious conversion of the Amerindians. Thus, the discovery of precious metals and stones was no accident. Acosta wrote that God intentionally enriched the lands of the New World and inhabited it "by less civil people, and there put the greatest abundance of mines that has ever been found so that with this [placement he] would invite men to look for such lands."[77]

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74 Ibid., 60.
75 Ibid., 61.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.

Once in the New World looking for the precious resources given by God, the Spaniards could communicate

> their religion and worship of the true God to those who did not know him… Thus we see that the lands of the Indies are more full of mines and riches than have been worked in the Christian religion in our time. Thus the Lord was making use of our pretensions for his sovereign ends.[78]

In Acosta's conception, a metaphysical dialectic is what drives the determined spirits of the Spaniards in the New World. The find of the precious metals, the conversion of the natives, come together in a predestined narrative. By fusing the acquisition of precious resources with Christian overtones, the conquest of Spanish America was, therefore, guided by a divine reason, thus making their actions divinely inspired. This, however, only served to embolden the Spaniards in treating the natives with greater hostility rather than pastoral care for their conversion. Only a handful of Spaniards were concerned with the well being of the Amerindians, both physical and spiritual. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that the official position of the Spanish monarchy was, always, that the Amerindians were to be vassals of the crown rather than slaves, and therefore mistreatment was not to be tolerated. However, this idea of vassalage under the Spanish monarchy could be realized only after the conquest of the Americas.

In order to fully address the question of justice throughout the Spanish Empire, it must be noted that Queen Isabel, in one occasion, allowed for the enslavement of the man-eating Caribs due to the unrestrained slaughter and hardships they caused her subjects. Furthermore, while the Spanish Crown was always against the enslavement of Indians, that view did not extend to African slaves.

However, out of all the colonial empires, Spanish America provided the least abusive framework for the treatment of slaves. For instance, within the Spanish laws of the *Siete Partidas*,

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[78] Ibid.

slaves had a "right to marry, even against the wishes of their masters, and a limited right to hold property. The code [the *Siete Partidas*] also opened the way to possible manumission, either by the master or by the state."[79] In addition, if slaves happened to be Christians, they could enjoy "the protection of the church and the canon law, and as vassals of the crown could seek redress from royal justice."[80]

In British America, in sharp contrast, the colonies increased the restrictions for masters to be able to free their slaves. Slaves in British America had no protections under any type of law, whether secular state law such as the *Siete Partidas*, or religious law such as canon law.

Perhaps it may seem like the Spaniards were, indeed, robbing the Americas of its natural wealth as it was carried off to Spain, and therefore such actions were simply immoral. But this perspective, however, is mistaken. The correct interpretation of these events requires for this historical particular to remain as object. To do this, it is necessary to understand these events from their surrounding socio-political institutions. The phenomenology[81] surrounding the Spanish appropriation of riches, gold, and silver, from the Americas lays down the proper perspective for understanding the actions of the Spaniards.

As has been observed, the Spaniards inherited a rich tradition of Islamic jurisprudence. Just like the Moors had appropriated the riches of the Iberian Peninsula while they were the rulers, so in turn did the Spaniards carry that framework over to the Americas. This was not necessarily a case of *quid pro quo*, and much less a case of thievery and plundering in the New World. Such notions are simply incorrect. The phenomenon of Islamic rule affected Spanish political thought. The Spanish were, to be exact, extending their understanding of phenomenon

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79 J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492 - 1830* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006), 107.

80 Ibid.

81 Phenomenology is a philosophical system of thought that focuses on the structures of experiences, or the way humans experience things, thus giving meaning to things through experiences.

in their conquest of the Americas. It can be objected that, then, the Spaniards' understanding of phenomena was Spanish-centered. Indeed, it was. Perhaps it can be said that the Spanish were duplicating the theft of their resources by the Moors. It may indeed be classified as theft, but according to what tradition or authority? Again, any analysis regarding the acquisition of property and resources, whether in Iberia or the Americas, requires for the observations to remain objective from within their own timely development.

But that in-itself does not carry a deontological value, and therefore it does not delegitimize the actions of the Spaniards in taking ownership of the riches of the New World. In fact, it is the opposite that proves to be true. By understanding that the action of taking over natural resources in the Americas was strictly Spanish-centered, the phenomenological perspective is proven to be true. The Spaniards were, as has been shown, conducting their possession of riches in the New World under a legitimate phenomenological framework. Even if the Spanish-centered framework for taking over the riches of the New World is seen as a Particular rather than a Universal, the legitimacy of the phenomenological value does not diminish whatsoever. In this case, the Particular is the Spanish-centered framework itself based on the Moorish legacy. The Spanish-centered phenomenological framework stands, for it is simply unfeasible to interpret this historical account from any perspective based on presentism, that is, using modern values and ideals of moral or immoral to evaluate Spanish possession over riches and resources in the Americas.

It must be said that the Spanish conquest of the Americas was, arguably, an extension of *La Reconquista*, following the same principles of uniting people under the Spanish banners of Catholicism and Empire. Even though the Spanish conquest shows cruelty towards the Amerindians, cruelty was never embraced by the Spanish crown as official policy. In fact,

Fernando and Isabel themselves "laid down the fundamental principle that the indigenous inhabitants in the new overseas territories of the Crown of Castile were vassals of the crown, and, as such, were not to be enslaved."[82] The foundations established by the Spanish state itself were benevolent and conformed to principles of justice. The Spanish state, unlike its British counterpart 100 years later, would be the one to truly implement the ideal foundations of a humane overseas empire based on Aristotelian principles.

The foundations of Spain's overseas empire would serve as a model, whether for good or for ill, for the British Empire starting in 1607. In many instances, the English would look towards Imperial Spain and try to copy their methods of colonization. But due to the essential natures in their forms of colonization, sometimes the English could only watch the actions of their Spanish counterparts. For instance, the English prided themselves in styling their colonial ventures as an empire of business rather than conquest. But the writing of the elder Richard Hakluyt *Pamphlet for the Virginia Enterprise* of 1585 shows otherwise. Hakluyt wrote that the English "may, if we will proceed with extremity, conquer, fortify, and plant in soils most sweet, most pleasant, most strong, and most fertile, and in the end bring them [Indians] all in subjection and to civility."[83] While the English form of colonial empire was different in essence from the Spanish version, they attentively watched the actions of the Spaniards as they spread across New Spain and took from them any useful lessons to bolster their own agenda.

Twilight of the Gods

In 1519 A.D., the Spanish *conquistadores* first anchored on the shores of the Yucatan peninsula in modern day México. When the natives of the Americas, incorrectly called Indians

82 Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 97.
83 Ibid., 11.

by the Spaniards' belief that they had arrived in Asia, saw the Spaniards, they were seen as gods returning to their subjects. Unlike the Amerindians, the Spanish bore full metal armors that glistened in the sun. They rode on their horses, which were foreign animals to the Americas. The roar of the cannons of the Spaniards, the size of their caravels, their weapons, and the Spaniard's 250,000 Tlaxcalan allies, all combined perfectly to cause fear and wondering among the natives. But what greatly impacted the mind of the Amerindians were their own religious beliefs. According to the legends of the Aztecs, the dominant group of Indians in Mesoamerica during the arrival of the Spanish, their god Quetzalcoatl (the feathered serpent) had left generations ago by way of the East. He would return some day from the same direction. Although, it is interesting to note that this idea of deification only lasted until the Indians first killed a Spaniard.

The east was the direction from which the Spanish arrived. In his narrative of *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*, Bernal Díaz del Castillo recounts an occasion when messengers of the Aztec Emperor Montezuma saw that one of Cortés' soldiers

> had a helmet half gilt but somewhat rusty, and this Tendile noticed, for he was the more forward of the two ambassadors, and said that he wished to see it as it was like one that they possessed which had been left to them by their ancestors of the race from which they had sprung, and that it had been placed on the head of their [god of war, Huitzilopochtli].[84]

While many Amerindians were fearful and suspicious of the Spaniards, not all Indians were hostile towards them. In his narrative, Bernal Díaz del Castillo refers constantly to the great lady Doña Marina, native of the Americas and constant interpreter for Cortés and his crew. For posterity, Doña Marina would be more famously known as *La Malinche*, for many, a traitor to her own kind and choosing the love of the Spaniard Cortés, and the woman most responsible for opening México to the Spanish *conquistadores*. Furthermore, Díaz del Castillo refers to a "fat

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[84] Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*, ed. David Carrasco (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 55.

cacique"[85] that mediated between Emperor Montezuma and the Spaniards. According to the account by Díaz del Castillo, many of the Indians were so taken by the Spaniards that "they said to Cortés that as we were already their friends, they would like to have us for brothers, and that it would be well that we should take from their daughters, so as to have children by them."[86] Eight Indian women were brought before Cortes, to be given to him and his high-ranking soldiers. They were "clothed in the rich garments of the country, beautifully ornamented as is their custom. Each one of them had a golden collar around her neck and golden earrings in her ears, and they came accompanied by other Indian girls who were to serve as their maids.[87]

Cortés was thankful to the caciques for their gifts, but the Spaniards could not accept the Indian women and become brothers until "they [got] rid of those idols which they believed in and worshipped, and which kept them in darkness, and must no longer offer sacrifices to them."[88] Furthermore, Cortés stated that the

> damsels must become Christians before [they] could receive them. Every day [they] saw sacrificed before [them] three, four or five Indians whose hearts were offered to the idols and their blood plastered on the walls, and the feet, arms and legs of the victims were cut off and eaten, just as … [they] eat beef brought from the butchers.[89]

For the Spaniards, the human sacrifices of the Aztecs were blasphemous to the one true God, their God. When Cortés made the acquaintance of Emperor Montezuma, Cortés demanded that all human sacrifices be ceased at once. Montezuma responded that their god Huitzilopochtli demanded these offerings. After the great Emperor Montezuma died, his brother Cuitláhuac became the next *tlatoaní*, or emperor. Unlike his brother Montezuma, Cuitláhuac was not taken

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85 The word cacique refers to a chief or leader of an Indian tribe, usually holding great power in political and social endeavors.

86 Ibid., 79.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

by Cortés' silver tongue. The rise of Cuitláhuac to the Aztec throne changed the dynamic between the Spaniards and the Aztecs.

Trained as a soldier, Cuitláhuac knew better than to trust the Spanish like his brother Montezuma had. During the reign of Montezuma, the Spaniards and the Aztecs had fought, resulting in the deaths of several thousands of Aztecs. But during the night of June 30, 1520 A.D., the hostilities between the Spaniards and the Aztecs opened into irreversible warfare. This night became known as *La Noche Triste*. Cuitláhuac's forces had dealt a devastating defeat to the Spanish at the palace of Axayácatl. According to the account by Díaz del Castillo, only Pedro de Alvarado and four other soldiers made it back to the Spanish camp. Upon seeing them in ill conditions from the fighting, Cortés and several other captains could not help but weep for their fallen brethren.

As a warrior, Cuitláhuac made the fatal mistake of not finishing off the Spaniards. He allowed them to regroup and prepare for war against the Aztecs. Since they had arrived in the shores of modern México and learning about Montezuma, the Spaniards had been meeting and talking to other groups of Indians under Aztec rule and trying to convince them to rebel against the powerful Aztec ruler. On September 17 of that same year, Cuitláhuac ascended to the position of Aztec Emperor, succeeding his brother Montezuma. To celebrate the occasion, the Spanish soldiers that had been held prisoners were sacrificed by Cuitláhuac.

Cuitláhuac knew that the Spanish would return with greater forces to the imperial city of Tenochtitlan. To prepare for the upcoming war, Cuitláhuac appealed to neighboring tribes in the close areas of Cholula and Tlaxcala. Once feared, the Aztec might no longer held the authority it once did over these populations. Many of their subjugated Indian groups found the courage, perhaps due to their contact with the Spaniards, to rebel against Aztec imperial rule. Cuitláhuac

placed his nephew Cuauhtémoc in charge of the Aztec armies. However, on December 5, 1520, Cuitláhuac fell ill due to the diseases that were brought over by the Spanish.

The immune system of the Amerindians did not have the necessary defenses to deal with new disease from the Old World. Among the diseases, smallpox was a major factor in killing off the mass majority of the Indians. In logistical terms, this was a huge advantage for the Spaniards in case of open warfare against the natives. At last, the escalating hostilities were now a declared war for survival.

With the passing of Cuitláhuac, Cuauhtémoc became the next, and last, Aztec emperor. As the last battle between the Aztecs and *conquistadores* was fought in the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, Cortés took Cuauhtémoc captive. Cortés tortured Cuauhtémoc by tying him and burning his feet in order to get him to reveal the location of the Aztec gold. Cuauhtémoc insisted that the treasure was at the bottom of the lake.

It is of utmost significance to clarify that far more Amerindians "died in bed from Eurasian germs than on the battlefield from European guns and swords."[90] It was because of diseases, especially smallpox, that Cortés and his army of around 600 soldiers were able to conquer the Aztec Empire and its population of millions of inhabitants; it is also the same reason why in South America, Francisco Pizzaro and 169 soldiers defeated and subjugated the Inca Empire and its millions of inhabitants in 1531.

It was not soldiers and conquistadores that wreaked havoc in the New World; the "main killers were Old World germs to which Indians had never been exposed, and against which they therefore had neither immune nor genetic resistance. Smallpox, measles, influenza, and typhus

[90] Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017), 201.

competed for top rank among the killers."[91] To strengthen the armies of germs and diseases from the Old World, "diphtheria, malaria, mumps, pertussis, plague, tuberculosis, and yellow fever came up close behind"[92] to the top killers like typhus, influenza, measles, and smallpox.

If a list was made based on the aforementioned diseases as to the top killers in the New World upon the arrival of the Europeans, smallpox would be in first place, with measles, influenza and typhus following close behind. This, at the very least, demonstrates that the actual fighting between Spaniards and Indians was not in the top four reasons in terms of Indian casualties. As a matter of fact, it is simply not possible to deliberately blame Europeans for the spread of diseases in the New World, for they were unaware of such a thing.

The Aztec Empire fell decisively on August 13, 1521 to the *conquistadores*, effectively converting the remainder of the Aztecs and surrounding tribes into subjects of the Spanish Empire. To the south of the new continent in what is modern Peru, another mighty empire fell to the Spaniards, the Incas. Their last emperor, Atahualpa, was deposed in 1533 A.D.

Under the leadership of Francisco Pizarro, and Indian help such as from the Huancas and the Cañaris who opposed the Inca rule of Atahualpa, the conquest of the Inca Empire was almost an identical carbon copy of the fall of the Aztec Empire to the north. Disease, war, and famine had brought both empires to their knees before the Spanish invaders.

After the conquest, there were new questions to be answered, questions regarding settlement, governance, and social structures. What was to be the relationship between the *conquistadores* and the *conquistados*[93]? What new social institutions were to take place between the Amerindians and the Spaniards?

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[91] Ibid., 203.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Those who have been conquered.

At the forefront of these dilemmas were men who were a product of the new Renaissance learning that was taking place back in Europe. In the case of the Spanish Empire, the new learning, and Aristotelian philosophy, would provide the answers for the political questions faced by Spain and its colonies overseas. Just like the Spaniards, the English would later face the same questions of imperial legitimacy in the Americas. Perhaps not surprisingly, both would look towards Salamanca in order to find answers to questions of conquest. But while these questions occupied the Spanish court before, during, and after the fall of the Aztec Empire, Spanish explorers ventured into North American territory with North American tribes, such as the Zunis and Hopis, resisting Spanish incursion on their land.

Spaniards, such as the explorer Juan Ponce de Leon and the Franciscan priest Junípero Serra, expanded Spanish presence throughout the southern and southwest lands that would later become the United States. Juan Ponce de Leon, c.a. 1513, explored what is modern-day Florida, while Fr. Junípero, c.a. 1769, founded the chain of missions stretching from Arizona to northern California. The most famous of these missions were San Xavier del Bac and Santa Barba in Arizona and California respectively. But a bigger threat to the Spanish territories in North America was, perhaps, from Anglo Americans as they poured over the Appalachian Mountains. The Spanish, c.a. 1785, had abandoned the idea of using their forts and missions for the conversion of the Indians as more Anglo Americans encroached on Spanish territorial boundaries.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE NAME OF ARISTOTLE

The powerful empires of the Americas, the Aztecs and the Incas, had fallen to their Spanish conquerors. Now, the Spanish settlers had the opportunity to build an empire in their image. The taking of possessions formerly belonging to the Aztecs and the Incas, the settling of "the land, the building of cities, the forcing of the native population into patterns determined for it by the Spaniards, and the gradual establishment of governmental institutions, represented the second, and perhaps the greater, conquest of America."[94] This was a process that would take generations to accomplish. As with the legends, myths, and stories that filled the imagination of Spanish explorers and adventures in the Americas, the old, medieval institutions of government, culture, and society were transferred from the Old World to the New World. Thus, "the conquerors of the New World themselves fell victims to the bureaucrats of the Old."[95] The Catholic Kings were aware of the challenges of having an overseas empire. They were ready to meet those challenges.

Before embarking westward towards Asia, Columbus and the Catholic Kings had negotiated extensively on the proper distribution of the lands and riches that were to be discovered by Columbus. *La Reconquista* had provided the Catholic Kings with a pattern on which to base the discovery of new lands abroad. A portion of the taken lands and riches was to

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[94] Elliot, *Imperial Spain*, 67.
[95] Ibid.

be set aside for the Crown and the rest was to be distributed to the members of the landing party. The main problems arose when the Spaniards began to exploit the Amerindians for their profits and personal advancement. The Spaniards were very dependent on exploiting native labour, in the fields and mines, but "on what grounds could this exploitation bet justified? This question raised the whole problem of the basis and extent of Spain's rights in the New World – itself an old problem posed in a new form.[96]

The Spanish Empire in the New World combined the medieval authoritative paradigms of church and state. As non-Christians, the inhabitants of the New World were automatically ranked as having a lower morality than the Christians of the New World. As with its fellow European countries, Spain had a tradition of dealing with pagans and infidels. When Pope Alexander VI "issued his famous papal bulls of 1493 drawing a line of demarcation between Spain's and Portugal's spheres of influence, and confirming the status of the new territories as a papal fief held by the Spanish Crown,"[97] he inadvertently complicated the socio-political problems that Spain would face several years from then.[98]

The papal bulls were ambiguous as the nature of rights therein, for it was unclear whether the bulls "unconditionally conferred full political and territorial rights on the Spanish Crown, or whether those rights were strictly subordinated to a religious end, and retained their validity only so long as Spain fulfilled its spiritual mission of converting its heathen subjects." With *La Reconquista* fresh on their memories, the Spanish explorers derived their understanding of concepts such as conquest, war, loot, and enemies, from the political lessons during the Spanish unification under Fernando and Isabel.

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96 Ibid., 69.

97 Ibid.

98 It is interesting to note that when Alexander VI issued his papal bulls, he was thinking that he was conferring rights to lands in Asia. Alexander VI, like Columbus and the Catholic Kings, was not aware of the existence of the American continent.

While the Spanish could appeal to papal sanction as a basis for undertaking their explorations of the Americas, the English, by contrast, could do no such thing, for in 1534 A.D., King Henry VIII had openly rebelled against the church authority of Rome and declared himself the head of the church in England. Both Spaniards and English were faced with the question of how to justify their conquest of the specific territories in the New World. But only one of them could appeal to papal authority. What, then, could the English use as their basis for justification in their conquest? Ironically, the English, perhaps out of options, relied on something that the pope had given the English king before England became religiously independent from Rome. The answer to the question of establishing an empire of legitimate authority came from the English Richard Hakluyt.

Hakluyt noted that "the Kings and Queens of England have the name of Defenders of the Faith; by which title I think they are not only charged to maintain and patronize the faith of Christ, but also to enlarge and advance the same."[99] It was thanks to Hakluyt that the English found their much needed justification for carrying a conquest of their own in the New World. They too, like the Spaniards, had a religious mission to "reduce the savage people [of the Americas] to Christianity and civility."[100] It is interesting that after having rejected and cut all ties with Catholic Rome, England relied upon its title of "Defender of the Faith"[101] to find solid ground on which to launch itself into open conquest of new territory.

Within a few decades of having discovered the Americas, the political problems brought about by the question of colonial legitimacy would engulf Iberian Spain, with advocates and defenders of different ideologies on both sides of the issue. To settle their disputations, the

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[99] Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 11.

[100] Ibid.

[101] This title was granted to King Henry VIII by Pope Leo X in 1521 A.D.

participants would summon the authority of ancient writers in order to provide the best paradigm for dealing with the infidels of the Americas. But the greatest debate of all would bring Aristotle's full authority to the forefront of the issue. In a sense, it was a political battle between Aristotelians from the Aristotelian branch of realpolitik vs. Aristotelians from the ethical branch.

After landing and exploring the unknown territory, Columbus "sent home shiploads of Indians to be sold as slaves, but the theologians protested, the Queen doubted herself, and the enslavement of the Indians was formally prohibited in 1500 A.D."[102] *La Reina* Isabel herself declared that the Amerindians were vassals of the Spanish Crown and that Spaniards, regardless of rank, had no right to sell or enslave the natives. This did not stop Spaniards, such as Cortés, from "finding pretexts for the enslavement of numerous men, women, and children."[103] Apart from the question of what constituted proper dealings with the Indians, the Spanish crown was aware of the necessity of keeping Spanish subjects in the Americas under their firm control. With plenty of historical examples to backup their wariness, the Spanish monarchs knew that conferring too much power on the Spanish explorers and *conquistadores* would lay the foundation for potentially challenging the rule of the Spanish Crown over its own colonies in the Americas.

Aristotle's Benevolent Empire Rises

Fernando and Isabel carefully weighed their approach towards American colonization. They were aware that they could not risk the disobedience of the *conquistadores* and explorers in the New World. The Catholic Kings knew that too much was to be gained from a careful conquest in terms of revenue and bringing in new converts to the Catholic faith, which had been

102 Elliot, *Imperial Spain*, 70.
103 Ibid.

entrusted to them by Pope Alexander VI in his papal bulls. They knew that they needed to quickly establish administrative, ecclesiastical, and judicial structures in the New World if they wanted to hold a firm control over their new territories. The Crown established the Council of the Indies with the Bishop of Burgos, Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, as the "*supremo* in the management of the Indies trade and the administration of the Indies from 1493 for almost the entire period down to his death in 1524."[104]

Isidoro de Sevilla would have, perhaps, never imagined that his dream of having a united Church and State working alongside each other would achieve its greatest expression during the Spanish Conquest of the Americas. It was truly a transatlantic effort by the two institutions of Spain to colonize an entire new world. But unlike the Spaniards, the English had nothing remotely close to this structural framework with which to carry out their conquest. In this, again, Spain had shown England what it meant to truly have a solid basis for establishing an overseas empire.

From its very foundations, the English settlements were primarily based on charters granted by the English crown, such as the Virginia Company's royal charter of 1606 intended to "combine personal profit and national advantage by means of a corporate organization which owed more to their own energy and enthusiasm than to that of the state."[105] The lack of silver in their new territory dissuaded the English crown from investing too much resources, or even attention, to its overseas colonial endeavors. The English monarchy saw that it had "less immediate profit to be expected from overseas colonization, [and thus] maintained a relatively low profile in the crucial opening stages of colonial development."[106]

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104 Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 122.
105 Ibid., 27.
106 Ibid.

This sharply contrasts with the heavy involvement of the Catholic Church and Spanish monarchy with their overseas project. With less indigenous people to be converted or exploited, the "British crown and the Anglican Church had much less reason than their Spanish counterparts to display a close interest in the well-being of the indigenous population in the newly settled lands.[107]

To address the dual problem of mistreatment of the Indians and maintaining firm Crown control over colonial territories, the Spanish government initially put forth a political system known as *la encomienda*. This system "appeared to harmonize satisfactorily the Castilian ideals of lordship and the demands of pastoral care."[108] The *encomienda* system had its roots in medieval Castile. In its original conception, the system was employed as conferring upon individuals the duty of protecting land that had been reacquired from Moorish territories. The colonial version of this system varied in its form. The colonial version originated in Hispaniola, where "Columbus assigned to the settlers a number of Indians who were expected to perform labour services for them." This numerical assignation to the Indians became known as *repartimiento*, or redistribution. The Spaniard that was granted lordship over a respective group of Indians was known as *el encomendero*. The *encomendero* was "given, on a strictly temporary, non-hereditary basis… a landed estate, and indeed had nothing to do with ownership of the land, the property rights of the Indians being formally respected."[109] It became the *encomenderos* duty to protect and instruct the Indians in the ways of Castilian civility and Catholicism; in return, the *encomendero* reaped fruits from the labor of the Indians.

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[107] Ibid.

[108] Elliot, *Imperial Spain*, 70.

[109] Ibid.

Unfortunately, the system of *encomienda* found a way to reorient itself to realize the fears and doubts that plagued the queen. Oftentimes, the *encomienda* system was indistinguishable from a slavery system. As colonization of Spanish America increased, so, too, did the demand for Indian labor. This exploitation of the Indians was en route to becoming a central issue within the Spanish Empire during the middle decades of the 16th century. Furthermore, the mixing of races between Spaniards and Indians gave birth to a new colonial hierarchical class system.

In contrast to the Spanish *encomienda*, the English did not have a framework to mirror its Spanish counterpart. In its conception, the Spanish *encomienda* was meant to have a Spanish overlord take care of the Spanish vassals, whether they be Spaniards of lower descent or Indians. The Spanish monarchy took its role as the benevolent monarchy chosen by God very seriously, and decided that careful intervention on colonial development was crucial. The Alexandrine bulls had tasked the Spanish monarchs to look after the spiritual and material well-being of its new vassals, not slaves, in the Americas. It was "incumbent on the royal conscience to prevent unrestricted exploitation of the indigenous population by the colonists."[110] To be precise, the Catholic Kings "insisted on retaining ultimate authority when it came to the protection of the Indians and the salvation of their souls."[111]

The Spanish monarchs, along with their subjects throughout the spectrum of the hierarchy, believed in the idea of a *corpus mysticum* of kingship. Instinctively, this generation of Spaniards believed in deference towards the Crown, that prince and subject together constituted a dynamic community "designed to enable its members to live good and social lives according to their respective social stations, under the benevolent rule of a monarch who governed, following

110 Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 22.
111 Ibid.

the dictates of his conscience, in accordance with divine and natural law.[112] This idea of communal and good living is directly derived from Aristotle's *Politics* where the he writes that "every community gets established with some good in view… [that] all communities have some good that they are aiming at."[113] This teaching derived from "Aristotle by way of Aquinas, [and was] reformulated at a theoretical level for sixteenth-century Spaniards by the neo-Thomist scholastics of the School of Salamanca."[114]

By contrast, the English colonists, and the English crown, overall, simply did not care for the Indians, much less for the salvation of their souls, and had no theoretical guidelines for their conducts towards the natives. Certainly the English had envisaged establishing a system similar to the Spanish *encomienda* where Indians would serve English masters, but the Indians had no desire to willfully participate in the English, or Spanish, plan. The English became more emboldened once they discovered that the land around the Virginia settlement was ripe for the production of tobacco. In the eyes of the English colonists, the Indians remained ever a threat. In 1622 A.D., the English settlers "embarked on overt-anti Indian policies, forcing them off their land in the lower peninsula. By 1633 a six-mile long pale had been constructed, leaving 300,000 acres cleared of Indian occupation."[115] In 1644, the English made even more advances onto Indian territory without any remorse either from the settlers, the monarchy, or the Protestant sects of the time.

The English focused on pushing the Indians further into the American continent. The English settlers looked at themselves, at their surroundings, and drew parallels between their plight and the Old Testament. They saw "a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts

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112 Ibid., 131.
113 Aristotle, *The Politics*, 8.
114 Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic Worlds,* 131.
115 Ibid., 42.

and wild men."[116] The wilderness of the vast American forests was analogous to a dark and dangerous land where Satan ruled. But, it also "implied a place of retreat and refuge, in which trials and tribulations would strengthen and refine the faithful as they struggled to tame and improve the wild land.[117]

Biblical imagery permeated all aspects of colonial life for the English settlers. The English colonists, regardless of their particular Protestant faith, saw themselves as God's elect people. If the Native American woods implied darkness and savagery where Satan ruled, it followed in their thinking that the natives were beholden unto the power of darkness. The English were wary of "going native" and having their souls lost to barbarous ways.

This idea of going native was not new to colonial England as a matter of act. It actually has its origins c.a. 1366 A.D. in the Statutes of Kilkenny. These statutes were made to prevent marriage or cohabitation between the English and the Irish "in the belief that mixed marriages would tempt the English partner to lapse into degenerate Irish ways."[118] Already small in number, the English settlers feared that renegade settlers would wander off into the barbarian land never to be heard of again. Even during the sixteenth century, the "Irish remained for the English a barbarous people, whose barbarism was now compounded by their obstinate determination to cling to papist ways."[119] Therefore, the "instinctive tendency of the colonial leaders was therefore once again to establish a form of segregation"[120] from the natives.

Almost all branches of Protestantism preached the same message regarding the wild lands of the Americas and their original inhabitants: they are infidels and we (the English) are the

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116 Ibid., 48.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid., 80.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.

chosen. In 1609 in Virginia, Reverend William Symonds preached a sermon that recalled a message given to Abraham by God in the Old Testament where Abraham is instructed not marry nor give in marriage to the heathen. The sermons alluded to the displeasure of God caused by the sons of Levi and Israel for having married strange wives.

Some Protestant groups took this message even further. The "fear of cultural degeneracy in an alien land was especially pronounced among the Puritan emigrants to New England in the 1620s and 1630s."[121] In addition, the English colonists ingrained a biblical exodus, that of the Israelites out of Egypt, deep within their minds. For the Puritan leaders as well as the faithful, the Indians were a degenerate race, like the Canaanites, that threatened to pollute God's chosen "people with their own degeneracy. For this reason it was essential that the New England Israel should remain a nation apart, resisting the blandishments of the people whom they were in process of dispossessing of their land."[122]

By contrast, the Spanish, 100 years before, had taken the opposite decision to actually mingle with the Amerindians. In fact, in 1503, Fernando and Isabel instructed the governor of Hispaniola – Nicolás de Ovando – to try to convince Spanish Catholic men and women to marry Indian men and women respectively "so that they can communicate with and teach each other, and the Indians can be indoctrinated in our Holy Catholic Faith, and learn how to work their lands and manage their property, and be turned into rational [people]."[123] The intermingling of Spaniards and Indians led to the creation of a racial caste system, with Spaniards at the top and the Indians and African slaves at the bottom. The creation of a racial system of hierarchy, however, does not diminish the fact that the Spanish state had created legislation to better the lot

121 Ibid.
122 Ibid., 81.
123 Ibid.

of all its vassals, whether Spanish or Indian. The actions of Spanish conform to patterns of benevolent administration and instruction and cultivation of understanding between Spanish and Indian alike. The Spanish crown understood that the basis of establishing an overseas empire rested on cooperation and exchanges of ideas and culture rather than isolation – the British approach. In fact, in 1622, Sir Francis Wyatt, the governor of Virginia, wrote down that their priority was the "expulsion of the Savages to gain the free range of the country for increase of cattle, swine, [that it is infinitely better to have no heathen among us, who at best were but thorns in our sides, than to be at peace and league with them."[124]

Compared to their Spanish colleagues, English reverends and preachers fell far short from their New Testament commandment to go and preach to all nations. In fact, some Spanish friars made an intensive effort "to understand the history and the customs of the peoples whom they were attempting to indoctrinate. In order to present the gospel, many of them had already laboriously mastered one or more native languages.[125] In addition, several "of these languages were transcribed into the Latin alphabet, and grammars and dictionaries were compiled, like the Quechua dictionary published in 1560 by Fray Domingo de Santo Tomás."[126]

Like a scene reminiscent of the Library of Alexandria or the cathedral under Raymund I, Spanish friars and Indians worked side by side to grow and share in knowledge of their respective worlds. Native people who possessed knowledge of native life before the conquest of the Americas were asked "to interpret and flesh out the pictographic evidence provided by the surviving codices and to answer carefully constructed questions about ancient practices and

[124] Ibid., 86.
[125] Ibid., 70.
[126] Ibid.

beliefs."[127] While it is true that zealot Spaniards, whether laymen or church officials, burned, desecrated and destroyed ancient pre-Columbian treasures, it is also true that the Spanish Crown generally pushed for policies that aimed to safeguard the native Indians as humanly possible. During his reign, Philip II also contributed to this safeguarding of Indian culture in 1578 by decreeing that "no religious friars should be appointed to Indian benefices without some knowledge of the language, and two years later he set up chairs of indigenous languages in the universities of Lima and Mexico City."[128]

To further illustrate the growing cooperation between Spaniards and Indians, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún "completed, in 1579, a bilingual text, Nahuatl and Castilian,"[129] that may have been produced with the purpose of converting the Indians. Meanwhile 100 years thereafter, the English preachers held firm to their beliefs of seeing themselves as strangers in a strange land, as faithful servants cast upon a lost world filled with dark nightmares. Upon a close look at the foundations of their respective overseas empires, Spain and England were outright unequal, with England having virtually no framework, theoretical or practical, to even think of itself in terms of a colonial empire.

The Spanish achievements were so impressive, in fact, that the English William Strachey held it up as an example to his fellow Englishmen as they embarked on the colonization of Virginia. He rhetorically asked them, "Have we either less means, fainter spirits, or a charity more cold, or a religion more shameful, and afraid to dilate itself? Or is it a lawful work in them, and not in us?"[130] In William Strachey's question, one portion does have a definite yes as a response, the part that asks if England had less means. The Protestant Reformation had destroyed

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127 Ibid.
128 Ibid., 84.
129 Ibid., 70.
130 Ibid., 72.

any symbiotic relation between Church and state. Based on their principles of *Sola Scriptura* and *Sola Fide*[131], each Protestant had leeway to interpret biblical scripture as his or her conscience dictated. This meant that any church authority was unnecessary, and that only faith was necessary for salvation.

After the Reformation, in England there was simply "no cadre of militant evangelists in the home country ready to take up the challenge of converting the peoples of North America to the faith."[132] The closest thing to a unified church located in England was the Anglican Church. But even then, the Anglican Church at the start of English colonization of the Americas was in no "position to devise and implement a Spanish-style programme of evangelization, enjoying full and effective support from the crown."[133] As a matter of fact, during the seventeenth century, the Anglican Church "was still struggling to establish itself and its doctrines at home, and had neither the energy nor the resources to devote much attention to the opportunities that awaited it overseas."[134] This is why, on a comparison of, for instance, during the first 50 years of their respective colonial foundations, Spain was the ideal example on how to establish a transatlantic empire, both from a logistical and a humane perspective. But within this vacuum of a state or a church presence, colonial England was sowing the seeds for its future identity.

On May 13, 1625, King Charles I of England spoke of a "Royall Empire, descended upon Us and undoubtedly belonging and pertaining unto Us."[135] The empire of which Charles I spoke was a *de facto* composite empire, rather than a unified empire such as the Spanish. Scotland and Ireland were not entirely fond of English authority ruling over them. Certainly Charles I sought

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131 *Sola Scriptura* means by scripture alone, and *Sola Fide* means by faith alone.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid., 117.

to consolidate English authority over its newfound American colonies. It was not until the eighteenth century that the British colonial government in the Americas had the infrastructure with which to collect taxes and allocate resources for imperial use. Colonial governments saw the need to fund themselves rather than rely on the English state. Colonial governors were even "forced to turn to colonial assemblies for money, including in some instances their own salaries."[136]

In terms of government, unlike their Spanish colleagues, the English colonists started to experiment with a form of government by committee representation. However, participation in these committees was limited to the most affluent men of their respective societies. Slaves, women and children were excluded. It was in "the Southern Colonies in particular, [where] local government was in the hands of self-selecting members of the plantation elite."[137]

To add complexities to the relation between the colonists and the English monarchy, the "English Civil War and the king's execution in 1649 raised, not only for Massachusetts but for all the colonies, major questions about the exact nature of their relationship with the mother country."[138] During the reign of King James II of England – c.a. 1665 – 1668 – the English crown set about on an ambitious project for "the consolidation of the American colonies into three or four viceroyalties on the Spanish model."[139] But at this point, imperial intervention in colonial lives was an unwelcomed prospect for the colonists.

The English settlers in the New World had been left bereft for decades by their monarchs. Now, "for the first time in their collective experience, [the settlers would] be brought face to face

[136] Ibid., 139.
[137] Ibid., 146.
[138] Ibid., 147.
[139] Ibid., 149.

with the intrusive state" of James II.[140] This late approach to the colonial project by the English state was in stark contrast to its Spanish counterpart where the Spanish monarchy, since its origins, was strongly present in the daily lives of its colonists during the entire colonial period. While the English settlers gained an air of autonomy early on in their colonial days, the winds of independence would not reach Spanish America until the early 1800s. In this, too, the English state tried to implement policies based on the Spanish colonial model.

As a unified entity made up of Church and State, Spain's founding principles for overseas colonization provided the ideal framework to carry out their conquest, as humanly possible by theoretical and practical standards. The well-balanced combination of a "bureaucratic state structure with a culture of loyalty that permitted resistance within certain understood limits gave colonial Spanish America the appearance of a politically stable society."[141] It is true that Spanish America had its quarrels with mainland Spain, but conflicts and crises were quickly addressed because Spain was organized and had the advantage of an effective mechanism for responding to the emerging questions of empire.

Furthermore, the fact that being Spanish and Catholic were virtually the same meant that the Catholic faith, with its traditions and outreach to the Indians, provided a sense of inclusion that eluded British America. The spread of the Catholic faith throughout the Spanish imperial lands was like a tree whose branches linked the subjects of the vast realm. England, on the other hand, struggled to find its own place within the era of colonial empires. Nonetheless, it continued to look to Spain for guidelines on what to do and what not to do.

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[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid., 133.

The Administrator

In 1504, *La Reina Isabel* passed away. *El Rey Fernando* would outlive Isabel for twelve years until his death in 1516 A.D. With the passing of Isabel, Fernando lost status and credibility among the Castilian nobility. He was denied the title of King of Castilla, remaining only King of Aragón. During the decade of the discovery of the Americas, the next generation of administrators and rulers of the Spanish Empire was being groomed. After the death of Fernando, the next King of Spain would be his own grandson (at the age of sixteen), Charles I of Spain, also more widely known as Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire. Through his maternal side, Charles' mother was Juana de Castilla, known as Juana *La Loca*, the third child of the Catholic Kings Fernando and Isabel.

Juana was born on November 6, 1479 in the city of Toledo. As the third child of Fernando and Isabel, Juana was naturally third in line for the thrones of Castilla and Aragón. However, her older brother Juan passed away, followed by their sister Isabel in 1497. In 1496, Juana married Philip I, known as Philip The Handsome, son of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. Philip's descriptor "The Handsome" was given by the French King Louis XII when the couple stopped in Blois on their way to Spain. Juana's marriage with Philip did not last long. Philip died in 1506, two years after his mother-in-law Isabel. For eight months afterwards, Juana had Philip's funeral procession travel around Spain. This caused the people to think that Juana had gone insane. For her father Fernando, this was an opportunity to remove her from the throne. Juana's supposed insanity has been the cause for much debate between historians. Charles' mother Juana passed away in 1555.

Upon becoming King of Spain in 1516 and the Holy Roman Emperor in 1519, he presided over a vast imperial property in Europe, inherited the socio-political problems of

colonial Spanish America, and the growing religious tensions of Europe. Fortunately, Charles, had an able administrator steeped in the Renaissance, nascent tradition of political advisor to princes and rulers. That man was the Italian Mercurino di Gattinara.

Mercurino was born in 1465 A.D., more than likely in the town of Gattinara in northern Italy. His father had taken low to mid-level government positions. The small town of Gattinara was deeply affected by the political turmoil between the Visconti family of Milan, the marquises of Montferrat, and the Francophone dukes of Savoy. Mercurino spoke Italian as his native tongue, but became fluent in French as an official to the Savoy court. At the age of twenty-five, Mercurino embarked on the pursuit of a law degree against the wishes of his mother Felicita Ranzo. For Mercurino's mother, studying law was a waste of family resources. Several of Mercurino's relatives had pursued a law degree and failed in the process. His mother feared that the same would happen to him, for understandable reasons. However, his determination would pay off.

As a lawyer, Mercurino increased in fame and financial stability. In one "case in particular, [he was]… pitted against three of his own law professors. He boasted of defeating and surpassing his masters."[142] With the growth of his reputation, Mercurino came to the attention of the duke of Savoy, Philibert II. Philibert offered Mercurino a post on his privy council. Mercurino refused. In 1501 A.D., Philibert married Margaret of Austria, daughter of Maximilian I, the Holy Roman Emperor. Once again, Philibert approached Mercurino with a job offer, to become legal advisor for his wife Margaret. Mercurino agreed, so long as he was permitted to continue with his legal practice. Philibert died three years later in 1504 A.D., the same year as *La Reina Isabel* de Castilla. Mercurino, however, remained at the service of the duchess Margaret.

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[142] Rebecca Ard Boone, *Mercurino di Gattinara and the Creation of the Spanish Empire* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 9.

In 1505, Margaret moved her court to the city of Bresse, bringing Mercurino along. Thereafter, in 1506, Margaret's brother, Philip The Handsome, passed away. As a result, Margaret received the lands of Burgundy that were under Philip. Then, in 1507, Margaret moved once again, but to Flanders, to govern the territories of the region and undertake the tutelage of her nephew Charles, son of Philip The Handsome and Juana *La Loca*. Under Margaret's service, Mercurino's career prospered. In fact, Mercurino di Gattinara was part of the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Blois. The treaty, brokered "between Ferdinand of Spain and Maximilian I and arbitrated by Louis XII, named Charles of Burgundy as king of Castile at the death of his mother, Juana de Castile, called *La Loca*[143] due to her mental instability."[144] But just as Gattinara's career had risen meteorically, so too was his fall from grace and from the service of Margaret.

After Gattinara moved to Burgundy along with Margaret, she made him president of the Parliament of Burgundy in 1508. To bolster his image as a noble of Burgundy, he fabricated a lineage of nobility to landholdings granted by Frederick Barbarossa. He instructed his personal agents to purchase a castle (Castle Chevigny) several miles outside of Dole, and solicited the title of Marquis of Gattinara, all this in order to build up is false claim as a Burgundy noble. But one Burgundy noble, the Marshal Vergy, controlled the region and was in no mind to share his power with Gattinara. Gattinara represented the power of parliament (a new institution) and Marshal Vergy represented the old nobility (an old institution). Thus, while the battle was personal between Gattinara and Vergy, it was framed in terms of a new social institution versus the old

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[143] It is interesting to note that even though Juana was called *La Loca* (the mad), she never actually displayed any manifestations of mental instability, even as a child. However "mental instability" could have been, rather, depression due to the fact that In the span of ten years, Juana witnessed the death of her older brother Juan, the death of her older sister Isabel, the death of her mother Isabel de Castilla in 1504, and then the death of her husband Phillip The Handsome in 1506. Furthermore, Juana had to deal with the regular infidelities of her husband with the ladies of the court.

[144] Ibid., 11.

feudal order. Gattinara "persecuted noble malefactors in the service of justice and law,"[145] which greatly turned the Burgundian nobility against him. In this personal conflict, Vergy was the victor and Gattinara lost his reputation. Furthermore, he lost the support of Margaret, for she was not willing to support him against the Burgundian nobility.

After falling from grace, Gattinara sought to resurrect his political fortunes by appealing to Margaret's nephew, the young prince Charles, who became the Spanish King in 1516 A.D. after his grandfather Fernando de Aragón. To gain the favor of Charles, Gattinara dedicated a work to Charles in the tradition of "mirror of princes." Exponent works of this genre include Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Budé's *Institution du Prince*, and Claude de Seyssel's *Monarchie de France*.

These works were "guidebooks" inspired by Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, which was a biographical treatise on the art of governing based on the rule of the ancient Persian king Cyrus the Great. These works "purported to instruct and spur the new prince on to virtue and contained practical advice on the organization of counsel, finance and foreign affairs,"[146] while showcasing the ability, wisdom, and virtue of the author himself. These authors embedded in their work a framework that relied on the new humanistic learning that was taking root during the time of Charles I. Gattinara addressed his work to Luigi Marliano, a diplomat, physician and close advisor to Charles, but in fact Gattinara's work was aimed at Charles; in essence, it was a job application to gain favor with the prince.

It was not the dedication of his work that gained Gattinara favor with Charles, but rather a political incident. Shortly before swearing his oath to King Charles I of Spain in 1518 A.D., Gattinara had been offered the presidency and the chancellorship of the duchy of Savoy by Duke

[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid., 25.

Charles II. On his diplomatic journeys, Gattinara and his aids had been followed by three messengers who "informed him that four of his enemies in Flanders had mysteriously died. Among these was Jean le Sauvage, grand chancellor of Charles I of Spain. Maximilian offered Gattinara the position."[147] In his own narrative, Gattinara described this event as being "suffused with divine providence, [and chose to] answer the call of destiny.[148]

The adolescent prince Charles arrived in Spain during the fall of 1517. With the death of his father Philip back in 1506, and with his mother unable to take up the reigns of government due to alleged mental instability, Charles was the next candidate in line to the throne of his grandfather Fernando. However, a portion of the Spanish nobility, including from Aragón and Castilla, looked upon Charles with suspicion as being a foreigner. Charles had been raised in the Low Countries to the north of France. The Spanish nobility was inclined to favor Charles' younger brother Ferdinand to succeed Fernando de Aragón. Unlike Charles, Ferdinand had indeed been raised in Spain, and thus carried more Spanish legitimacy. Eventually, the elder brother, Charles, became the successor to the Spanish crown.

Charles' political situation in Spain became more complicated with the death of his paternal grandfather Maximilian I in January of 1519. As grandson of Maximilian, Charles' name was put forward as potential successor to Maximilian. However, members of the Spanish court held strong opposition towards his election, for understandable reasons. The sheer size of administering the territories of Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Spanish colonies overseas were not worth the trouble, according to Charles' counselors. Furthermore, the Spanish citizenry worried that their funds would be used for the protection of not just Spanish territory but now the Holy Roman Empire as well. Gattinara sided with the imperialists, infusing his

147 Ibid., 13.
148 Ibid.

opinion with messianic overtones for the dawn of an *orbis monarchiam*, or world domination. Gattinara put forth the conclusion that Charles' ascendance to the Imperial throne had been ordained by God himself to be the defender of Christendom in these uncertain times.

Charles' election to succeed Maximilian had been ripe with political intrigue. Charles was but one of three candidates competing for the crown; the other two were Henry VIII of England and Francis I of France. Each king had his own advisor, all men of prestige and among the most influential administrators during the 16th century. The English king, Henry VIII, had Cardinal Wolsey by his side. The French king, Francis I, was guided by Antoine Du Prat; the Spanish king, Charles I, was guarded by Chièvres[149] and Gattinara. Pope Leo X and seven electors were to decide the outcome of the imperial election. Each side offered incredible sums of money and made political promises to secure the favor of those deciding the outcome. Upon realizing that Charles was prone to win the imperial crown, Pope Leo X offered Gattinara the position of cardinal in the Catholic Church. Gattinara refused, stating that he preferred to work besides Charles. Gattinara did not wish to be closely aligned with the Catholic Church, saying that it was a natural enemy of the empire. Charles became Maximilian's successor, known as Charles V in the Holy Roman Empire and Charles I in Spanish territory.

After the death of his rival, Chièvres, in 1521 A.D., Gattinara focused on administering the vast domains of Charles. Even before, in 1520 A.D., Gattinara accompanied Charles to England to negotiate with Cardinal Wolsey. Therefore, Gattinara went with Charles "to the fabled meeting in Calais, in the 'Field of the Cloth of Gold,' where Charles I, Henry VIII, and Francis I met to arrange for a final peace in Christendom."[150] Gattinara had also been present during the historical confrontation between Charles and Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms in

[149] William of Croy, Lord of Chièvres, was personal advisor to Charles. Naturally, his relation with Gattinara was extremely personal, as both competed for the favor of Charles.
[150] Ibid., 17.

1521 where the final rift in Western Christendom became irreconcilable. After the Diet of Worms, Gattinara exchanged his role of diplomat for that of administrator. Gattinara was the de facto administrator and grand chancellor of all the territories governed by Charles.[151] Gattinara envisioned governing the vast territories from a central court, but balancing centralized authority with traditional, regional customs was a difficult task.

Gattinara's enemies at the Spanish court accused him of seeking more power at the expense of the king. This was primarily a regional issue. The authority and purpose of a grand chancellor was not an issue in Habsburg territory. However, it was a foreign concept for Spanish traditionalists. Ever more independent, Charles did not allow Gattinara to exercise uniform control of all communications with viceroys, ambassadors, and other diplomats. Nonetheless, Gattinara held firm power and grasp over the affairs of Charles, including the overseas affairs of the Americas.

As an administrator, Gattinara looked at the Americas as sources of revenue for funding the European wars. He catalogued and fixed his seal to reports of cargo ships coming from the New World. "In addition to gold and silver, however, the New World produced revenue as a source of new land. Islands especially were sold as fiefs to raise money for soldiers and weapons."[152]

Gattinara affirmed strong support for the exercise of central power over the Amerindians. In regards to the proper dealings with the new subjects of Imperial Spain in the Americas,

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151 To give an idea of the difficulty and confusion about Charles' responsibilities, here is the official title of Charles: Charles, Always August Emperor, king of Germany, of Castile, of Aragon, of the two Sicilies, of Jerusalem, of Hungary, of Dalmatia, of Navarra, of Granada, of Toledo, of Valencia, of Galicia, of Seville, of Mallorca, of Cerdeña, of Cordoba, of Murcia, of Jaen, of the Algarbes, of Algeciras, of Gibraltar, of the Canary Islands, of the Indies, islands and terra firma of the Ocean Sea, Archduke of Austria, duke of Burgundy, of Brabant, Lotharingia, Carinthia and Carniola, of Luxembourg, of Limburgh, of Guelders, Athens and Neopatria; Count of Brisna, of Flanders, of Tirol of Habsburg, of Artois and Burgundy; Count Palatine of Hainault, of Holland, of Zeeland, of Ferut, of Fribuque, Amuque of Rosellon and Cerdana; Landgrave of Alsace, Marquis of Burgundy and of the Holy Roman Empire, of Oristan and Gociano; Prince of Catalonia and Swabia; Lord of Frisia, of the Marcas, of Labono, of Puerta, of Viscaya, of Molina, of Salinas and Tripoli.

152 Ibid., 19.

Gattinara sided with Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas, who narrated the brutality of the Spanish *conquistadores* against the Indians in his work *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. Gattinara recognized the need of impartial justice for the new subjects, but not for the humane or religious reasons advocated by Las Casas.

In a realpolitik Aristotelian spirit derived from the *Politics*, Gattinara viewed the welfare of the Amerindians in terms of efficiently consolidating resources. Gattinara learned from his apprenticeship "with Maximilian I that finances determined the outcome of war. Years of unrest in the Italian Wars and in the Comuneros Revolt taught him that rebellion and social disorder produce no revenue."[153] When Columbus arrived in the Indies, several members at the Spanish court were skeptical of the personal motives of the *conquistadores*. One of these members was Juan de Rodríguez Fonseca, "chaplain to Isabella and archbishop of Burgos, [who] founded the *Casa de Contratación de las Indias* in 1503."[154] The task of this body was to regulate the trade coming from the Americas towards Spain. When Fonseca died in 1524 A.D., Gattinara took part in establishing a new administrative council called *el Consejo Real y Supremo de las Indias*.

With vast documentation regarding the resources of New Spain, including precious metals, foods, and people, Gattinara calculated that New Spain added around 1.6 million inhabitants to the realms of Charles V. Gattinara was quick to realize the potential power of the Amerindians as Spanish subjects. As a result, the protection of the Amerindians was a high priority for him. Gattinara's goals and the goals of Las Casas' aligned remarkably, albeit for different reasons. The grand chancellor of Charles V became a natural ally and supporter of Las Casas, the "Apostle of the Indies." Gattinara's involvement in the Indies was just as vast as that of Las Casas. In 1522 A.D., Gattinara presided over a dispute involving the governor of Cuba,

153 Ibid., 20.
154 Ibid., 38.

Diego Velásquez, and the *conquistador* Hernán Cortés. In essence, Velásquez had appointed Cortés to lead an expedition to the Yucatan peninsula, but had not given the latter the right to claim land. Upon landing in Vera Cruz, Cortés claimed the land in the name of Charles V.

Velásquez, however, denied Cortés the right to the claim and declared that since he had been the one to appoint Cortés, the land claim rightfully belonged to Velásquez. With Gattinara as the presiding official, the commission issued its opinion from Valladolid on October 22, 1522. The decision stated that the claim by Velásquez was invalid, given that he had appointed Cortés as the commander of the expedition. Cortés was promoted to governor of New Spain, and Velásquez was repaid the expenses of the expedition. Furthermore, the commission made it clear in its statement that the indigenous peoples were to be treated humanely, "evidence that Gattinara had taken the message of Las Casas to heart."[155]

Nonetheless, Gattinara could not help but see Cortés as a threat to the consolidated power of Charles. Cortés, like the indigenous subjects, needed to obey the crown. It can be argued that Gattinara had a sincere concern for the well-being of the Amerindians. "He regarded them as human beings who deserved justice and efficient administration… [while] many at court argued that the savagery of the Indians made them natural slaves and incapable of salvation.[156] Gattinara was supportive of the idea that *quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet* (what touches all must be agreed by all). Other members of the court went so far as to "refuse to acknowledge the humanity [of the natives] at all, and described them as deserving only of extinction."[157]

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155 Ibid., 41.
156 Ibid., 43.
157 Ibid.

The accounts by *conquistadores* helped to further fuel the disdain towards the Amerindians. For instance, Fernández de Oviedo claimed "that just listening to the Indians' unabashed descriptions of homosexual conduct made him feel mortified."[158] The Indian practices of "idolatry, human sacrifice, cannibalism, and sodomy in particular drew expressions of outrage from Iberians [that] cannot be understood through simple observation of native customs."[159] However, the practices of idolatry, "ritual commemoration of human sacrifice, and cannibalism all were suspiciously close to Catholic religious rituals,"[160] the very religion of the Spaniards!

The charge of idolatry against Spaniards by the Moors had been recurrent throughout the era of Moorish Spain. Thus, when Spaniards encountered idolatrous practices in the New World by the Amerindians, it is possible that centuries of accusations had subconsciously shaped Spanish mentality towards rage against idolatry. Similarly, the Moors attacked the Spanish on their ritual reenactment of human sacrifice during the Eucharist. This may, perhaps, have been a powerful trigger when witnessing actual ritual human sacrifices being performed by the natives. Some Europeans, however, like the Frenchmen Jean Léry (1536 – 1613) and Michel de Montaigne (1533 – 1592) issued critical attacks and observations regarding the sadistic practices of European greed as a counterweight to the cannibalism of the Amerindians.

Léry, in his *History of a Voyage* for instance, mentions that "Catholic Frenchmen savagely butchered and then ate the hearts and body fat of Protestant Frenchmen in 1572,"[161] and further noted "both his and his shipmates' impulses to ingest each other when famished on the return voyage to France."[162] In his essay *On Cannibals*, Montaigne praised the Amerindians in

158 Patricia See, *American Pentimento*, 96.
159 Ibid., 97.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid., 109.
162 Ibid.

saying that if their "'neighbors come from beyond the mountains to attack them and win the victory over them, the victor's gain is glory, and the advantage of having proved the superior in valor and prowess; for not otherwise do they give heed to the property of the vanquished.'"[163] In the same essay, Montaigne contrasts the barbarism of the Amerindians with the barbarism of the Europeans, and states that in "prying so narrowly into their faults, we are so blinded in ours."[164] In fact, European history is ripe with examples of human sacrifice. "The inquisition in Spain and Portugal burned people at the stake. Authorities throughout Europe regularly engaged in public executions. In early medieval times, prisoners of war in Germany were sacrificed to the gods."[165] Europeans had committed the very sins of which they accused the natives of committing.

In the midst of these attacks against the Amerindians, Gattinara made use of his power at court to defeat each of these propositions. Like Las Casas, Gattinara did much at the Spanish court for the "recognition of the indigenous peoples as true subjects of the crown, and provided administrative and legal structures, even if Spanish administrators did not ultimately succeed in enforcing policies that protected them from abuse and mistreatment."[166] Gattinara was determined to make Charles' empire a *monarchia universalis* that possessed *dominium totius orbis*.[167] Gattinara was so determined to keep the favor of Charles V that he had infused the image of Charles and his empire with messianic overtones. As a utopian thinker working under Charles V, Gattinara argued for "the unity of Christendom under one government."[168] This one government, of course, was to be the empire under Charles V, stretching from all the territories

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163 Ibid.

164 Michel de Montaigne, *Of Cannibals*, The Norton Anthology of English Literature Norton Topics Online, https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/16century/topic_2/cannibal.htm.

165 Ibid., 111.

166 Rebecca Ard Boone, *Mercurino di Gattinara and the Creation of the Spanish Empire, 43.*

167 Dominion all over the globe.

168 Ibid., 30.

in Europe to the lands in the New World, and all the inhabitants of these territories were to be faithful vassals to their one, true emperor.

With Gattinara the humanist at the helm of foreign policy for Charles V, and Las Casas, an Aristotelian ethicist, making the case for indigenous dignity and rights, the Spanish Empire was cloaking itself in an Aristotelian framework for administering the New World. However, opponents of both Gattinara and Las Casas would soon start to claim Aristotle in support of their alternate frameworks for dealing with the problems brought about by the discovery of the Americas.

The Imperium Romanum Reborn

Under Charles' leadership, Gattinara envisioned the birth of a global community that encompassed the globe under a Christian framework as the heir of the *Imperium Romanum*. In order to achieve the Aristotelian notion of *autarkeia* (self-sufficiency), the subjects of a state must adhere to the standards of the *societas civilis*. Virtue, according to Aristotle, could only be achieved in the political community. This idea carried over to the Romans, albeit under a Ciceronian conception. The greatness of a city, according to the Romans, was directly correlated to the greatness of its rulers. For Gattinara, this framework was ideal for the efficient administration of an empire.

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle put forth the idea of *koinos nomos*, or a universal law for all mankind. The reach of the *koinos nomos* included laws governing political arrangements and civilization. Civil law was a derivative of human law (*lex humanus*), which was in turn derived from natural law (*lex naturae*). However, this concept was specifically Roman. Thus, only the people that lived under Roman law within the scope of the *Imperium Romanum* were considered

fully human. For Cicero, the conception of political units outside of the *Imperium* was difficult to accept. The Ciceronian viewpoint consisted of a sharp division between Romans and provincials. According to Cicero in his *De Republica*, "the provincials… are the 'barbarians', rule over whom… is just precisely because servitude in such men is established for their welfare."[169]

The similarities between this Ciceronian viewpoint and Spanish imperial rule are staggering. Just like those outside of the scope of the Roman Empire were not considered fully human, so too were the natives that were outside of the periphery of the Spanish Empire. What would be the case, however, if human beings outside of imperial reach were to be included within the scope of empire? Would they become full subjects? The answer to this dilemma resides in three distinct narratives, all originating with Aristotle's conception of natural slavery, used by Aristotle, Cicero, and Imperial Spain.

Aristotle's theory of natural slavery has been the subject of countless debates between philosophers, historians, political theorists, and other intellectuals. Aristotle points out, however, that there is a distinction between a person who has been enslaved through unfortunate circumstances and a person who is a slave by nature. A slave by nature, according to Aristotle, is "someone who has the power of belonging to another… and who shares reason sufficiently to perceive it but not to have it."[170] Furthermore, natural slaves have the "condition of those whose work is the use of the body and from whom such work is the best that there is."[171] Aristotle speaks of slavery in terms of being part of a whole, just as "property is a part of the household and the science of property is a part of household management."[172] As a result, the master of a household much be virtuous in household management. Likewise, if the master of a slave is not

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169 Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500 – c. 1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 20.

170 Aristotle, *The Politics*, 16.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid., 13.

virtuous, then there is no benefit for the master-slave relation. Natural slavery "is a possession in the same way that we speak of a part. A part is not only part of something else but also wholly belongs to that something else, and the same is true of possession."[173] Thus, the Aristotelian teaching is that the relation between the natural master and the natural slave is guided by virtue and benefit, and that the latter is a living extension of the former. For Aristotle, however, a barbarian (the natural slave) was immovable from his slavery status, whereas for Cicero, a provincial could certainly be educated and brought to the ways of civil society.[174] In contrast, the Spanish Empire shifted positions between the Aristotelian conception and the Ciceronian formulation; with the intervention of the School of Salamanca, however, the Spanish Empire produced a synthesis of Ciceronian thinking within an Aristotelian framework.

De jure[175], at least, "Augustus and his successors had become rulers of the world. It now required only an act of legislation, duly provided by the Emperor Antoninus Pius in the second century in the famous *Lex Rhodia*[176], to transform the imperator into the 'Lord of all the world.'" This idea of a *monarchia universalis* on a scale of *orbis terrarum* (encompassing the entire world) was taken from the Stoic notion of a single human genus and applied to a political framework. The significance of *Lex Rhodia* cannot be underestimated, for it paved the way for the Bishop of Rome (as heir of the Roman Emperor) to claim universal authority, terrestrial and spiritual. With the fall of Rome, Christianity became the new bonding institution between the nations of the Roman Empire, at least in the West. Christianity was thought of as being spatially "co-extensive with the *Imperium romanum*. The *orbis terrarum* thus became, in terms of the

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173 Ibid., 14.

174 Cicero was influenced by Aristotle's idea of natural slavery. However, as it has been pointed out, Cicero allowed for the integration of provincials to Roman status, where as Aristotle denied that barbarians could achieve a status similar to Greeks.

175 The phrase *de jure* means per law, in contrast to the phrase *de facto* which means in actual practice.

176 Rhodes maritime code of law.

translation effected by Leo the Great in the fifth century, the 'orbis Christianus', which in turn soon developed into the 'Imperium Christianus.'[177]

With this new transformation of concepts, from Aristotelian to Ciceronian to Imperial Roman to Imperial Christian, the requirement for being human meant being Christian. Any person outside of this formulation was denied civil status. By the time of Gregory the Great (540 – 604 A.D.), Aristotle's barbarian became synonymous with being a pagan, a non-believer in the Christian framework. The pagan, like the barbarian and the provincial, resided in the outskirts of inhumanity and incivility.

As narrow as the political mindset had become during the days of Gregory the Great, the idea of *lex naturae* was to reappear in the sixteenth century and put a limit on the power of this political conception from Aristotle to the early modern European empires, especially in the Spanish Empire. Interestingly enough, it would be the far away students of Aristotle using the very words of the Greek sage to re-orient the actions of the Spaniards in colonial America.

[177] Ibid., 24.

CHAPTER V

ARISTOTELIANS VS. ARISTOTELIANS

In the reign of Emperor Charles V in 1540 C.E., friar, and then bishop, Bartolomé de Las Casas, renowned protector of the Indians of the New World, went to the court of the Emperor to inform him of the affairs taking place between Spaniards and natives in the New World, of the "terrible things… the slaughters and ruins of innocent people, the depopulations of villages, provinces, and kingdom in those Indies, and many other acts of no less heinous and abominable character."[178] Las Casas' complaint to the Emperor was the former's work *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies*. Its main purpose was to narrate the destructive relations between the Spaniards and the Indians in the New World, with the natives suffering tenfold at the hands of the Spanish. It must be remembered that the Spanish state was, since the very beginning of the colonial project, against the mistreatment of the Indians. As it has been seen thus far, individual Spaniards chose, or not, to follow the mandates of the Spanish state. It is for this reason that Las Casas deemed it necessary to address the mistreatment of the Indians by those Spaniards that did not comply with the mandates of the Spanish state.

Actually, the one to have directed Las Casas' attention towards the mistreatment of the Indians had been Fray Antonio de Montesinos. In 1511 A.D., the Sunday before Christmas, Fray Antonio delivered a sermon that had transatlantic ramifications. He boldly denounced "the

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178 Bartolomé de Las Casas, *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies*, ed. Franklin W. Knight, trans. Andrew Hurley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), 1.

[Spanish] settlers for [how] their barbaric treatment of the Indians was to affect many lives."[179] Las Casas had his own *repartimiento*[180] of Indians, but the preaching by Fray Antonio was sufficient to make him see the reality of the social situation between Spaniards and Indians. Thereafter, Las Casas joined the Dominican Order and became Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, "Apostle of the Indians."

Unable to stay silent on the matter, Las Casas wrote about the mistreatment of the Indians in the Americas, about the "perditions of infinite souls and bodies… [of the] temerity and unreasonable eagerness of those who think nothing of spilling such immense quantities of human blood and depopulating those vast lands of their natural inhabitants and possessors"[181] at the hands of Spaniards. Two years after his meeting with Las Casas, Charles V, in 1542 A.D., "abruptly terminated all existing and future trusteeships and enslavement of the natives of the New World."[182] The new regulations put forth by Charles for the proper treatment of the natives became known as the New Laws.

Las Casas describes Spaniards as "killing a thousand million souls and stealing incomparable treasures"[183] from the native lands. In his appeal to Emperor Charles V, Las Casas quotes divine scripture and writes to the Emperor that "*rex qui sedet in solio iudicii, dissipate omne malum intuit suo*,"[184] meaning that "a king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes." (Proverbs 20:8) In his letter, Las Casas states that injustices in kingdoms occur because the monarch has no notice of them. Once the monarch is aware, he or she can take action, as was the case with the emperor enacting new legislation and councils.

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179 Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 67.

180 To Spaniards of renown was given a group of Indians to instruct and make into members of the rising society in New Spain. This allocation of Indians to a Spanish overlord was called the *repartimiento.*

181 Bartolomé de Las Casas, *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies*,, ed. Franklin W. Knight, 3.

182 Patricia Seed, *American Pentimento*, 68.

183 Bartolomé de Las Casas, *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies*, 3.

184 Ibid.

Ten years after Las Casas appeared before the emperor with this petition, he would be in the middle of one of the most important debates to occur between two Spanish theologians, each a faraway student of Aristotle, but each understanding different lessons from the Greek philosopher. In 1550, Las Casas would face his lifelong rival Juan Ginés de Sepulveda in shaping the future relations between Indians and Spaniards, between international relations, between the Old and New Worlds, between Aristotle's teachings of the good citizen and Aristotle's teachings on realpolitik.[185]

Las Casas and Sepulveda

The discovery of the Americas was one of the most crucial turning points in world history, not only because a new world was discovered, but because it brought about new challenges to the established paradigms of society in the Old World. This was an event that truly brought about a revolution in mores, ethics, social organization, political theory, international relations, and economics, to name a few categories. One of the most contested topics of debate that arose during this clash of civilizations was the course that the Spanish Empire was to undertake in its dealings with the inhabitants of the New World. This loaded question brought a massive divide among the jurists, theologians, ecclesiastics, lawyers, humanists and bishops of Spain.

Complex arguments were presented to defend their respective positions, some arguing for conquest and a complete Spanish takeover of the Americas with no consideration for the native populations. Others argued that the natives were people of reason and understanding, with their own traditions and social organizations, that the use of force was therefore illegitimate, and that

[185] Realpolitik refers to the idea that politics must be taken at face value, to look at what actually occurs in political affairs and not worry about ideological speculation.

the natives should be treated as people with souls equal to those of the Spanish. The Spanish theologian and philosopher Juan Ginés de Sepulveda argued for the former perspective, while the Protector of the Indians Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas fervently advocated for the latter position.

The dispute between these two men invited the opinions and perspectives of intellectual giants of 16th century Spain, drawing upon from contemporary, medieval, and classical thinkers, men such as Francisco de Vitoria, Domingo de Soto, Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine of Hippo, and above all else, the Greek sage Aristotle. Aristotle, the master of those who know, was the one thinker to whom both Las Casas and Sepulveda quoted in the defense of their positions regarding the proper relations between the Spanish Empire and the American natives. Their battle reached its climax in 1550 in Valladolid, Spain when the two men appeared before a council of learned jurists to present their arguments for evaluation.

These two men were both students of Aristotle's work, yet they reached opposing conclusions about his teachings, for "the moral point of view derives its legitimacy from the perspective of the actor."[186] One used Aristotle the humanist, while the other used Aristotle the realist thinker. Furthermore, both Las Casas and Sepulveda summoned the interpretations of Aristotle's work of Thomas Aquinas and Vitoria, men who were the intellectual paragons of their generation. To understand the dimension of the divide between Las Casas' framework and Sepulveda's framework, we must analyze the work of these thinkers, beginning with Aristotle and work towards the inevitable events at the council at Valladolid in 1550.

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[186] Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historial Illustrations*, 5th ed., (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 8.

In Aristotle's Own Words

Perhaps the most quoted and fiercely debated point of contention between Las Casas and Sepulveda was the correct interpretation of Aristotle's theory of natural slavery found in his *Politics*. In this work of realpolitik, Aristotle looks at the natural political workings of the Greek world and draws conclusions based on his observations. The institution of slavery was one of those natural workings that formed part of daily life in classical Greece, thus not escaping the analysis of the philosopher. In chapter four of his *Politics*, Aristotle focuses on the question of slavery exclusively. He begins by analyzing the components of a household, stating that property is part of the household, and used to complete the assigned work. "Tools," says Aristotle, can be "either lifeless or living – as the pilot's rudder, for instance, is a lifeless tool, but his lookout man on the prow is a living one – accordingly a possession is a tool for the purposes of life, property is a multitude of such tools, and the slave is a living possession."[187] Thus for Aristotle, the ontological distinction between a non-living possession and a living possession takes a secondary nature in terms of usefulness for a household.

A slave is akin to an assistant, in Aristotelian thinking, as is evident from his statement in the *Politics*. Aristotle states that there are slaves by nature, that that "is the condition of those whose work is the use of the body and for whom such work is the best that there is."[188] The resulting relation between slave and master is a beneficial one, claims Aristotle, just as the lookout man works with the captain to get safely to their destination. However, Aristotle is not blind to the fact that the relation between master and slave is not always beneficial, for he says

187 Aristotle, *The Politics*, 14.
188 Ibid., 16.

that "if mastery is exercised badly, it is not beneficial to either of them."[189] The master is bound to have a higher form of virtue if he is to be master.

Slavery by nature is not the only form of slavery, according to the philosopher. There is slavery by law as well. This deals with the question of might makes rights; in other words, those who have more power are lawfully allowed to rule. However, Aristotle offers a sort of litmus test for this idea of might makes right. As in the proposition of slave by nature, Aristotle declared that the conqueror must have a higher virtue than the conquered. Otherwise, the resulting end would be disastrous for both master and slave. When the use of force is implemented with virtue, "the dispute seems to turn only on the principle of justice itself."[190]

When compared side by side, the doctrines of natural slavery and slavery by law have the notion of virtue in common, thus prompting the necessity of understanding what Aristotle means by virtue, particularly in his work the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In this work, Aristotle specifically addresses the meaning of virtue. In the debate between Las Casas and Sepulveda, both ecclesiastics were aware of the prominence of virtue in the works of Aristotle, both in his *Politics* and *Ethics*. This invites the logical question: was the Spanish Empire virtuous? The empire was virtuous if it had full Aristotelian authority to proceed with its conquest across the Americas and bring the natives under its fold. However, if it was not virtuous, then the Spanish conquest was rotten to its core, and could not make the slightest claim to Aristotelian authority.

Las Casas stated that the treatment of the natives by the Spanish lacked any form of virtue, while Sepulveda appealed to the ancient paradigm of might makes right, and that bringing the natives under the protection of the Spanish Empire would benefit both the natives and the Spanish, thus fulfilling the requirement of virtue of which Aristotle spoke. Las Casas, however,

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189 Ibid., 19.

190 Ibid., 18.

was far from being the only Spaniard to note the abuses against the Indians at the hands of Spaniards. In his fifth letter to Emperor Charles V, the conquistador Hernán Cortés himself wrote that "there were certain Spaniards who did them [the Indians] much harm, since, besides burning their villages and slaying their people… they had been the cause of the total disappearance of trade, formerly very flourishing."[191]

The struggle became "so heated and the king's conscience so troubled over the question of how to carry on the conquest of the Indies in a Christian way that Charles V suspended all expeditions to America while a junta of foremost theologians, jurists and officials in the royal capital of Valladolid listened to the arguments of Las Casas and Sepulveda."[192]

Sepulveda "not only sustained this view with great tenacity and erudition but also concluded that the Indians were in fact such rude and brutal beings that war against them to make possible their forcible Christianization was not only expedient but lawful."[193] To fight Sepulveda, Las Casas resorted to use divine law and natural law in support of his case. Although, the question of natural law and divine law does not play a role in Aristotle's overall philosophy. But for his disciples, such as Thomas Aquinas and Francisco de Vitoria, the development of these ideas and precise definition of these terms was central to their greater frameworks in order to address the pressing political questions of their day.

Aquinas and Vitoria

By the time the Council at Valladolid met in 1550, the master theologian Francisco de Vitoria had been deceased for four years, since 1546. In fact, Vitoria's fame was so widespread

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191 Hernan Cortes, *The Fifth Letter of Hernan Cortes to the Emperor Charles V Containing an Account of His Expedition to Honduras*, trans. Don Pascual de Gayangos (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 4.
192 Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1959), 13.
193 Ibid., 13.

throughout Spain that Charles V called upon him several times regarding questions of complex political nature. Along with several of his pupils who became famous throughout Europe in their own right, including the famed Luis de Molina, Francisco Suarez, and Domingo de Soto, this close group headed by Vitoria became known as the School of Salamanca. They were scholastic intellectual giants with vast learning in practically every area of academics during their time.

If Vitoria had lived, perhaps he would have written a sublime commentary on the debate between Las Casas and Sepulveda regarding the proper role of the Spanish Empire in the Americas. Nonetheless, the head of the School of Salamanca owed a great deal to the medieval Dominican master Thomas Aquinas. He was responsible for fusing Aristotelian rational thought with orthodox Catholic teaching. Thus, in order to understand the political thinking of Vitoria, it is necessary to look at the political thinking of Thomas Aquinas, for Vitoria's thought derives directly from Aquinas, which in turn derives from Aristotle.

The phrase "Just War" is constantly used by Sepulveda to justify Spanish imperialism, something he considered "a necessity of nature."[194] This is an idea that was thoroughly explored by Thomas Aquinas, and later expanded upon by Vitoria. But even before Vitoria or Aquinas, the Romans had developed a concept of "Just War" during the era of empire. For the Romans, war was "always looked upon as a means of last resort, and the supposed objective of war had always been to acquire not cultural and religious transformation, much less territory, but peace and justice."[195] The purpose of a just war conferred upon the aggressor the right to engage in warfare against someone else, the *ius ad bellum*. If an aggressor chose to engage in a just war, then that party was bound to honor the moral rules for conducting such a war, and understand the benefits that the aggressor was to receive afterwards, the *ius in bello*.

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194 Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 8.

195 Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World,* 95.

Spanish jurists developed their own variation based upon Just War theory for implementation within the context of American colonization. The main premise was that a prince may go to war against another prince in defense of the latter's subjects if they were being oppressed. If a ruler "could be shown to have oppressed his peoples in such a way as to constitute a threat to their lives, then he might legitimately be deposed by another prince."[196] Even if the subjects of the oppressive ruler were not aware of their dilemma, the prince that was to defend them had the duty to do so. Being sacrificed and eaten constituted a violation of the natural rights possessed by the subjects of the Aztec rulers. These were enough grounds for a prince to step in and depose the other prince. To complete this framework, the Spanish jurists, such as Francisco Suárez and Luis de Molina, tied in this variation of princely Just War to Aristotle's teaching on natural slavery: if the American Indians were proven to be natural slaves in the Aristotelian conception, then a just war was thoroughly justified in order to bring them into the *Imperium Christianum*, and therefore to civilization.

We may ask if Sepulveda, like his contemporary Spaniards, had the right understanding of Just War theory? Or does his understanding of it differ from that of its developer, namely Aquinas? To address this question, it is necessary to compare and contrast the work of Aquinas with the claims of Sepulveda.

In developing his theory of what constitutes a just war, Thomas Aquinas states that any war has to meet three requirements: (1) legitimacy and authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged, (2) a just caused is required, namely that those who are attacked, should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault, (3) the necessity for belligerents to have a rightful intention, intended for the advancement of the good, or the

[196] Ibid., 97.

avoidance of evil. Taken together, these three precepts form the backbone of Thomistic teaching regarding the proper undertaking of war. Aquinas' reflections on what constitutes a just war developed during the same time frame as the medieval notion of a republic, the Middle Age equivalent of a modern political state. The intermingling of religious and secular-political government "laid upon authority the obligation to care for temporal welfare and to collaborate in spiritual welfare."[197] The result was that "this first notion of the modern state, source of all Spanish public law at the time, was transplanted wholesale to America."[198] Through a new synthesis of religious and secular authority, Spain embarked on extending the Spanish legal system to the Americas, oftentimes producing disastrous outcomes.

As has been observed before, the conscience of Charles V became so clouded that he eventually suspended further exploration of the Americas, thus ruling out a claim of Aquinas' first requirement for waging a just war. In regards to Aquinas' second requirement for just war, it is the Spanish who are depicted as more violent and aggressive towards the natives than the natives towards the Spanish, thus putting in question any claim to Aquinas' second requirement. Lastly, Aquinas' third requirement can also be called into question. As Las Casas points out, the treatment of the Indians by the Spanish was beyond moral and corrupt. Perhaps the Spanish had good intentions, but good intentions that favored them and not the natives. The meaning of evil, arguably, became misunderstood in the understanding of many would be *conquistadores*. Sepulveda's own writings are a testament to this dilemma, using the language of beneficent humanization rather than imperial conquest. Unfortunately, Thomas Aquinas was 300 years removed before the events of the Spanish conquest of the Americas. However, his great successor, Francisco de Vitoria, did live to see the events of the Spanish conquest unfold.

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197 Luis Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, 443.
198 Ibid.

From the School of Salamanca

Under Francisco de Vitoria (1485 – 1546), the framework for understanding the relation between the natives and Spain (rather the relation between gentiles and Christendom) undergoes a complete Catholic makeover. Vitoria's own involvement with "the affairs of the Indies" goes back to 1513 when King Ferdinand summoned a *junta* of civil and canon lawyers, and theologians, to discuss the matter of legitimate Spanish colonization of the Americas.[199] This *junta* produced *La Ley de Burgos* of 1513, which was the first piece of legislation for the American colonies. The *junta* that wrote *La Ley de Burgos* "included among its members partisans of both the Indians and the encomenderos, laid down a series of principles which were to be fundamental to Spain's future government of the Indies."[200] Even though the *junta* did not abolish the *encomienda* system, it did declare that the Indians were to be treated as a free people "in conformity with the wishes of Ferdinand and the late Queen Isabella. As a free people, they were entitled to hold property, and – although they could be set to work – they must be remunerated for their labour."[201] Furthermore, in "conformity with the bull of Alexander VI they [the Indians] also had to be instructed in the Christian faith."[202]

Throughout his writings, Vitoria expanded on themes mentioned by Aquinas. For both Vitoria and Aquinas, the role of *ius naturae*[203] (natural law) occupied a place of prominence in the development of a sound Christian framework. *Ius naturae* is, in Thomistic teaching, the participation of rational creatures in the eternal law. Participation in the *ius naturae* was what connected man's relationship with the rest of the world. *Ius naturae*, according to Vitoria,

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199 Francisco de Vitoria, *Political Writings*, ed. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xiii.

200 Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 68.

201 Ibid.

202 Ibid.

203 Natural law is interchangeable between the Latin spelling between *ius naturae* and *jus naturae*.

consists of two parts: *prima praecepta* (first principles) and *lex humana, ciuilis* or *positiua* (human or positive law). *Prima praecepta* is understood as "a body of self-evident first principles implanted by God at the creation 'in the hearts of men.'"[204] *Prima praecepta* thereafter cascades down towards the conception of *lex humana*. However, there is a mid-way ground between *prima praecepta* and *lex humana* called *ius gentium* (law of nations). The *ius gentium* "was the body of those laws which could be said to be what Vitoria termed a set of precepts enacted by the power of 'the whole word, which is in a sense a commonwealth, irrespective of … convictions, beliefs, customs of individual communities, or indeed their place in time.'"[205] Vitoria regarded *lex humana* as part of and deriving from the *ius gentium*. In addition, *praelatio* (supremacy) belonged to natural law and extended to all communities whether Christian or non-Christian, and as such was superior to *lex humana*.

One of Vitoria's central arguments for his overall framework is the claim that all rights (*iura*) of men come from God's law, not from God's grace, for if laws derived from God's grace, then it follows logically that the Indians would possess no natural laws that deserved the respect of other nations as part of the *ius gentium*. This proposition by Vitoria met with considerable resistance, noticeably from Reformers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and even John Wycliffe two decades earlier, all who maintained that *potestas* (power) was derived from God's grace and not from God's law. But as Vitoria pointed out, the only conclusion from such a position would be to deny that any non-Christian state had political autonomy.

At the very beginning of his work *On Civil Power*, Vitoria discusses the nature of civil power as a natural necessity. He states that nature itself is the primitive cause and origin of human cities and commonwealths. Thus from nature does man derive the laws that govern the

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[204] Ibid., xiv.

[205] Ibid., xv.

commonwealths across the earth. To support this claim that non-Christian commonwealths have legitimate forms of government under the *ius gentium*, Vitoria uses the Biblical narratives of Joseph and Daniel during their service to pagan rulers and heads of state.

Joseph became "chief minister of the kingdom of [the] Pharaoh and collector of his tribute,"[206] while "Daniel and his companions were appointed governors of a province by King Nebuchadnezzar."[207] By using Holy Scripture, therefore, Vitoria forms a solid defense against any claims saying that the Indians are heathens with illegitimate forms of government. Both Joseph and Daniel served the rulers of gentile nations without questioning their political authority or governmental institutions. This is the line of thinking that Vitoria applies to the political relation between Spain and the Indians in the Americas.

The Indians could not "be robbed of their property, either as private citizens or as princes, on the grounds that they were not true masters… [for] it would be harsh to deny to them, who have never done us any wrong, the rights we concede to Saracens and Jews [non-Christians]."[208]

The pillage and slaughter, committed against the Indians by Spaniards cannot possibly be justified under Vitoria's doctrines. By developing his defense of the Indians, Vitoria developed the idea of the *ius gentium* beyond the scope of Thomistic teaching, so much that Vitoria can be thought of as the father of international relations. Scholar Dominique de Courcelles explores the massive implications of the *ius gentium* in her work *Managing the World: The Development of the 'Jus Gentium' by the Theologians at Salamanca in the Sixteenth Century*.

In following the Aristotelian tradition of natural rights as deriving from nature, Courcelles defines *jus gentium*[209] as the right of the people. By using the framework established

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206 Ibid., 15.
207 Ibid.
208 Ibid., 251.
209 The spelling is interchangeable between *ius gentium* and *jus gentium*.

by Aquinas and Vitoria, Courcelles concurs with their assessment that the *ius gentium* of the Indians cannot be violated by Spain, even if Pope Alexander VI gave the Catholic Kings the mission to evangelize the Indians. For justifying war, Courcelles reiterates the teachings of Aquinas on just war in order to justify the conflict between a Christian nation and a foe, whether Christian or non-Christian. However, Courcelles expands her argument on the *jus gentium* to include one more thinker.

Furthermore, the Pope stated that he also had jurisdiction over the property rights in the Americas, basing such claim on the idea of being the true heir to the Roman Emperors, and therefore enjoying *dominium jurisdictionis* over the entire world and also *dominium ac proprietatem bonorum omnium*, that is, having the rights to property worldwide. Apart from the Western Roman Emperors, part of this papal claim derived authority from a decree by the Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian in his *Bene a Zenon*, "which reserves exclusive rights of property in 'the world' to the emperor, and subsequently to the Papacy."[210]

For members of the School of Salamanca, such a papal claim was a path towards tyranny. Domingo de Soto pointed out that "there had been two divinely appointed rulers, Saul and David. All others had been elected, in one way or another, by men for the preservation of the human political community."[211] Vitoria reasoned that there was no justifiable framework that conferred imperial *dominium* upon the Spanish rather than, say, the French or Italians.

Furthermore, the members of the School of Salamanca challenged the papal claim of universal jurisdiction on the very grounds that if the Pope was making such a claim based on Roman decrees, then the Pope was entitled only to lands that had previously been held under

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210 Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World*, 51.
211 Ibid., 50.

Roman authority. This, automatically, excluded the Americas, for they had never been part of the Roman Empire. If Augustine's massive work was to be condensed into a single idea, it could be argued that it revolves around the idea of an imperfect Christian community between the nations of the world as a faulty reflection of the eternal and perfect heavenly city of God. Once the Indian nations of the Americas had been converted to Christianity, they would take their place under the Christian fold of nations.

Since the terms Spanish and Catholic were virtually one and the same, the framework of political thought of this era in Spain is inseparable from the theological framework of the Catholic Church. Courcelles, however, points out that Bartolome de Las Casas was right in his assessment of the way in which the Indians were being treated by Spaniards, for how, asks Courcelles, could "a power that kills and destroys its subjects and its lands, which does not know how to manage the world, secure and maintain its sovereignty?"[212] Whereas Las Casas elevated the Indians to human beings, Francisco de Vitoria elevated them to participants in political rights as part of *ius gentium*, contends Courcelles.

The observations and criticisms of Las Casas are within the theological-political framework in Vitoria's works. Courcelles notes that Vitoria puts forth three principles to outline his framework: (1) civil authority belongs to natural rights and derives from society, (2) *communitatis orbis* is the universal community in which all peoples and nations, whether they be Christian, Jewish, pagan, Saracens, share in similar duties and rights deriving from natural law, (3) there are restrictions to the autonomy of civil societies, at the national and international levels, which therefore limit the actions of nations against each other. These three principles, as laid out by Vitoria, form a bridge towards a just war undertaken against the Indians. Vitoria's purpose,

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[212] Dominique De Courcelles, "Managing the World: The Development of the 'Jus Gentium' by the Theologians at Salamanca in the Sixteenth Century." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 38, no. 1 (2005): 6. Accessed February 16, 2016. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40238198.

according to Courcelles, was to establish these principles to construct an international law between Spain and the New World.

The only reasons to undertake a just war against the Indians are to stop human sacrifices, cannibalism, and liberate innocents from tyranny. Vitoria considered such actions as misguided acts on the part of the natives rather than sin. This observation by Vitoria anticipates, by centuries, modern anthropological propositions, such as the idea of ethnocentrism, that is, judging other cultures and societies from one's own culture and society.

It can be asked, on what basis can a culture judge another culture and remain thoroughly objective? Furthermore, this invites the involvement of ideals of right and wrong, which are also based on subjective perspectives. This was exactly the case between Spanish culture and Indian culture. Las Casas argued that the Indian's capacity for reasoning made them receptive to receive the gospel of Christianity, thus bringing them under the fold of Christendom. For Las Casas, violence based upon the idea that might makes right was not the answer. Interestingly enough, Las Casas was not always a stark defender of the Indians, or an admirer of Aristotle; in fact, he disliked Aristotle when he first read his works.

Despite his vast output of theological writings on the American Indians, Courcelles contends that Vitoria shifted the very image of an archaic Spanish Empire into a capitalistic and mercantilist imperial power that truly set the course for modern commerce between nations, Christian and non-Christian. Instead of using violence and enslavement, Vitoria's framework provided for trade and growth between nations. This realist approach to politics brought Vitoria's framework into *aporia*[213] with the most basic teachings of Aristotle in his *Politics*, for there the philosopher states that the free engagement of individuals in commerce increases the wealth of

[213] Aporia is a Greek word that means to go back to the beginning without an answer. For example, in Plato's dialogues a question was asked, such as what is love. The speakers would engage in a thorough discussion of the question only to end up at the very beginning without having answered the question in a satisfactory manner.

nations. In addition, Vitoria's framework allowed for the idea of justice to develop at an international level between Spain and the Americas.

By showing that the Indians were part of the *ius gentium*, Vitoria acknowledged the Indians' moral worth, and therefore established the justification for a system of distributive political justice. As political philosopher John Rawls states, distributive justice can only be "introduced until after the principles of justice and of natural duty and obligation have been acknowledged. Once these principles are on hand, moral worth can be defined as having a sense of justice."[214] This benevolent realism would last, however, in the pages of Vitoria's works.

It is interesting to note that even the Protestant English plagiarized ideas from Vitoria for their own policies. In 1610, Reverend William Crashaw preached a sermon before the Virginia Company in which he used Vitoria's idea of the *ius gentium* to declare that the English "may traffic with the heathen"[215] of the New World.

Crashaw further added that the English could "take from them [the Indians] only that [which] they may spare us… [and in turn] we will give to the Savages what they most need. 1. Civility for their bodies. 2. Christianity for their souls."[216] It is interesting to see that a Spanish theologian, a papist as the English of the time would say, provided a necessary foothold for the English to guide their own endeavors in the New World.

A few years after the death of Vitoria, another pupil of Aristotle, Juan Ginés de Sepulveda, would use the teachings Aristotle to justify a course of action that would lead to the clash with Aristotle's humanist pupil, Las Casas, in Valladolid in 1550 A.D.

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214 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), 312.

215 Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 12.

216 Ibid.

One Master, Two Pupils

It is said that a master can only have one true successor. Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepulveda both studied with great interest the works of their far away master and teacher, Aristotle. In developing their commentaries, treatises, and political frameworks, both friars and theologians fused the teachings of Aristotle with their orthodox Catholic thinking. Their results, however, were opposed in scope, narrative, and fundamentals. The narrative developed by Las Casas was one of humane compassion for the Indians against the cruelties of the Spanish Empire, while the synthesis forged by Sepulveda advocated for the use of power and dominance. So we must determine how it is that they arrived at diametrically opposed viewpoints on his teachings, and we must determine which Aristotle is to be favored, the humanist teacher of Las Casas or the realist master of Sepulveda. Furthermore, we must determine whose framework was favored by the Spanish magistrates, both secular and theological. The answers lie, perhaps, not in the writings of Aristotle himself but in the interpretation and personal viewpoints of his two diverging pupils.

One of the central questions surrounding the Spanish Empire was how to proceed with its conquests according to just and Christian principles. An answer was produced in 1513 with "the adoption of the famous juridical declaration known as the Requirement, which had to be read formally to the Indians before the *conquistadores* could legally launch hostilities."[217] The only problem was that the Requirement was read in Spanish to the Indians, whom did not read, write, or understand the language. Spaniards fulfilled their obligation of letting the Indians know that they were going to be attacked, and afterwards it was up to the Indians to understand why they were going to be attacked. For the Spanish *conquistadores*, this lack of understanding showed

[217] Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians,*16.

the Indians as inferior to them, and therefore subject to slavery by a superior race, an idea that brought Las Casas into contact with Aristotle's idea of natural slavery.

The Aristotelian doctrine of natural slavery was first used specifically for the American Indians in 1519 "when Juan Quevedo, bishop of Darien, and Las Casas clashed at Barcelona before the young Emperor Charles V. Aristotle had not been used to justify slavery in medieval Spain, so Las Casas was treading on unknown ground."[218] As it has been observed previously, Las Casas was not always a supporter of Aristotle's ideas; it was not until has late forties that he began to consider the ideas of the philosopher. Las Casas denounced both Quevedo and Aristotle, referring to the latter as a "gentile burning in Hell, whose doctrine we do not need to follow except in so far as it conforms with Christian truth."[219] Las Casas was a man of more than 45 years of age when he showed such disdain against Aristotle, and had recently "been converted to the cause of the Indians five years previously."[220] It was not until 1522 A.D. that Las Casas formally entered into the Dominican Order of friars and preachers after "the failure of his plan to colonize Tierra Firme with God-fearing, honest labourers who would help and not oppress the Indians."[221]

Las Casas had gone to Barcelona, fresh from the Caribbean Islands, in 1519 A.D. to denounce "the royal approval given to bringing Indians from other islands to work in the mines and on the farms of Hispaniola."[222] While other Spaniards saw the Indians as "pieces of wood that could be cut off trees and transported for building purposes, or like flocks of sheep or any

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218 Ibid.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid.
221 Ibid., 17.
222 Ibid.

other kind of animals that could be removed around indiscriminately,"[223] Las Casas had grown to see the Indians as "rational men… not demented or mistakes of nature, nor lacking in sufficient reason to govern themselves."[224] Over time, Las Casas' views on Aristotle would begin to change, as did his views and opinions regarding the capacities of the Indians.

Juan de Zumárraga, Franciscan and Archbishop of Mexico City, and life-long friend of Las Casas, was also a devout supporter of Indian rights and liberties. Like Las Casas, Zumárraga upheld the rational capacities possessed by the Indians and defended them as rational souls who could be saved. Zumárraga was extremely active in bettering the lives of the Indians. He "established the famous *colegio* for boys at Tlatelolco and the school for Indian girls in Mexico City, [brought] the first printing press to America, [and began] the movement for a university in Mexico, and the writing of books for Indians."[225]

Around 1537 A.D., this friendly approach towards the Indians became a political issue. Pope Paul III saw it necessary to deliver the papal bull *Sublimis Deus* to declare that the Indians were "not to be treated as 'dumb brutes created for our service but as truly men… capable for understanding the Catholic faith.'"[226] After this papal bull, Pope Paul III further stated that Indians, and other people that may be discovered by Christians were not to be deprived of their possessions or liberties, nor to be enslaved. In following this humane treatment towards the Indians, Las Casas found himself in direct conflict with other Spanish authorities, including fellow Franciscan friars and preachers. It was at the end of this conflict with his fellow preaching brothers that Las Casas emerged as a true defender of the Indians.

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223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
225 Ibid., 19.
226 Ibid.

Las Casas took care to preach the Catholic faith as responsibly as possible to the natives. But "other missionaries in those early days, particularly Franciscans, placed no such emphasis on a thorough education, believed in mass baptism, and sprinkled holy water over Indian heads until their strength failed."[227] For Las Casas, converting to the message of the gospel was a matter of profound personal conviction, and not a mere matter of numbers. Las Casas "wanted to make certain that each Indian was properly instructed in the faith before baptism,"[228] while some "believed that the faith should be preached quickly, 'if necessary by force.'"[229] Upon witnessing this approach undertaken by fellow Christian preachers towards the natives, Las Casas slowly began to deeply care for the rights and just treatment of Indians. This turning point in Las Casas' views would place him on the path to debate his fellow Aristotelian, Sepulveda, at Valladolid in 1550.

As Las Casas was turning into a staunch defender of the Indians, Sepulveda was developing his views, closer to the bare teachings of Aristotle's ideas regarding natural slavery. Sepulveda states in his own writings that by natural right "what is perfect must reign and dominate over the imperfect."[230] In the political development of Sepulveda's thought, the cultural comparison between Spaniards and Indians proved that the ways, customs, laws, and social institutions, of Spanish civilization was superior to Indian culture. Some men, stated Sepulveda, "are born to obey, [if] they refuse servitude, a war is just by nature."[231]

In order to expand on his perspective, Sepulveda uses the analogy of a father correcting his son. "A father that corrects his own son, even if he does so in a harsh manner, does not

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227 Ibid., 20.

228 Ibid.

229 Ibid., 21.

230 Juan Gines de Sepulveda, *Tratado Sobre Las Justas Causas de la Guerra Contra los Indios* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultural Economica, 1979), 83.

231 Ibid., 87.

necessarily lose his paternal love."[232] Such is the relation between Spaniards and Indians, between civilization and barbarism. For Sepulveda, the Spanish were civilized, cultured, organized, instructed in the Catholic faith and revelation of holy scripture while the Indians were heathens, lacking knowledge of the workings of the gospel, uncivilized, uncultured, barbaric, and therefore inferior by nature. It is this inferiority by nature, states Sepulveda, to which Aristotle refers to in his *Politics*. As a result, war against the Indians is a just war to allow them to partake of the institutions offered by Spanish civilization.

The value that drives Las Casas' work is humanism through fraternal love and understanding; for Sepulveda, the main value is humanistic incorporation. Furthermore, the theme that seems to guide Sepulveda's views is that the perfect must reign over the imperfect. It is interesting to note that this idea seems to be profoundly metaphysically Platonic rather than empirically Aristotelian. Aristotle's own master and teacher, Plato, stressed the ideal that the world, and by extension the material, is an imperfect copy prone to decay and deficiencies while the perfect is eternal and non-material. Thus, the perfect is master over the imperfect. When compared to Sepulveda's teachings, the same idea holds true but without the metaphysical argumentation found in Platonic teaching. In this respect, Sepulveda's thought is akin to Aristotelian materialism, as is evident from his comparison of worldly entities, namely between Spanish and Indian cultures. Sepulveda's thought, however, like that of Las Casas, flows from a long line of thinkers, originating with Aristotle, specifically through his realpolitik approach to writing about politics.

The realpolitik approach that Sepulveda takes in his political writings was part of an emerging line of political thinking that was on the rise during this time. Historian Andrew

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[232] Ibid.

Fitzmaurice contends that there were "two attitudes in early modern Europe to the problem of the possession of the New World."[233] The first perspective, according to Maurice, was "supported primarily by theologians, particularly the school of Salamanca, was cautious and skeptical concerning the scope of European claims to property in the New World."[234] The second perspective, opposed to the theologians, was held by the rising humanists. The humanists, were "closely associated with colonial ventures – unsurprisingly, given their emphasis on the *vita activa.* They are said to have allowed their preoccupation with glory, particularly the glory of conquest, to encourage their unapologetic justifications of the enterprises."[235] Sepulveda belonged to the latter school of humanist thought.

This second attitude (the rising humanist thought) embraced a material perspective of requirement and realism, thus pushing it beyond the boundaries of a mere classification such as wrong and right, good or bad. The worldview propagated by the School of Salamanca was based on a geo-Christian paradigm, while the worldview of the humanists centered on a Eurocentric axis. It was this ontological difference at the very core of the frameworks that pitted them against each other.

This new humanist outlook, according to Fitzmaurice, faced a fundamental dispute within "sixteenth and seventeenth century humanist moral philosophy: between a conventional Ciceronian insistence on the primacy of honesty and a Machiavellian and Tacitean emphasis upon expedience and necessity."[236] Generally, the term Machiavellian has connotations of evil, devilish, deceitful, cunning, and immoral. Niccolò Machiavelli grew up in Renaissance Florence during the prime era of humanism. Machiavelli was steeped in classical education, was an avid

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233 Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 167.
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid., 168.

reader of Aristotle, and wrote commentaries on the ancient Roman Empire. His studies led him down the path of realpolitik, meaning that he chose to see society and humanity as it really was, rather than imagining ideal republics and deriving political laws from them.

For Machiavelli, all forms of political power and institutions played their roles in an inevitable cycle of rising and falling. Machiavelli reached his moment of understanding humanity when he took Aristotle's realistic lessons from the *Politics* and applied its teachings to his theory of the cycle of rising and falling in the political world. History had shown to Machiavelli that there was nothing ideal about political power. The rulers who had achieved the highest glory during their respective time had used all the means at their disposal to keep their power. In fact, in *The Prince*, Machiavelli states that a prince "so as to keep his subjects united and faithful, should not care about the infamy of cruelty."[237] This was the human condition, he argued, and those who had chosen a life of virtue often found misfortune and a fall from political grace.

Machiavelli's political thinking is akin to the phrase "*res dura, et regni notivas me talia cogunt/moliri, et late fines custode tuere*."[238] Thus, if Machiavelli's political philosophy is to be judged on a scale of moral or immoral, it is necessary to establish whose conception of morality is to be used: Greek, Roman, Germanic, medieval, Renaissance? Moral codes and mores are a reflection of a time period, with no seemingly constant variable. This was the lesson that Machiavelli labored to spread in his political works, a lesson that resonated with thinkers such as Sepulveda.

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237 Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 2nd ed., trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 65.

238 "Harsh necessity and the newness of my kingdom force me to do such things, and to guard all frontiers." This was a phrase spoken by Dido, legendary founder of Carthage and lover of Aeneas in the Roman poet Virgil's epic poem *The Aeneid*.

Sepulveda took his political lessons and set them down in his works *Democrates* (1535), and *Democrates Alter* (c.a. 1545). The purpose of these works was to define the relationship between the Christian religion and a just war against the Indians of the New World. The content of Sepulveda's works appealed to the *conquistadores* and other Spaniards back in Spain who thought similarly, "to the Emperor and his advisors, because *Democrates* expressed arguments intended to show that it was right to conquer savages so that they could no longer persist in such evil practices as human sacrifice and idolatry."[239] According to G. L. Huxley, Sepulveda was not concerned, primarily, with the taking of property and riches away from the Indians, but rather with their subjection under Christian dominion.

The policy arising from these assumptions involved dominion over the livelihoods of Indians, especially in regards to their work under the supervision of the Spaniards. Work laws stipulated that "married Indian women would not be obligated to serve in the mines nor in any other area, but rather out of their own will or if their husbands brought them along… minors would serve in tasks according to their strength,"[240] and "maiden Indian women would work with their parents."[241] The Christian dominion that Sepulveda spoke about encompassed a framework that placed strict behavior codes on the Indians, oftentimes extremely unfair. But it was precisely such a framework that *conquistadores* and likeminded Spaniards sought in order to fulfill their personal dreams of wealth and power. However, this very framework would be a stepping-stone in the fall of the Spanish Empire, for "there was no attempt at systematic

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239 G. L. Huxley, "Aristotle, Las Casas, and the American Indians," Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature, Vol. 80C (1990): 57–68. Accessed February 16, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25506049, 61.

240 Silvio Zavala, *Estudios Indianos* (Mexico D.F.: Editorial Libros de Mexico, 1984), 169.

241 Ibid.

exploitation of the resources of the New World other than those of the mines, and almost nothing was done to develop in the New World an economy which might compliment that of Castille."[242]

Sepulveda does not give as much weight to the lessons about commerce as he does to power. Or perhaps, as political theorist Mary G. Dietz argues, the Christian framework advocated by the humanist followers of Aristotle crumbled because the polis-centered framework "that comprises this dominant view holds generally to the notion that Aristotelian political theory is exclusively and parochially concerned with the city-state as a political community."[243] In other words, Aristotle's insights can only go so far given the parameters of his time and political situation, while his followers in the era of exploration attempted to build entire systems of social infrastructure and political organization around his teachings. This rigid interpretation of Aristotle and its applications in the New World is one of the pillars that drive the narrative between the feud of Las Casas and Sepulveda and their final showdown at Valladolid in 1550.

Valladolid, 1550 – 1551

Battle lines were drawn. Ideologies had been developed. Worldviews clashed. Lawyers, jurists, theologians, heads of state, and learned men of wisdom gathered at Valladolid in 1550 A.D. to hear an answer to the question of how the American colonies should be ruled. Under the moderation of Domingo de Soto (1494 – 1560, and member of the School of Salamanca), the two debaters, Sepulveda and Las Casas, took different approaches to this question, each with an arsenal of historical, biblical, and philosophical examples. Sepulveda was the first to present his arguments first before the great council.

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[242] J. H. Elliott, Imperial Spain (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 199.

[243] Mary G. Dietz, "Between Polis and Empire: Aristotle's Politics," The American Political Science Review, Vol. 106, No. 2 (May 2012): 275–293. Accessed February 16, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41495079, 276.

Sepulveda relied greatly on the arguments he had put forth in his *Democrates* and *Democrates Alter*. "The two great questions treated by Sepulveda at Valladolid were: (1) What justifies war against the Indians?, (2) How should this just war be waged?"[244] For Sepulveda, the "natural rudeness and inferiority of the Indians"[245] was reason enough to call for a just war against them. According to Sepulveda, it was the barbarous customs and idolatry of the Indians that primarily justified the Spaniards to act with a just cause on their side. When contrasting Spanish civilization to that of the Indians, Sepulveda concluded that Spanish civilization was at a higher level of organization, therefore placing the Spaniards as natural masters over the Indians. From this perspective, the Spaniards had "an obvious right to rule over the barbarians because of their superiority."[246] It is interesting to note that Sepulveda did not have personal knowledge of the natives; all his understanding about them was theoretically based on reports he had read and formed his judgments from deductive reasoning.

In support of this Spanish view of superiority, Sepulveda uses historical examples to exemplify the natural bravery and honor of the Spanish legions. He mentions battles undertaken at "Milan, Naples, in Tunis, Belgium, France, and more recently in Germany where the heretical Lutherans were defeated. No people in Europe can compare with them in sobriety, frugality, and freedom from gluttony and lasciviousness."[247]

Interestingly enough, Sepulveda also mentions the 1527 sack of Rome by Spaniards as another example of their bravery. But according to another account of the time period, Rome was subjected "'to horrors far more awful than those of barbarian days. Lust, drunkenness, greed of spoils and, in some cases, religious fanaticism, combined in truly hellish fashion to produce the

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244 Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians*, 43.
245 Ibid., 44.
246 Ibid., 45.
247 Ibid.

worst outburst of savagery in the annals of the period.'"[248] According to the account, "monasteries and churches were burned, nuns violated, pregnant women put to the sword, and no one was safe from the depredations of the unpaid and savage soldiers of many nations who made up the imperial army."[249]

After reading this description of the events in Rome on behalf of the Spanish imperial army, it is questionable as to why Sepulveda would regard this historical example as a paragon of Spanish bravery. Perhaps the answer lies in the events that came about after the sack of Rome. Sepulveda writes that

> Spaniards who died of the pest, to a man, provided in their wills that the goods they had stolen should be restored to their rightful owners. The meekness and humanitarian sentiments of the Spanish soldiers there, whose first thought after victory was to save as many of the conquered as possible, are well known.[250]

Perhaps, even after the acts committed during the sack of Rome, Spaniards achieved a moment of true atonement for their actions, and this may be the bravery to which Sepulveda refers.

Sepulveda continues his defense by elaborating on "his version of Indian character. Indians were given over… to all kinds of passions and abominations and not a few of them were cannibals."[251] To further expand the idea of Spanish bravery being superior to that of the Indians, Sepulveda uses the example of "Cortez, with a handful of Spaniards, subdu[ing] Moctezuma and his Indian hordes in their own capital."[252] This example of Spanish superior bravery is also questionable, for the Spaniards had 250,000 Tlaxcalan allies that fought against the Aztecs. Aztec civilization had the myth of one of their gods, Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent. As it has been mentioned before, Quetzalcoatl departed from the eastern shores of Mexico centuries

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[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid., 45.
[251] Ibid., 46.
[252] Ibid., 47.

before the Spanish arrived. Coincidently, the Spanish arrived on Aztec lands in the same direction from which Quetzalcoatl departed. Clothed in shining armor on top of horses (foreign animals to the Americas), the Spaniards must have seemed like gods to the Aztecs. From this narrative, one can see why Moctezuma believed that Quetzalcoatl had returned, which prompted the Aztec emperor to open the doors of his kingdom to the Spaniards, thus allowing for an eventful conquest of the Aztecs. Nonetheless, the illusion that Spaniards were gods ended after the Indians killed their first horse and Spaniard.

That the Indians had their own form of government meant little to Sepulveda. The Amerindians were *de facto* a *respublica*. He insisted that they were by no means equal to Spaniards and their Christian ways. This showed that they simply "were not monkeys and did not entirely lack reason."[253] Even if the Indians formed a legitimate part of the *ius gentium*, as Vitoria had demonstrated, Sepulveda reasoned that based on the very laws of the *ius gentium*, the Indians would be subjected to their conquerors with the victors having a right to claim the spoils of war and conquest. It is interesting to note that Sepulveda never once visited the Americas, but rather had "depended on the knowledge of others for his views on Indian capacity and achievement."[254] To this fact of Sepulveda's life, Las Casas "did not fail to stress that 'God had deprived him of any knowledge of the New World.'" [255] But even if Sepulveda "may have seen an Indian lurking about the royal court, he never mentioned the fact."[256]

For Sepulveda, the institutions and mores of the Americas were not praiseworthy. The Spaniards, for instance, found in America the first social organization based on a matrilineal paradigm. The high reverence for the noble women they encountered, such as queens and

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253 Ibid., 48.
254 Ibid.
255 Ibid.
256 Ibid.

princesses, met both intrigued and offended their sense of appropriateness. "The mores of a society in which the males did not make the rules were different from their own… [and] unhesitatingly condemned the unfamiliar culture pattern and proceeded to break it down.[257] This brings to the forefront the question of European ethnocentrism, that is, judging other cultures by European standards. This is exactly what Sepulveda and likeminded Europeans were doing.

In his argument, Sepulveda employs the benefits of conquest that will come to both Spaniards and Indians alike. In his opinion, the benefits and goods that will be derived from conquest will massively outweigh the negative impacts. Sepulveda is not blind to the fact that great benefits often come about after much loss and sacrifice, but the positive to be gained will be much greater than the loss that must undertaken. For instance, Sepulveda states that the Spanish introduction of iron into the Americas was greater than the value of gold and silver taken from America to Europe.

Sepulveda states that the immense value of "iron may be added to other Spanish contributions [to the Americas] such as wheat, barley, other cereals, and vegetables, horses, mules, donkeys, oxen, sheep, goats, pigs, and an infinite variety of trees."[258] For Sepulveda, the usefulness of such resources had a greater, beneficial impact for the Americas than the unused gold and silver taken by the Spaniards. "How, asks Sepulveda, can the Indians ever adequately repay the kings of Spain, the noble benefactors to whom they are beholden for so many useful and necessary things wholly unknown in America?"[259] In his response to the arguments put forth by Sepulveda, Las Casas presented his 550-page Latin *Apologia* to the judges at the council of Valladolid. This "juridical treatise, consisting of sixty-three chapters of close reasoning and

[257] Ibid., 52.
[258] Ibid., 51.
[259] Ibid., 53.

copious citations, was dedicated to demolishing the doctrine Sepulveda has set forth in *Democrates*." In this work, Las Casas poured his first-hand experiences of the New World and set out to prove to the Valladolid Council that the Indians were just as rational, if not more, than Europeans themselves.

Las Casas relied heavily on his earlier work, *Apologetic History*, a massive anthropological work regarding Indian culture, to counter the arguments presented by Sepulveda. Unlike the *Democrates*, the *Apologetic History* "advanced the idea… that the American Indians compared very favorably with the people of ancient times, were eminently rational beings, and in fact fulfilled every one of Aristotle's requirements for the good life."[260] For instance, Las Casas maintains that the Mexican Indians are superior to many ancient cultures based on the education and rearing of their children. Furthermore, the marriage arrangements held by the Indians are reasonable and partake of the *ius naturae* and *ius gentium*.

Las Casas commended the work ethic of Indian women who sometimes toil with "their hands if necessary to comply with divine law,"[261] a characteristic, he said, that perhaps could be adopted by Spanish matrons. Las Casas also compares the pyramids of the Indians, such as those in Yucatan, to the pyramids of the ancient Egyptians as further proof of their rationality and capacity for subjects such as engineering and mathematics. As Las Casas continued with his defense, he accused Sepulveda of misunderstanding the meaning and teachings of Aristotle.

Nonetheless, Sepulveda was perhaps the foremost authority on Aristotle during this time. He had studied the works of Aristotle with great intensity in Italy under the tutelage of Pietro Pomponazzi, arguably the most prominent Renaissance authority in that field of study. As Las Casas presented complex arguments to counter the intricate arguments of Sepulveda, the debate

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[260] Ibid., 54.
[261] Ibid., 55.

dragged on from 1550 to a second session in 1551. The lawyers, jurists, bishops, theologians, and heads of state, at Valladolid, "probably exhausted and confused by the sight and sound of this mighty conflict, fell into argument with one another and reached no collective decision."[262] Perhaps both Sepulveda and Las Casas thought himself to be the victor, but the council ended without declaring a final statement.

In the aftermath of the great debate between the two students of Aristotle, the judges present went home with differing and unresolved opinions over the matter. In fact, years afterwards "the Council of the Indies struggled to get[the judges at Valladolid] to give their opinions in writing. As late as 1557 a note was sent to the Dominican Melchor Cano explaining that all the other judges had rendered their decisions and that his was wanted at once."[263] After their great debate, Las Casas and Sepulveda remained ideologically at odds, each going his own way. Although Las Casas and his supporters did not succeed in their primary purpose of "elevating the status and conditions of life of the Indians, they did succeed in creating a moral climate in which the crown was forcefully reminded of its obligation to defend them against their oppressors and do what it could to improve their lot."[264] Nonetheless, the Spanish state took strong steps to fulfill its mission in safeguarding the Indians as vassals of the crown.

The Spanish state set up an additional juridical system where "special judges were appointed to handle Indian cases in the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru, and legal assistance was provided for Indians who wished to lodge complaints."[265] Thereafter, in 1573 A.D., Philip II proposed new ordinances to regulate further territorial expansion on Indian land. These actions

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262 Ibid., 74.
263 Ibid.
264 Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 77.
265 Ibid.

are valid proof of the Spanish Crown's commitment to bring a just and better livelihood for its native vassals.

The English monarchy has nothing to parallel this Spanish framework of justice and retribution. The Spanish state was genuinely active in its commitment to justice for all its subjects, whether European or Indian. As a matter of proper government, Fernando and Isabel had first and foremost "laid down the fundamental principle that the indigenous inhabitants in the new overseas territories of the Crown of Castile were vassals of the crown, and, as such, were not to be enslaved."[266] From its origins, the Spanish state passed decrees that banned the institutional slavery of Indians, although it is true that individual Spanish colonists treated the Indians as inferior beings. In comparison, the English state embraced slavery, even before embarking on its colonial enterprise. Slavery in the English colonies would have long lasting consequences that would extend well into the 19th century.

Las Casas made "final arrangements with the San Gregorio monastery in Valladolid"[267] to be there for the remainder of his life. But by no means did Las Casas cease to have an active life. Perhaps the failure of having secured a resounding support at Valladolid convinced Las Casas that more was needed to be done in order to publicize the cause of the Indians. Instead of permanently settling down, Las Casas "left San Gregorio and sallied forth the next year, 1552, to Sevilla, where he spent many months recruiting friars for America and preparing the series of nine remarkable treatises which were printed there in 1552 and early 1553."[268] These treatises included the famous *Very Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, which denounced the cruelty of Spanish power against the Indians. These treatises soon were translated into German,

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266 Ibid., 97.

267 Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians*, 75.

268 Ibid.

English, Flemish, French, Latin, and Italian. "What had been a bitter but private feud in Spanish intellectual and court circles now became widely known in Europe."[269]

Hardt and Negri comment that it is surprising that Las Casas, who was part of the Spanish project, "could separate himself enough from the common stream of opinion to insist on the humanity of the Amerindians and contest the brutality of the Spanish rulers. His protest arises from one simple principle: *humankind is one and equal*."[270] Hardt and Negri observe that the ontological thought of Las Casas was that of equality only in terms of sameness. The "Amerindians are equal to Europeans in nature only insofar as they are potentially European, or really potentially Christian: 'The nature of men is the same and all are called by Christ in the same way.' Las Casas cannot see beyond the Eurocentric view of the Americas."[271] Las Casas' renewed mission, according to Hardt and Negri, was driven by generosity and charity to bring the "Amerindians under the control and tutelage of the true religion and its culture."[272] By taking this approach, Las Casas "belongs to a discourse that extends well into the twentieth century on the perfectibility of savages."[273]

Based on the construction of Hardt and Negri's argument, there is no room for the Renaissance ideals of fraternal love, or mutual cooperation, to exist outside of the Eurocentric worldview. Their framework simply does not permit it. Even with his change of heart and perspective, Las Casas, in the conception of Hardt and Negri, remains part of the problem of Eurocentrism. Furthermore, they state that "Las Casas is really not so far from the Inquisition.

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269 Ibid., 76.
270 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 116.
271 Ibid.
272 Ibid.
273 Ibid.

He recognizes that humankind is one, but cannot see that is also simultaneously many."[274] In order for the Amerindians to be free "from persecution, [they] must pass first through Christian conversion."[275] For Hardt and Negri, the end purpose of Las Casas, the well-being of natives, holds less value than his Eurocentric drive. In other words, disregard the fact that Las Casas underwent a genuine conversion to see the Amerindians as potential brothers and sisters in Christ. That does not redeem him from the fact that the origin of his ideas is Eurocentric, claim Hardt and Negri. On the contrary, the fact that Las Casas' ideas developed from a Eurocentric perspective is a positive commendation.

As has been stated before, particulars partake of universals, and universals give form to particulars. Without this connection, there are no grounds to qualify any system of classification, whether moral, political, philosophical, or theoretical. By seeing the natives as potential brothers and sisters in Christ, Las Casas was elevating the natives to be of equal status under the same framework. The perspective may certainly be of European origin, but the end result, equality, carries a greater weight than the framework itself. It is impossible to bring unity to two different modes of being, e.g. Spaniards and natives. But, by establishing a single mode of being, it is possible to achieve unity.

This is similar to consequentialist philosophy where the end result defines the moral worth of an action. Take for instance the act of pushing. Pushing another person is itself morally questionable. However, if pushing a person results in saving his or her life, then the end result is superior in value than the act itself. This same logic can be applied to the case of Las Casas. If by pushing (itself an immoral action) the natives towards Christianity Las Casas was elevating them to equal human essence with Europeans, then equality has been established between Europeans

[274] Ibid.
[275] Ibid.

and natives (the end result). However, the concern of Las Casas was not based on a consequentialist outlook but rather on a deontological perspective. As Las Casas had witnessed, what did numbers matter if the natives lacked any conviction to embrace and understand the Catholic faith? It was because of a deep conviction towards duty and right understanding that Las Casas took on the immense task of properly instructing the natives in the tenets of the Catholic faith.

Meanwhile Juan Ginés de Sepulveda had been busy with the build up of his own estate. Sepulveda's close biographer Angel Losada "describes him as 'dominated by a desire to increase his property.'"[276] Indeed, Sepulveda was greatly engaged with selling, renting, buying, and accumulating ecclesiastical benefices. However, Sepulveda's fame also saw a rise, notably with Spaniards in America. In fact, Sepulveda had come to be regarded as the foremost authority in matters of conquest in the Americas that contemporary historian Francisco Lopez de Gomara did "not trouble to justify the conquest at all but recommended that his readers consult 'Sepulveda, the emperor's chronicler, who wrote most elegantly in Latin on this topic, and thus you will be completely satisfied on this matter.'[277]

Alas, the great debate at Valladolid had not settled the question of rightful action towards conquest in the Americas. It did, however, define where Las Casas and Sepulveda stood in regards to this matter, a matter which both students of Aristotle continued to support respectively.

[276] Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians*, 77.
[277] Ibid., 78.

CHAPTER VI

RETURN OF THE MASTER

The events at Valladolid from 1550 – 1551 opened up new lines of thought in Just War theory, it gave rise to movements from religious-based frameworks to secular frameworks in political thought (Thomas Hobbes), and placed the issue of natural rights at the core of 17th century political philosophy (John Locke). Thus, it can be said that the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke was a footnote on Aristotelian philosophy. These developments were a reaction to the political circumstances involving the Spanish Empire and the Americas. With the passing of Vitoria in 1546 A.D., the Aristotelian-Thomistic framework of political theory would slowly give way to a humanistic and secular understanding of political reality.

The new framework expounded by the next generation of the School of Salamanca would rely less on Thomas Aquinas and more on Aristotle. Arguably, the last great Aristotelians of the century were Vitoria's immediate successors from the School of Salamanca: Domingo de Soto, Diego de Covarrubias y Leyva (1512 – 1577), and Fernando Vázquez de Menchaca (1512 – 1569). These three jurists produced political works that would change the direction of political thought in Spain and abroad, especially England. Thus, they altered the philosophical-political foundation of the English Empire.

Post-Valladolid

Like his master Vitoria, Domingo de Soto was a fervent critic of Spanish conduct against the Indians. De Soto argued that the things which the inhabitants of the Americas held in "common, but do not themselves employ, could not be seized by another 'without the consent of those who live there,' an explicit reference to the precious metals which, in his view, the Spaniards had been mining illegally and which they should now restore."[278] De Soto pushed his master's political thinking (Vitoria) towards a crossroads that began to separate theological interpretation from pure political interpretation. St. Augustine had been the first to claim that the Roman Empire had been a reward for the Romans because of their virtue, thus bestowing divine grace on a worldly institution. Naturally, from a Christian framework, divine grace preceded virtue in categorical standing.

However, de Soto argued that this Augustinian interpretation was incorrect because the Roman Empire had been entirely secular and held civil qualities, even before the Augustinian conception. It must be pointed out, however, that while de Soto saw the Spanish Empire as secular rather than divine, he was not entirely opposed to the Spanish colonial project. In fact, he recognized that only one justification legitimized the Spanish Conquest of the Americas: Just War theory. The saving grace for the Spanish colonial project, argued de Soto, resided within this framework alone.

For de Soto, "the supposition that had underpinned so much Christian thinking about the pagan empire – that because God had allowed it to exist, it must, in some sense, have been divinely ordained – was false."[279] All "claims to sovereignty that are based upon one historical

[278] Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World*, 52.
[279] Ibid., 53.

moment cannot be extended indefinitely through time."[280] Indeed, as a devout Catholic, de Soto was not opposed to a divine plan guiding historical development; however, he was opposed to taking frameworks from a specific historical period and using those frameworks to justify previous historical developments.

De Soto was breaking entirely from the Christian conception of divine grace upon political institutions. For him, government was secular in nature rather than theological. Empire, just like any other form of government and regardless of size, was a purely human conception. But even if any emperor was able to claim universal sovereignty on any grounds, it would be impossible for said emperor to exercise his universal authority over his realms. Power "exists in order to be exercised (*potestas sit propter usum*), and its exercise is impossible over such extended territory, [therefore] it would follow that such an institution is vain."[281]

Diego de Covarrubias y Leyva added to the nascent, secular framework put forth by de Soto. Just like Vitoria had done previously, Covarrubias "pointed out that Daniel's recognition of the authority of Nebuchadnezzar offered biblical proof that political legitimacy could be accorded to pagan or infidel rulers."[282] Covarrubias extended this biblical proof to his contemporary political atmosphere between Imperial Spain and the Americas. Like his fellow member of the School of Salamanca, Covarrubias maintained that it would be impossible to govern the entire world.

Both de Soto and Covarrubias upheld the Aristotelian teaching from the *Politics* that the purpose of government was to serve as the means of achieving the good life. Furthermore, de Soto stated that "the role of the legislator… is to benefit the citizens and to instill good customs

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[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid., 54.
[282] Ibid., 55.

in them." [283] Any government that could not meet its purpose of helping its citizens achieve the good life and instill good customs because of its size was therefore illegitimate. To expand on this topic of illegitimate government, Fernando Vázquez de Menchaca added a great deal to this political principle. With Vázquez de Menchaca, the political conversation dominated by the School of Salamanca as the foremost heir to the Aristotelian framework would come to an end, thus closing an entire era in Spanish theological-political thought.

Reflecting on the philosophical-political work by de Soto and Covarrubias, Vázquez de Menchaca understood that the dawn of a secular Aristotelian framework for empire had arrived. His predecessor Vitoria had laid the foundation; de Soto and Covarrubias had expanded the arguments of Vitoria. And now, Vázquez de Menchaca was to complete the final separation of the Aristotelian-Thomistic conception of empire as a viable political framework. Vázquez de Menchaca knew the Spanish King Philip II (1527 – 1598) personally, for in 1561 A.D., Vázquez de Menchaca "accompanied Philip II to the final session of the Council of Trent, and it was there that he seems to have written much of his work," particularly his *Controversiarum illustrium aliarumque usu frequentium libri tres*. Philip II had been the only legitimate male heir of Charles V to reach adulthood, and as such, succeeded his father when Charles abdicated the throne at the closing of 1555 A.D. Vázquez de Menchaca's work was written to advance the interests of his master Philip.

Vázquez de Menchaca build on the work of the School of Salamanca. He disagreed with several points of Vitoria, but nonetheless expanded on the line of though left by his predecessors. Building on the groundwork of de Soto, Vázquez de Menchaca argued that "all civil power depends upon voluntary submission. No other form of 'principate or jurisdiction is

[283] Ibid.

legitimate.'"[284] Vázquez de Menchaca was a staunch supporter of the political principle that the "supreme power of emperor, king, princes and powers, in a word every category of supreme command (*potestas*) is for the exclusive use of the citizens and subjects and not in any sense for their rulers."[285] *Potestas*, in the conception of Vázquez de Menchaca, was to be utilized solely for the benefit and betterment of those over whom it was to be exercised, regardless of the form of government employing it.

Vázquez de Menchaca's political philosophy is, in essence, the forerunner to Thomas Hobbes' own political philosophy regarding commonwealths, for Hobbes stated in his *Leviathan* that a commonwealth (the state) is formed on the consent of the governed by giving up some of their natural rights in order to empower the state to act on their behalf. Nonetheless, there is a stark difference in the final conception of Vázquez de Menchaca's work and that of Hobbes. For Hobbes, once the subjects transferred their rights and authority to the sovereign, it was not possible to take back those rights. In Hobbesian philosophy, taking back the authority from a monarch once a social contract had been established defeated the whole purpose of the contract itself, which is the preservation of order. Thus, the monarch, according to Thomas Hobbes, must remain outside of the reach of the subjects. The power of the state was absolute, for even an absolutist state was preferable to lawlessness and lack of a social contract.

In contrast, the political conception of Vázquez de Menchaca allowed for the subjects of a state to take back the authority they had granted the monarch, following the Aristotelian teaching that the purpose of the government was to help the citizens achieve the good life. If the government failed in this regard, then that government was illegitimate and did not possess the authority to stay in power. In addition, Vázquez de Menchaca is the first among the writers of the

[284] Ibid., 57.
[285] Ibid.

School of Salamanca to definitely declare that the subjects of a state are "to be understood as 'citizens' (*cives*), autonomous rights-bearing political agents, a category which hardly features at all in the earlier juristic or theological literature."[286]

The role of autonomy in the framework of Vázquez de Menchaca is analogous to Aristotle's principle of *dynamis* as the driving force of a *polis* (city) on a daily basis. In the *Politics*, Aristotle observed that the interaction between people in their own pursuits was the essence of the political *dynamis* that pushed the progress of a *polis* forward. From these two conceptions, therefore, the internal link between Aristotle's principle and that of Vázquez de Menchaca becomes realized as an inherent natural right at the core of the post-Spanish colonial commonwealth starting in 1812.

The Final Storm Before Jamestown

While Vázquez de Menchaca spent his time developing original political theory, his lord and master Philip II was occupied defending the fast-fledging glory of the Spanish Empire. During the time of Philip II, arguably, the Imperial Spain had reached its height, and was, therefore, on its way to be surpassed by a new power, specifically England. Philip II had ascended to the Spanish throne in 1556, succeeding his father Charles V. Philip's first marriage, in 1543 A.D. had been to Mary of Portugal, but she passed away in 1546 giving birth to their son Carlos.

In 1554, eight years after the passing of his first wife, Philip married the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, the English Queen Mary Tudor, first cousin of Charles V. Like her mother Catherine (daughter of Fernando and Isabel of Spain), Mary was raised as a

[286] Ibid.

devout Catholic. Her father, Henry VIII, had even been awarded the title "Defender of the Faith" by Pope Leo X in 1521 A.D. Henry, however, was concerned with his lack of a male heir, having Mary as his only daughter. Henry asked his chief minister, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, to address Pope Clement VII in regards to an annulment for Henry's marriage to Catherine. Clement VII, however, did not concede to the annulment for fear of angering Charles V, the most powerful monarch in Europe and nephew of Catherine. In 1533 A.D., Henry broke with the Catholic Church and married Anne Boleyn, who found herself with child, Elizabeth I. But by breaking with the Catholic Church, Henry helped to make England a Protestant nation, free from the grip of Rome.

Anne, like Catherine before her, failed to provide Henry with a male heir and was eventually executed. Henry's third marriage to Jane Seymour gave him the male heir he desperately had been wanting. Jane passed away after giving birth to Edward. His father Henry would go to marry three more times to Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr successively. On January 28, 1547, Henry passed away and was set to rest besides Jane Seymour at Windsor Castle. Henry's first daughter, Mary, would succeed him as ruler of England in 1553.

Mary tried to bring England back to Catholicism, but her reforms proved extremely unfavorable with the population. Mary took more drastic measures to achieve her goals, even ordering the execution of over 300 subjects based on their adherence to the Protestant faith. This act earned Mary the moniker of "Bloody Mary." To legitimize England's return to the Catholic faith, Mary chose to marry Philip II of Spain. Her marriage to Philip failed to produce any children, nonetheless. Childless and wanting of love from her husband, Mary passed away on November 1558. Her half-sister, Elizabeth, succeeded Mary as the English monarch in 1559.

Elizabeth I was a Protestant, and therefore beloved of the English people, at this point a major Protestant nation. Philip sought Elizabeth for marriage, but she rejected the idea.

In 1580, Philip also became the king of Portugal. His wealth, deriving primarily from the Americas, far exceeded that of rival England. Philip advocated for tighter expansionist policies, including the affirmation of the Catholic faith throughout his dominions against a Protestant threat. As a result, he sanctioned the persecution of Protestants. The Protestant and English Queen, Elizabeth I, declared her commitment to defend those persecuted by Philip. Philip would not stand the intercession of Elizabeth and formally ordered the invasion of England by Spanish forces in 1588.

The Spanish Armada, the fiercest naval power in the European continent, on route for England, docked on Calais Harbor in northwestern France. On the night of July 29, the British sent eight burning ships into the crowded harbor. Caught completely off guard, the Spanish vessels quickened their escape from the harbor in a completely disorganized formation. In the battle of that morning, the English fleet sunk many of the Spanish vessels. To make their escape, the remainder of the Spanish Armada was forced to embark on a route northward towards Scotland.

The journey up north and then westward around Ireland would prove just as perilous. Devoid of sufficient resources and battling gale winds, some of the already damaged vessels sunk at sea while others were pushed towards against the rocky coast of Ireland. When the last remaining vessels of the Spanish Armada reached Spain, more than half of the original force had been lost at sea. With its invincible naval fleet defeated, Spain ceased to be the dominant world power and was slowly conceding its supremacy to England on the global stage.

Back home in Spain, things for Philip were just as complex and unfortunate, especially with the rising threat of a revolt from the kingdom of Aragón. During his reign, the struggles between the regions of Spain continued to shape court policy as they had since the time of the Catholic Kings. The Aragonese faction saw the monarchy as essentially Castilian. The Castilians were seen as "unworthy heirs of the great imperial tradition… by their clumsiness and arrogance, were all too capable of shattering the fragile vessel"[287] of the Spanish monarchy. To make matters worse, Philip's preoccupation with the quarrels with England and the Protestants in the rest of his domains distracted him from the needs of his Spanish subjects.

For many of them, Philip was an "increasingly Castilianized absentee monarch."[288] During the 1580s, the Aragonese were one of the most hostile groups of his subjects, ungovernable, and on the verge of civil war against the Castilians. Even though the Aragonese faction essentially revolted against the "Castilian" king, through swift action, Philip was able to keep the Aragonese territory under his control. As the challenging decade of the 1580s came to an end, the final breakdown of the once mighty Spanish Empire would commence during the 1590s.

Philip II continued the imperial expansion begun by his great-grandparents Fernando and Isabel, having established possessions virtually around the globe. However, Philip's imperial expeditions were denting the exchequer at a formidable pace. "The apparently inexhaustible stream of silver from the Indies had tempted the King to embark on vast enterprises which swallowed up his revenues and added to his mountain of debts."[289] By the early 1590s, it was clear that the Spanish treasury was reaching its limits. Apart from levying new taxes on the

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[287] J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 277.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid., 285.

population, the Spanish exchequer depended almost entirely on the silver imports from the Americas. By 1596, the Spanish Crown was officially bankrupt. This bankruptcy *de facto* symbolized the beginning of the end of Imperial Spain. The origin of the end can be taken to be the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 A.D.

The venture of the invasion of England was a concoction by both church and state. From their pulpits, priests preached with religious fervor and rallied the Spanish people behind their king, using the glory of Spain's imperial past since the age of the Catholic Kings. Both church and state preached that the war to be undertaken was purely defensive rather than offensive.

Officials preached that the war against England was one in which the Spanish were defending their "sacred religion and our most holy Roman Catholic faith…, one in which we are defending the high reputation of our King and Lord, and of our nation, defending, too, the land and property of all the kingdoms of Spain, … our peace, tranquility, and repose."[290] But as is known, the invasion proved a disaster, psychologically, morally, and financially, for Spain. Regardless of their loss, "the Spanish fleet not only made up its losses with remarkable speed, but actually became a more formidable fighting force than it had been before."[291] Philip's enemies knew that in order to take on Spain, they needed to take away the Indies, for it was from there that Philip financed his military campaigns.

After the defeat of the Spanish Armada, news of the event travelled fast around Europe. The English felt morally confident to take on Spain directly on Spanish waters. English naval commanders such as Sir John Hawkins, Sir Francis Drake (the Dragon), and the Earl of Cumberland led maritime raids on Spanish possessions, including territories and transatlantic shipments. In 1597 A.D., Philip felt that his forces were once again strong enough to attempt

[290] Ibid., 288.
[291] Ibid., 289.

another invasion of England and "sent another Armada against England… only to see it dispersed by the storms."[292] This defeat, and the waste of resources, put the final seal on Philip's conquests. "Painfully aware that his days were numbered and that his inexperienced son would succeed to an empty treasury, Philip set about reducing Spain's enormous commitments."[293]

First, Philip loosened Spanish control over the Netherlands. Then, on May 2, 1598, Philip signed the Treaty of Vervins with Henry IV of France, which brought an end to the hostilities between Spain and France. However, Philip could not find it in him to make peace with England. On September 13, 1598, he died, and his son, Philip III, took over the throne of his father. As Philip II had feared, his son inherited an empty exchequer. Inexperienced in the matter, Philip III attempted to launch new military campaigns. However, the resources of the Spanish Empire were drained; quickly, Philip III pursued the option of carrying out wars of conquest. But Philip III soon discovered that "there were certain forces beyond their control, and that a withdrawal from the aggressive imperialism of the later sixteenth century had become both necessary and inevitable."[294] The closing decade of the sixteenth century witnessed the definitive withdrawal of Spain as a global power. The final calamity to befall the Spaniards, however, was yet to arrive. Things were not so bad that they could not be worse.

During the last year of Philip II's reign, a plague epidemic first appeared in northern Spain, and "moved steadily southwards, ravaging in its passage the densely crowded cities of Castile."[295] The plague reached its full force in 1599 – 1600 A.D. In a single blow, the plague swept away the huge surge in population during the sixteenth century. A new era ushered along with the new century, an era of pessimism, decline, poverty, stagnation, and unrest. As a country,

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[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid., 290.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid., 298.

Spain was lost, with no hope, or sense of purpose. "The country felt itself betrayed – betrayed perhaps by a God who had inexplicably withdrawn His favour from His chosen people."[296] Spanish spirit was desolate, stricken with plague, famine, and poverty. The Spain of 1600 was not even a shadow of the Spain of 1492. 1600 was both the end and the beginning of an era for Spain.

The extreme reversal of fortunes of Spain as a global empire brought a flood of questions for the Spaniards. What happened? Where had they gone wrong? Was it a divine cause? Was it human error? Perhaps the goddess Fortuna had escaped the grip of Spain, just like Boethius had witnessed that Fortuna could not be tied down. And what of the teachings of Aristotle? Had the teachings of the philosopher failed to uphold Imperial Spain? Or was human folly at the core of this failed experiment? Whatever the cause, or causes, may have been, the Aristotelian framework at the core of Imperial Spain was but a blueprint. The rest, its implementation and execution, was up to the Spaniards.

The children of Aristotle had failed in their endeavor to place the world under an Aristotelian framework. The remnants of the Spanish Empire, nonetheless, would last until the start of the nineteenth century. The School of Salamanca was no more. In the demise of Spain, a void was left on the global stage, waiting to be filled. Seven years after the great plague of 1600 A.D., a new power would try its luck in conquering the globe.

[296] Ibid., 299.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF THE BENEVOLENT EMPIRE

There is no doubt that the discovery of the New World by the Spaniards altered the established socio-political institutions of Spain and the Amerindians, and set the example for the European overseas empires that would follow. Overall, the Spanish Conquest of the Americas under its Aristotelian framework, despite the massive bloodshed and loss of life, was, indeed, carried out in the most benevolent manner possible with a greater positive result rather than a negative one. As has been shown, the British Empire had neither the involvement of the crown, the backing of the church, nor the infrastructure to carry out an ordered overseas empire. Through its governmental institutions, the implementation of religious canonical laws, and the humane wisdom of the Catholic Kings Fernando and Isabel, the Spanish built an empire on stone, whereas the British built an empire on sand that would start to fall apart in 1776.

In one form or another, colonial Spanish America served as a blueprint for the English as they looked at the achievements and failures of the Spaniards. Indeed, it cannot be forgotten that the Spaniard Francisco de Vitoria had supplied the English with a much-needed framework on which to justify their own takeover of Indian lands in British America. It is interesting, perhaps, to wonder why the English did not also take into account Vitoria's ideas on the legitimacy of the Indian governments.

Perhaps the one persistent question surrounding the Spanish Empire is the question of slavery. If, indeed, the Catholic Kings and their successive administrators and heirs had been

instructed in the proper treatment of people, why had they permitted slavery, perhaps not for Indians, but for Africans? The answer to this one question can be extracted from the writings of the administrators and counselors of the empire, from the traditions that guided the actions of the Spaniards, and from the value that lay at the heart of the colonial project: deontological justice. As the members of the School of Salamanca observed, the institution of slavery was not an ethical dilemma in the ancient world. Aristotle himself, as has been observed, was not troubled by the institution of slavery during his own lifetime because of the social mores that were in place.

Questions regarding the deontology of slavery came about after the firm, philosophical conception of natural rights as being innate to humanity during the 17th century. While slavery formed a part of the structural framework of the Spanish Empire, Spanish slaves could exercise certain autonomous actions that were denied, and not even recognized, by the English in the British colonies. Thus, the question of deontological justice was extended throughout the hierarchical structure of Spanish society, Iberian and colonial.

As has been observed throughout the premises presented, the Spanish concern with the question of deontological justice can be defined as giving to each what is proper. What is proper is then derived from the temporal mores of a particular era. Thus, temporal mores are particular categories whereas the question of deontological justice remains as a universal constant.

Because of the Spanish crown's efforts to address the question of deontological justice and promote the good for each imperial subject throughout its hierarchical strata, it may seem that the Spanish (and by extension, the Aristotelian) framework was fundamentally utilitarian, that is, maximizing happiness for the greatest amount of people. If the imperial decrees were aimed at maximizing the stability of all subjects of the Spanish Empire, whether free folk or

slaves, indeed it can be said that the Aristotelian framework implemented by the Spanish crown was essentially utilitarian. However, such an interpretation is incorrect. What was achieved through the Spanish imperial framework was the implementation of deontological justice; the fact that hierarchical social stability was maximized was an outcome, a secondary category, of the Aristotelian framework.

Furthermore, the colonial Spanish framework cannot be considered utilitarian because the utilitarian framework is, fundamentally, a framework of numbers where the greatest happiness is the imperative and the group of the minority is stripped from its happiness. As a result, a utilitarian framework is devoid of deontological justice, which was the core principle of the Spanish framework. Thus, even though the Spanish colonial framework was not essentially utilitarian, it had elements of a consequentialist system, which is a system of morality that is justified by its beneficial end results. Indeed, a system based on deontological justice and a consequentialist system are preoccupied with producing beneficial outcomes. Essentially, however, a consequentialist system faces the same dilemma as a utilitarian system: who benefits? Any system that prioritizes the benefits for a group while denying the same benefits for another group is unjust.

As has been previously stated, the value of deontological justice at the heart of the Spanish colonial project allowed for the fair distribution of justice for each member of the Spanish state. The decrees of the Spanish government did not differentiate between a minor group and a larger group. All subjects received their just due, whether they be Spaniards, Indians, or African slaves. The Spanish state, indeed, was constantly proactive in the evolving process of safeguarding the social standing of each hierarchical group while guaranteeing the proper functioning of each of them. Therefore, to label the Aristotelian-Spanish imperial framework as

consequentialist, or utilitarian, would be inaccurate and misleading. The correct interpretation is to acknowledge the fact that the question of justice was at the very center of the imperial project, and as a result produced an ideal overseas empire that was virtually superior to the latter British Empire in the American colonies in terms of governance, administration, unison, and acting morally towards its subjects.

Another point that must be reaffirmed is the fact that far more Amerindians died because of plagues and diseases than from fighting between Spaniards and Indians. Europeans cannot be held morally, much less legally, responsible for this because they were not aware of the presence of the plagues and diseases within their bodies, clothing, weapons, food, or other materials.

When it comes to the question of establishing an overseas empire, the Spanish model was indeed the better organized and better prepared for the endeavor rather than the British counterpart because of the commitment and structural framework of the Spanish state. The necessary structural framework propelled mainland Spain to administer, as best it could, its colonies in Spanish America. Given its resources within its time period, the Spanish infrastructure worked effectively guided by the question of justice, a question that was not addressed by the English state.

In terms of leadership and initiative, the Spanish rulers involved in the colonial project, whether looking out for their own interests, the interests of Spaniards, or the interests of the Indians are worthy of consideration. The many decrees passed by the Spanish monarchs are a testament to their constant involvement and leadership. In contrast, the English monarchs left much to be desired. The English monarchy did not attentively involve itself with the English colonies until the rule of James II during the 1660s. There was no “the Church” to pass canonical decrees or regulations that could serve to unite the English settlers. Spanish Catholicism served

as a mantle that brought the faithful under a single fold of religious ideology. However, English America had no such widespread religious mantle. If the English monarchy, or the Anglican Church, would have been actively involved with the English colonies since their very beginnings, perhaps their future would have played out entirely differently.

The British colonies could, arguably, be described as quasi-independent entities that fended for themselves due to the lack of a central monarchial authority. If it is true that the English colonies can be seen as entities existing autonomously, then what exactly made the colonies "English"? Was it a name derived from the use of the English language? It certainly was not because the English monarchs were concerned for the colonists. By the same token, there was no grand faith that unified the colonists. Perhaps Protestantism, albeit in its multiple conceptions, united the colonists in mistrust of the Spanish Catholics. But even so, the colony of Maryland was founded as a refuge for English Catholics. Furthermore, Puritan New England had a faith and social structure very different than that of Anglican and Baptist Virginia.

In the final analysis, it was the Spanish Empire that implemented the essential framework and political structures, based on Aristotelian principles, for the establishment of a proper overseas empire. Combined with the Catholic-Aristotelian ideology of the monarchs and administrators, imperial Spain served as the blueprint for how to bring about a benevolent, colonial empire that concerned itself with the question of justice for all its imperial subjects, whether they be Spaniards, Indians, or slaves. It is for these reasons that the Spanish model, rather than the British model, was the best available alternative for administering a colonial empire.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Luis Angel Buentello was born in Reynosa, Tamaulipas in México 1987. At the age of three, his family immigrated to the United States and settled in Roma, Texas where he attended elementary school, middle school, and high school. He graduated with the Roma High School Class of 2006. As a high school senior, he gained admission as a Voice major to the Butler School of Music at The University of Texas at Austin. After having spent his first semester as a freshman music student, he decided to transfer into the school of liberal arts. As a sophomore at UT Austin, he discovered the joy of reading philosophy and was engulfed by the writings of Plato. Thereafter he became a voracious reader of classical, medieval, and modern philosophy. He earned two Bachelor of Arts degrees: B.A. in History, and B.A. in Government, and graduated from UT Austin in the Spring of 2010. Since then, he throws a Hook 'em Horns hand sign whenever he can.

Since graduating from UT Austin, Luis Angel has been working as a high school educator. He holds a Composite Teaching Certification for 8 – 12, and earned an Advance Placement Government Certification from Rice University during the summer of 2015.
He completed his Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in History degree in December 2017 at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and plans to offer college courses and Dual Enrollment courses at a high school level. He is a book enthusiast, a green tea connoisseur, and a conversationalist Spanish, French, Italian, and Japanese speaker. He can be reached through his email, lab9287@gmail.com.