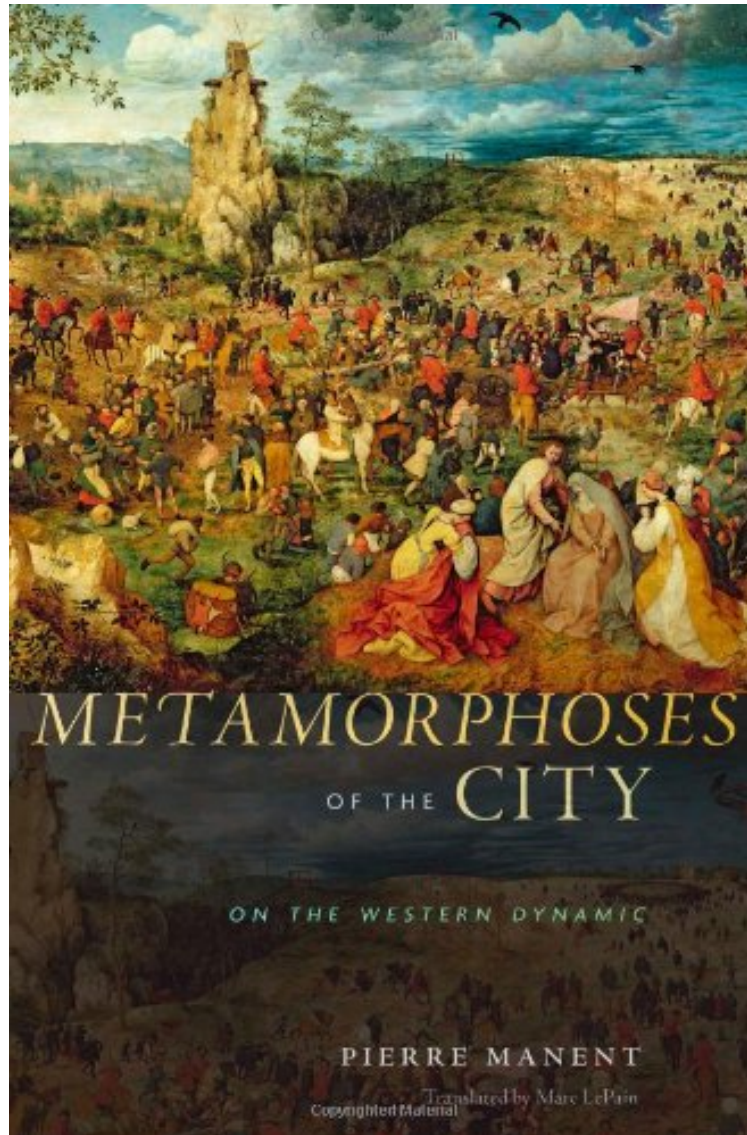


(Download) Metamorphoses of the City: On the Western Dynamic

Metamorphoses of the City: On the Western Dynamic

Pierre Manent

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Pierre Manent : Metamorphoses of the City: On the Western Dynamic before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Metamorphoses of the City: On the Western Dynamic:

22 of 23 people found the following review helpful. A New Dynamic By Randy J. Earley Writing in the November 13, 2013 issue of National Review, Paul Rahe, professor of Western Heritage at Hillsdale College says that: "What Manent has in mind is ... a reconfiguration of "ancient political science," which he persists in embracing "not because it is ancient but because it is political and it alone is wholly political; that is, it is wholly science of the government of

humans by humans." He remains persuaded that he was correct in arguing in *The City of Man* that "modern political science, even in the most 'liberal' authors, such as Montesquieu, tends to make us the playthings of 'causes' that 'govern' us." One cannot defend self-government with a political science that is predicated on a denial of the human capacity for what the Greeks called praxis. The requisite reconfiguration of political science that Manent seeks is, he believes, ready to hand. It was, he argues, Cicero who, in the time of Caesar and Octavian, revised the political science of Aristotle for the purpose of understanding a *res publica* in the process of becoming what the Romans would in short order dub a principatus (the private possession of its princeps, or "first man")--and Augustine was the Roman statesman's greatest intellectual heir. In Manent's estimation, Rome's transformation was just the beginning, for it was followed by the founding of the Christian church, which was a city, or *civitas*--a new political form in its own right. In time, moreover, when the Reformation divided Europe, sapped the energy and authority of the Church, and left it in both Catholic and Protestant kingdoms to the mercy of the secular prince, there gradually emerged a fourth political form, the nation-state--which was possessed of a sovereignty that enabled it to absorb and dominate the Church and, in time, neuter it and consign it to civil society. With this nation-state, there came a revival of self-government by way of representative institutions. . . . Manent has written a book as challenging as Strauss's *Natural Right and History*, one in which he calls to judgment Strauss and his followers for neglecting the city of God and failing to articulate an adequate "science of Rome." In the process Manent has done a great public service: first, by forcing political philosophers to grapple with the erosion of self-government in the West and the gradual substitution of bureaucratic administration for political praxis; and, second, by demanding that they reconfigure the only political science that gives primacy to politics in such a manner as to take into consideration the succession of what he calls "political forms." What Cicero did for Rome in the time of Caesar and Octavian with his *De Officiis* and his *De Republica* and what Augustine did for the *Civitas Dei* with his magnum opus *The City of God* needs to be done for Europe and America in and after the age of the nation-state. Manent is right in intimating that we need to read Montesquieu with great care and to take seriously the criticism that he levels at classical political science, and to do so without succumbing to the propensity--fostered by all modern political and social science--for underestimating the scope left for human agency. He is correct as well in his insistence that we need to attend to the logic underpinning the succession of political forms, and the warning that he directs to his fellow Europeans about the dangers attendant on administrative centralization is not salutary solely for them: It applies with almost equal force to us. With the nation-state, man recovered in some measure what the ancient Greeks had discovered when they founded the city. To lose the *res publica* would be to lose our most precious heirloom." 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. like a primer or an accessible history By Daniel Strand I am not going to write a long review because any real review of this book would have to reckon with the immensity of the argument and erudition that Manent brings to this work. It is impressive, to say the least. His writing brims with insights and his engagement with the whole breadth of the Western political tradition is majestic. If you care about politics in the grand sweep of history and want to be challenged to think more deeply this book is for you. If you want something else, like a primer or an accessible history, this is not the book for you. 7 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Manent's study illumines how we have come to where we are in politics By Kenneth L. Smith This volume is demanding of the reader, both in terms of history and philosophy, but well worth the effort. I recommend it to anyone willing to put the time in wrestling with its argument. His conclusion that the nation state is the most stable political structure among the alternatives is well put but disconcerting in terms of Europe's evident path.

What is the best way to govern ourselves? The history of the West has been shaped by the struggle to answer this question, according to Pierre Manent. A major achievement by one of Europe's most influential political philosophers, *Metamorphoses of the City* is a sweeping interpretation of Europe's ambition since ancient times to generate ever better forms of collective self-government, and a reflection on what it means to be modern. Manent's genealogy of the nation-state begins with the Greek city-state, the polis. With its creation, humans ceased to organize themselves solely by family and kinship systems and instead began to live politically. Eventually, as the polis exhausted its possibilities in warfare and civil strife, cities evolved into empires, epitomized by Rome, and empires in turn gave way to the universal Catholic Church and finally the nation-state. Through readings of Aristotle, Augustine, Montaigne, and others, Manent charts an intellectual history of these political forms, allowing us to see that the dynamic of competition among them is a central force in the evolution of Western civilization. Scarred by the legacy of world wars, submerged in an increasingly technical transnational bureaucracy, indecisive in the face of proliferating crises of representative democracy, the European nation-state, Manent says, is nearing the end of its line. What new metamorphosis of the city will supplant it remains to be seen.