



PART I - IN PLAIN SIGHT: WHO ARE “WE, THE PEOPLE?”

Posted on October 1, 2020 by John Coleman



This is Part I of a series of three: [Part II](#) and [Part III](#).

Introduction: Misunderstandings

Anyone with an ounce of spiritual awareness and emotional sensitivity knows low-level blues some of the time. Even our metric friends, they who hold but a diminutive gram's worth of discernment, know well this vale of tears. In the catalogue of woes which stalk long downtrodden man, the disconnect between impression and reality is prominent.

At a political hearing I attended earlier this year, for example, I was taken aback to learn how divergent our general understanding of the immune system is as compared to where science presently stands. What we are taught in high school is about a century out of date.

Another example is seen with driverless trucking features on TV. Broadcast in North America and Europe, these specials have all the schadenfreude that reality TV can dish up. The producers narrate as high-tech lorries roll across the screen. As these programs unfold they inevitably cut back and forth to befuddled truckers. Always American Southerners, the interviewees coyishly confront their livelihood evaporating before their bloodshot eyes. Remarkably nonplussed (or fronting heavily), they assure the host that such machines will, "Never take off." After all, "Who'd you trust on a highway, me or some robot." The producers have made their point: the wagoneers are out of touch with reality.

We won't even get started on the perception-reality dynamic surrounding face masks vis-a-vis virus protection.

Think of all the lost opportunities, the mistaken conclusions, the wasted health and wealth and peace of mind which is out there because people's perceptions do not match reality. It adds up and it wears one down. I suppose there's some proof of Original Sin in all this. And we see the same disconnect with politics.

A Most Popular Crew

One error heard throughout these States united concerns invocation of "the People." Their mention, typically an ever-present warble, becomes a clashing gong each presidential election. And why wouldn't it? The purported benefit to the people can justify any scheme. Is mechanical abortion good? Yes, because the people benefit. Should it be permitted? Of course not, babies are people too. Some foreign country must be invaded to avenge the people! No, it mustn't. People might be killed. Taxes are necessary to provide services to the people. Taxes steal the people's money. You get the point. Sprinkle the people on it, and any topic is justified.

The purpose of this article is to pin down the members of this timely clique. Who are the people? Or rather, who are the People? (n.b., We'll get into the capitalization significance below). The People must really be special to have so many skins talking about them! The purpose of this article is not to lampoon the present condition of Western democracy, a ludicrous system custom-fit for every two-bit grifter from your town hall alderman to your Supreme Court heavy hitter. Nor do I write this with a moralizing spirit. I am not saying the conclusion herein is good or bad. Alas, political discourse is frustratingly given over to what people think of this or that occurrence; little attention is given to how things are. Let us put our emotions and impressions and solutions aside. Let us look at the naked reality.

The Rub

That we not beat around the bush, the People are a specific group of men distinct from the mass of Americans. Almost certainly you, kind reader, are not among the People. Their concerns are not your concerns, their loves are not your loves, their fears are not your fears. Only by a polite omission on the part of the People themselves, combined with a baseless and monstrous assumption on your part, do you believe you are among the People.

By blood, or marriage, the People were or are those related to the 18th-century constitutors of the state and Federal governments of America, as well as those men so involved with states later incorporated into these United States. Far from being a stealthy clique, they number in the hundreds of thousands, perhaps the millions. Far from being secretive, their identity is trumpeted in both the legal documents they publish and it is plainly seen in their behavior. With eyes to see, one stands in awe of just how explicit, frequent, and honest the People are in advertising their distinction from the regular Americans they rule over.

There are four reasons which support this unusual and uncomfortable, but inevitable, conclusion. They

are (1) legal grammar, (2) the Founders' historical awareness, (3) the U.S. Constitution, and (4) the present and historical behavior of the People.

Specificity & Hierarchy: Legal Grammar

The legal system is specific. Indeed, specificity is shy only of artificiality when comprehending the legal control matrix. Without general nouns there is no way whereby one group can be designated from another. Likewise, without proper nouns there is no way things of a kind can be isolated from their larger mass. What book-hoarding boon is a library card if it has no name to it and if anyone in the town may use it? What fear does a speeding ticket hold if there is no specific man to mail it to? Without specificity, statisticians cannot exert their will upon their subjects. Legality demands specificity.

General specificity only gets one so far. Hierarchy is needed for greater distinction. If we all have individualized library cards, to carry over the above example, who goes first if we both want to check out the same book? To see the People for who they are we need to unlock the hierarchy their system assumes. The maxims of law and the doctrine of *capitis diminutio* are our keys.

The maxims are the skeleton upon which the legal system hangs. They're analogous to a Catholic's examination of conscience for Confession. They are less a list of hard and fast regulations and more of a general collection of proverbs which explain the principles of legal land. Woe betide those who do not make this distinction! The penitent becomes a neurotic and the barrister a hack should they put such enumerations literally into practice. Many a soul and many a lawyer has been ruined by this oversight. When it comes to the maxims of law, the spirit rules and the letter kills.

The creator controls, is one such proverb. In fact, it's a truism so fundamental to legalism that it often does not appear in published lists of maxims. Only the frequent reading of case law, or "reading between the lines" on the compiled legal proverbs cited in Black's or Bouvier's dictionaries, will discover this plain principle. Upon this doctrine, for example, I have the sole authority to decide what gets mentioned in this article. I am the creator of this article; I am its sovereign. However, should I desire this piece to be published on a platform created by another, I must submit this creation to that creation, myself being the petitioning party. I must subordinate this sovereign creation to that one (i.e., for editing, formatting, etc.). From the doctrine of "the creator controls" the whole legal structure flows.

Capitis deminutio is a principle which the Founding Fathers, mostly lifelong barristers and/or merchants, would have been familiar with, at the establishment of the country's governing system. A concept from Roman law, a system which all English-speaking structures eventually default to, should there be no usable precedents, *capitis deminutio* designates the amount of control an entity is under. Long story short, so that we don't get tangled in jargon, the capitalization of the first letter of a noun in legal land designates something as both a specific something, and under the ownership of another. If you are up for a load of jargon, here's the definition of *capitis diminutio* from *Black's Law*, 2nd edition: "In Roman law, diminishing or abridgment of personality. This was a loss or curtailment of a man's status or aggregate of legal attributes and qualifications, following upon certain changes in his civil condition. It was of three kinds, enumerated as follows:

Capitis diminutio maxima. The highest or most comprehensive loss of status. This occurred when a man's condition was changed from one of freedom to one of bondage, when he became a slave. It swept away with it all rights of citizenship and all family rights.

Capitis diminutio media. A lesser or medium loss of status. This occurred where a man lost his rights of citizenship, but without losing his liberty. It carried away also the family rights.

Capitis diminutio minima. The lowest or least comprehensive degree of loss of status. This occurred where a man's family relations alone were changed. It happened upon the arrogation of a person who had been his own master, (*sui juris*,) or upon the emancipation of one who had been under the *patria potestas*. It left the rights of liberty and citizenship unaltered. See Inst. 1, 1G, pr.; 1, 2, 3; Dig. 4, 5, 11; Mackeld. *Rom. Law*."

Thus "the People" in a legal document, such as, the U.S. Constitution, or in the mouth of someone holding a legal office ultimately under the jurisdiction of the Constitution, refers to a specific group of people, rather than any old sinner walking on top of America.

Togas & Muskets: The Framers' Historical Awareness

Second, the claim that the People refer to a specific caste of men is supported by the historical awareness of the Founding Fathers. They were a clutch deeply steeped in ancient history. Their use of antique references bolstered the point that their political arguments were timeless.

When news of the Battles of Lexington and Concord came to holy Connecticut, for example, jovial Israel Putnam immediately dropped his plowing in situ and raced Cincinnatus-style to join the Massachusetts rebels. About two months before Dr. Joseph Warren became Bunker Hill's most famous casualty, he was seen speechifying on the streets of Boston in a Roman toga!

The American Revolution came at a time when various trends were at their zenith. The equality of armaments between rulers and ruled, is one example, the afterglow of a Protestant revival is another, and the obsession of that generation with the likes of Plutarch and Cicero is yet one more example. The Framers could not get enough of ancient history.

Those acquainted with Rome will be aware of the divide between the patrician and plebeian classes. The interaction between those who traced their families back to the original stock of Rome (patricians) and those who moved in later (plebeians) provides an enduring thread through all the turns and jolts of Roman history. But even the dullest pleb, a manifest client of Sulla or Caesar, one hopelessly addicted to bread and circuses, would never seriously think the "P" in SPQR (i.e., *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, the Senate and the People of Rome) meant him. The "P" for People meant the patricians. Everyone else was along for the ride.

Communist countries like China and North Korea are more in line with this Roman bluntness than the democratic West on this point. Everyone knows when an office holder in those countries talks about "the People" they're referring to the members of the Party, which is considered to be a type of incarnation of the will of the populace.

The American Framers meant to provide against a repeat of the ancient slide towards democracy and chaos. Far from being a sexist, hypocritical oversight, their limit of the voting franchise to men, and only men of property at that, was a direct homage to the early Roman Republic. Of course, they would say, men of maturity and wealth - the material success stories of a community - ought to be the ones to steer the ship of state. Jobbers and renters were not fit to run a county, having so unimpressively run their lives. Reprising the *paterfamilias* role, the males of the early American republic would stand in for all their family members' concerns in the public sphere. They would save - not exclude - women, children, and the indigent from the morass of electoral politics.

In Rome the patrician class was not static. There was the process of adoption. Far removed from motives of modern charity or conjugal sterility, adoption was offered to promising youths entering their

adult years. The Emperor Augustus is the most famous example of this. It was a means to ensure inheritance in a society with disabilities on women's ability to inherit property.

Teasing these points out, the existence and stability of the patrician class and their use of adoption, we see how the American constitutors were primed by their interest in Rome to create a governing caste in their "People," which was stable yet occasionally open to fresh, well-vetted blood via marriage and other forms of incorporation.

In Plain View: The People Define Themselves

The third point is proof from the U.S. Constitution. We take the legal and historical setups above into this consideration. Now that we know the principles under which the Framers operated, the identity of the People is hardly a question at all, as we examine a document they produced.

The U.S. Constitution is a contract using specific legal language. It plainly states for whom the new government exists. It famously begins, "We, the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." There you have it. The United States Federal government, and its incorporated state entities, exist for the sole benefit of the People.

The "We" and "ourselves" refer to the signatories themselves, the 39 souls who met in Independence Hall. Through the doctrine of delegation, however, the People also included those men who constituted the several state governments which dispatched those representatives to Philadelphia. Remember, the creator controls. Thus, by the agentic, representative relationship, the Peoples of the 13 states were invisibly present at that Pennsylvania meeting, too.

Then there is the mention of "our Posterity." Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary, a text whose definitions are closer to the Founding Fathers' understanding than our dictionaries, defines posterity as, "Descendants; children, children's children, etc. indefinitely; the race that proceeds from a progenitor. The whole human race are the *posterity* of Adam." His second definition defines posterity as, "In a general sense, succeeding generations; opposed to ancestors."

We know the first definition is what the constitutors intended because legal language is specific, not general. John Bouvier's 1839 dictionary defines posterity as, "All the descendants of a person in a direct line." Therefore, the Posterity mentioned in the Constitution refers to the descendants of the constitutors. Unless you are one of the fortunate few hundred thousand or millions of souls related to those state or national leaders, you are not the People. With the legal definitions, principles, maxims of the system itself, not what we assume they mean, we come to know who the People are. Only an undiscerning and gross assumption suggests that "We the People" applies to all Americans.

Distinctions, Distinctions, Distinctions: The Vote And The Election

Lost on Americans is the distinction between two events which the media conflate into one: The Presidential vote and the Presidential election. They are not the same event. The early November vote is largely a straw poll, while the December election makes the actual choice of President. The November event is a way to take the pulse of the country. It has no direct say-so on who becomes President. It is nearly, but as we shall see not totally, meaningless.

The November vote is analogous to Catholic parish administration. The priest has absolute, official, final say in ordinary decisions for his parish. In no way whatsoever is he obliged to listen to the directives of his council. Yet to go against the zeitgeist of the parish council in a major way would be foolish. It would create sullen, testy subjects. Such a rash override would form a block of uncertain loyalty should the priest run afoul of the bishop at some future date. In the Catholic parish council as soon as in the American vote, the mob has power of a sort. However, that power is consultative not formal. At base, the November vote serves as a psychological release valve. It lets off tension which otherwise would manifest itself in discord and revolution.

The election, a distinct event from the vote, is a quiet event which takes place in the 50 state capitals mid-December of each election cycle. This limited December event has in fact all of the import which people ascribe to the popular November event. The tally of the December electors decides who will be President, not the vote.

The electors are drawn from the suggestions of the state political parties. They're largely the same sorts who participate as delegates at the state and national conventions charged with selecting the presidential candidates. To follow the *cursus honorum* of such [party delegates/electors](#) is to see the People in their natural habitat.

At this year's Democratic National Convention, where state party delegates met to choose their national candidate, there was a remarkably helpful commercial released, entitled, "We The People at the Democratic Convention." A superficial viewing showed a diverse collection of Americans of all races, classes, and creeds. However, a closer re-watch reveals that all participants were sitting office holders, Bar attorneys, or DNC representatives. Once you know who the People are, you'll never hear politicians the same way again!

By Their Works: The People In Action

Lastly, the People are a specific clique based on the observable behavior of the American ruling class. From time to time, articles appear noting the relationship of this or that politician with this or that movie star or commercial mogul. If only in the interest of trivia, most Americans probably know a few examples of this.

The relationship between the second and sixth Presidents (Adamses), as well as the 41st and 43rd ones (Bushes), are commonly known. The simplified observation that California Governor Gavin Newsom is the "nephew" of California Congresswoman and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (herself the daughter of a Maryland Congressman and the sister of a Baltimore mayor) has received some press, as Mr. Newsom has run California off a financial cliff in 2020. Less well known is that Gavin Newsom is the removed cousin of the far more useful soul, the harpist, Joanna Newsom.

And relationality in the ruling class isn't a modern phenomenon. Chilly Connecticut, where I compose this article, was started by a breakaway faction of Puritans led by Thomas Hooker. The good reverend left his mark in the new-found colony. Aaron Burr, George Catlin, J.P. Morgan, and William Howard Taft were all descendants, with Hooker's blood running through the veins of the Pierpoint and Edwards families.

I could go on and on. If you spend an hour or two nosing around your socially-distanced library, if you connect the dots between the "related to's" in the biography section, you'll see the combination the People have going. You may even visit Google and use their "People also search for" feature to do the same. If you invest the time, these simple experiments about the People will solidify profound conclusions about American government than do isolated barroom anecdotes. If one understands the People to be the specific class they define themselves as, a great many baffling statements and state policies become sensible.

There is a Masonic aspect to this topic I only skirt now. It's a theme which could swallow this discussion. Suffice it to say, the practitioners of occult schools were well represented at the state and national constituting conventions of late 18th-century America. Within those communities the use of adept symbolism and "open secrets" are no strangers. The occultation of the meaning of the word People is not beyond the pale in this context as well. But before we get all tangled up in "endless genealogies" (1 Tim. 1:4) we remember that, like the Roman system, the present order is simply codified nepotism. Don't overthink the motives of the People.

Conclusion

Plato argued that societies need a noble lie to keep them living together harmoniously. Such is the spurious assumption that all Americans are the People. By quietly letting the mass of men believe they are this group, the American system rectified the failings of ancient experiments at self-government.

As noted, one of those failings was a tension between the patricians and the plebeians, the old blue bloods and later settlers. One way to provide against the selfsame tensions which destroyed the Roman Republic is not to mention this social division, however true it is. If the pleb believes he is a patrician a great source of resentment is avoided.

Power to the People!

[Go to Part II.](#)

*John Coleman co-hosts [Christian History & Ideas](#), and is the founder of **Apocatastasis: An Institute for the Humanities**, an alternative college and high school in New Milford, Connecticut. Apocatastasis is a school focused on studying the Western humanities in an integrated fashion, while at the same time adjusting to the changing educational field. [Information about the college can be found at their website.](#)*

The image shows, **Cincinnatus abandons the Plough to dictate Laws to Rome**, by Juan Antonio de Ribera; painted in 1806.

