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The Postliberal Order: A New Movement Emerging in American Political Thought

Abstract: Some conservative American political thinkers seek a political theory that could replace contemporary liberalism. After the publishing of Patrick Deneen's *Why Liberalism Failed* in 2018, a new movement in political theory emerged. Since 2021, Patrick Deneen, Adrian Vermeuele, Chad Pecknold, and Gladden Pappin started publishing together at postliberalorder.com, calling themselves The Postliberals. The paper aims at summarizing and outlining postliberal thought, along with its two main elements: Deneen's political theory of common good conservatism and Vermeuele's legal theory of common good constitutionalism, asking the question of whether postliberalism, as represented by the authors, is a new political doctrine or rather an emerging intellectual movement.

Keywords: postliberalism, Postliberal Order, common good constitutionalism, common good conservatism, legal theory, political theory

Introduction

An intellectual movement named “postliberalism”, associated with names such as the author of *Why Liberalism Failed*, political theorist Patrick Deneen, constitutional scholar Adrian Vermeuele, political Scientist Gladden Pappin, theologian Chad Pecknold, and many others, started emerging in recent years in American academia. In November 2021, the first four authors decided to start a new platform called “Postliberalorder”, starting an online intellectual movement that is supposed to lead the political discussion toward “a good that is common” to escape from the political discourse in the US, which focuses on the division for the left-right political axis of two forms of the liberal ideology, a conservative one represented by the Republican Party, and a progressive one represented by the Democratic Party [Deneen 2021]. The post-liberals are looking for a political order that could supposedly replace the current one. The paper aims to outline and summarize the

views of the post-liberals and to determine whether the “postliberal order” can be considered a cohesive political doctrine using the criteria of cohesiveness; providing a diagnosis and critique of the contemporary regime, and giving a consistent postulating set of political goals and policy targets. The views of the Post-liberals mentioned were found at their official Substack platform account and website Postliberalorder.com and in various publications and books of the Post-liberals mentioned (most notably Vermeuele’s *Common Good Constitutionalism* and Deneen’s *Regime Change Toward a Postliberal Future*). The scope of the research has been limited to primary sources as there is currently little literature concerning the emerging post-liberal movement in the US. Moreover, the question will be asked as to whether the measures and methods to reach the political targets they propose are consistent with the targets themselves, namely bringing back the more classical tradition oriented to the common good.

Four major aspects of the postliberal doctrine are analysed: anthropology and its view of the nature of politics and society itself, a critique of liberalism and modern politics, proposed political solutions and proposed legal doctrine to replace current jurisprudential patterns—namely, originalism and living constitutionalism.

The sources and cohesiveness of the postliberal order

Back in 2018, Patrick Deneen published a bestselling book titled *Why Liberalism Failed*, where he argued that the liberal project prioritizing individual autonomy has failed to fulfil its promises, led to social and economic fragmentation, economic inequality, disfiguring the conception of human nature, and loss of meaningful community and tradition. Liberal institutions, such as government, markets, and civil society, became dysfunctional and incapable of addressing challenges facing modern societies, and are failing to serve the common good [Deneen 2018: 186]. *Why Liberalism Failed* seems to be a cornerstone of the postliberal project. In the conclusion of his 2018 bestseller Deneen advocates for moving to a regime that would be oriented to something that would come after liberalism, providing a better theory of politics and society, focusing on localism, and being aware of basic political ideals of Western civilization. Simultaneously, it must be acknowledged that while building a new form of a regime, we ought to be aware of the achievements of liberalism and eschew a desire to somehow return to a preliberal (that is pre-modern) age [ibid.: 182]. The Postliberal Order project seems to be a continuation of the idea that served as a conclusion of Deneen’s famous book.

The post-liberals provide a powerful critique of contemporary liberalism: they even argue that it might be considered a political form of Pelagianism [Deneen P., Pappin G., and Pecknold C. C. 2021].

Deneen, describing liberalism, says that it expects “all who enter within its orbit will hold this preliminary view of culture as a secondary attribute, effectively demoting their own cultural inheritance in favor of a primary allegiance to liberal anti-culture [being a homogenous liberal culture, disembodied an individual from his local community].”

Since, in his opinion, “Nothing works so fast to dissolve the rich tapestry of human civilization as liberalism does,” it becomes a duty to endeavour to think of establishing a new political form, unbiassed by the liberal ideology [Deneen, Pappin 2022].

According to Deneen, the emergence of a ‘postliberal’ right is an effect of a rediscovery of early modern forms of conservatism. It relates to the early conservatives, who warned of the dangers of the ‘ideology of progress’ that was emerging [Deneen 2023: 12]. The movement, i.e., postliberal conservatism, opposes liberalism’s central commitment to liberty understood above all as an individual choice; it instead focuses on the common good and the primacy of the family, community, and human goods that can only be secured through efforts of the political community—not with the primacy of an individual [ibid.: 111-112]. Moreover, the post-liberals, namely Adrian Vermeule, propose an alternative judicial interpretation of the American Constitution and statutes called Common Good Constitutionalism. This jurisprudential approach rejects both originalism and liberal constitutionalism and its overriding emphasis on safeguarding individual rights and limiting state power. These are rejected for the sake of promotion of respect for legitimate authority, hierarchies needed for society to function, solidarity within and among families, social groups, unions, associations, and professions, appropriate subsidiarity, and respect for legitimate roles of public bodies, and associations at all levels of government, along with a candid willingness to ‘legislate morality’. The core assumption is that the proper function of the political authority is the promotion of a substantive vision of the good, thus, legislation is always founded on some vision of morality, promoting which is a legitimate function of that authority [Vermeuele 2022: 37].

Views on the nature of man and the political order

The post-liberals present a particular view of human nature and the nature of political communities, an understanding that is crucial to grasp their further

claims concerning the proper arrangement of the political and legal order. In their eyes, it is the regime that shapes the people, not the other way around—in one of the essays on the Postliberal Order, Pecknold clearly states that “the soul conforms itself to the regime, and if the regime is disoriented in its civic-religious order, so will the disordered souls perpetuate the disordered regime in a vicious downward spiral” [Pecknold 2022].

To him, a secularized concept of human dignity “is a political concept which is designed to give us an anthropology detachable from God” [Pecknold 2021]. In consequence, so long as a community relies on flawed anthropological terms, “it will continually arrive at ever more tragic disfigurements of the image of God, and thus even more unstable political arrangements” [ibid.].

An alternative he proposes is turning to a hierarchical concept of human dignity—being a potential for elevation into a closer Image of God (which is in all human beings due to being intellectual creatures). To Pecknold, humans possess a natural aptitude for knowing and loving God as the rational soul is itself our potency for elevation, which we can call a ‘dignity’ since it is ordered to and tends towards “our highest good and our end” [ibid.]. He goes further to state that all political communities are religious by nature, thus, “Christians who care about their neighbor must not be indifferent to the sacred bonds of the city but must oppose civic sacrilege, and work to reorient the domestic and civic altars alike to God’s heavenly city,” therefore advocating for public enforcement of Christian morality [Pecknold 2022].

This focus seems to be a common denominator of also Deneen and Vermeuele, who in fact do not propose an imposition of any religion, but civic virtue, as in their eyes policymakers can turn citizens into more or less virtuous beings either through institutional rearrangement and culture-influencing policies or appropriate law that ought to have “a candid willingness to legislate morality” [Vermeuele 2020].

Vermeuele uses St. Thomas’s definition of law, which is “an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by a public authority who has charge of the community” [Vermeuele 2022: 3].

He sees law as “parental, a wise teacher and an inculcator of good habits”. Coerciveness is part of the proposed project, as the “just authority in rulers can

be exercised for the good of subjects, if necessary, even against the subjects' own perceptions of what is best for them" [Vermeuele 2020].

On the other hand, as mentioned before, Deneen sees that "liberalism expects that all who enter within its orbit will hold this preliminary view of culture as a secondary attribute" [Deneen, Pappin 2022].

In effect, working to "dissolve the tapestry of human civilization" demoting their cultural inheritance in favour of a primary allegiance to liberal "anti-culture"[*ibid.*]. For him, new, virtuous elites, if assigned to proper places of power in a new institutional matrix—mixed constitutionalism will, in consequence, lead the rest of society to private virtue.

Patrick Deneen's proposal of a "regime change"

Deneen has developed his thoughts in a 2023 book titled: *Regime Change Towards a Postliberal Future*, where he advocated for several major issues, including localism (support of a healthy civil society under an umbrella of public policy devoted to breaking up concentrations of power), pro-family policies, enforcing moral media, enlarging the Congress, an idea of a mixed constitution (mixed regime in a larger than institutional sense), public promotion of Christian values and roots, blue laws, public help in providing an environment for the life of prayer and replacing the current elites with more virtuous political actors. To Deneen, what "the many" (that is ordinary, working-class people that he calls *demos*) want is "a conservatism that conserves", which is "a form of liberty embedded within duties and mutual obligations" [Deneen 2023: 9].

His "regime change" includes making "formative institutions in which all can and are expected to participate as shared 'social utilities'" [*ibid.*: 11]. Lastly, he sees the need for "an elite that respects and supports the basic commitments and condition of the populace; and a populace that in turn renders its ruling class responsive and responsible to protection of the common good" [*ibid.*: 11].

A claim he makes is that what most ordinary people seek instinctively is "stability, order, continuity, and a sense of gratitude for the past and obligation toward the future" [*ibid.*: 11].

Deneen describes his political views as "aristopopulism", a regime that achieves balance through a form of political, social, and economic "mixing," which seeks

cooperation of “the many,” with their insights and experiences grounded in “common-sense” experience and “the few,” with their more refined, even philosophic understandings available through liberal arts education, with the end of defending the common good [ibid.: 109]. An order based on assumptions of a “mixed constitution,” rejects not only “liberalism’s commitment to progress advanced by the elite (whether classical or progressive),” but also “Marxism’s identification with “the many” as a fundamentally revolutionary force” [ibid.: 109].

In short, this political vision is labeled “Common Good Conservatism”, to include both modern and ancient connotations [ibid.: 106].

Public help in providing an environment for the life of prayer

A crucial aspect of postliberal thought is the critique of liberalism from a Christian perspective. According to Pappin, Christian critics of liberalism, at the broadest level see liberalism as both hegemonic and fragile, where “its hegemon has become the source of fragility,” because it caused reactions threatening or giving opportunity to replace liberal politics with not liberal “politics of order,” such as the Chinese authoritarian state capitalism or Hungarian and Polish populist nationalism, and reactions against economic policies in the US and UK. For Pappin these circumstances are an opportunity to establish a political order based on something non-liberal [Pappin 2021: 2]. For the post-liberals, a Christian critique of liberalism revolves around central elements, such as promoting excessive individualism, moral neutrality, an imposition of a private/public divide, and crucially, the treatment of liberalism as a civil religion. The problem of the role of religion in the public sphere becomes one of great importance as the political conditions are of high influence on the possibility of living a religious life. Therefore, Deneen argues for a revitalization of public Christian culture and an acknowledgment of the Christian roots of American civilization, especially by referring to the Christian legacy via a call for service and sacrifice of those advantaged on behalf of the forgotten and poor. He also refers to other post-liberals—Ahmari, Pecknold, and Pappin—who argue that Christian culture is the only thing capable of recharging “the West’s potential for law and culture that undergirds flourishing for ordinary people who are otherwise drowned in the overwhelming tides of liberal ‘progress’” [Deneen 2023: 202-203].

Since liberalism has “democratized” the life of prayer by replacing it with “a kind of elitist sequestration of leisure and contemplation”, postliberalism needs to enhance the conditions contributing to the life of prayer, especially through introducing

blue laws. Deneen refers to studies considering the deaths of despair which showed that those deaths not simply correlated to individual losses of faith but to the public manifestation of religious indifference, namely the public repeal of blue laws and a day of rest on the Sabbath. A strong thesis he puts forward is that expansive liberal indifferentism to the life of prayer linked to a positive encouragement to the good of leisure has had a disproportionate, and even deadly, effect on the least socially and economically privileged [ibid.: 260]. He perceives it as the duty of the political order to guide people and to provide the conditions for the enjoyment of the goods of human life, such as a life of prayer. Deneen continues that liberal values such as “Religious liberty,” “academic freedom,” “free markets,” and “checks and balances,” cannot substitute piety, truth, equitable prosperity, and just government [ibid.: 255].

The replacement of the elites

Deneen presents a highly sceptical view of the contemporary ruling elites, claiming that those who are in positions of power and influence have demonized fellow citizens, who are more eager to advocate for populist candidates, as “backward, racist, recidivist, even too lazy to get up and move”, therefore creating a further social divide. What is labelled as “populism” by the elites, to him, is a “reaction by the immune system of the body politic, but not the cure for political disease.” The remedy is the development of a new elite “dedicated to the promotion and construction of a society that assists ordinary fellow citizens in achieving lives of flourishing” [ibid.: 256-257].

A similar, but more poetic statement, was given by Vermeuele, who back in 2018, reviewing *Why Liberalism Failed* advocated for a “soft paternalism”, based on political control and the concept of default rules, derived from the behavioural economy, that may nudge whole populations in desirable directions. In *American Affairs*, he advocates that the conservatives should find “a strategic position from which to sear the liberal faith with hot irons, to defeat and capture the hearts and minds of liberal agents,” moreover, they should “take over the institutions of the old order that liberalism has itself prepared and to turn them to the promotion of human dignity and the common good” [Vermeuele 2018].

This idea of replacing the current elites with more virtuous political actors seems to be common to the post-liberals.

Deneen considers a common culture of good habits of “ordinary people” with its virtues of thrift, honesty, and long memory, which, in turn, foster gratitude and

a widespread sense of mutual obligation to be weakened or destroyed. Hence, the “only hope is a renewal and reinvigoration by a responsible governing class” [Deneen 2023: 255].

It seems that he assumes that good elites will simply make a good regime that will, by default, proscribe virtue to the people. The direction of social change seems to be not “bottom-up” (from creating a culture to creating social acceptance of certain norms and implementation of them in the legislative sphere) but “upper-down”.

Adrian Vermeuele’s jurisprudence of the common good

Common good conservatism and, a specific understanding of an Augustinian approach to the relations of politics to religion, are not the only features of the postliberal order. It also offers a substantive approach to legal theory, namely Adrian Vermeuele’s Common Good Constitutionalism. The idea is to adapt the classical legal tradition and use it as a matrix to interpret law and statutes in the US. It is not quite a new theory: according to Vermeuele, it is a return to a tradition that has been present in US jurisprudence till the early 20th century. Classical law has a subsidiarity built within—it has general principles that apply to all the circumstances, so it is both a yes and no answer to the question of whether the US Constitution is a fixed document [Deneen et al. 2023]. The Common Good, as he defines it, is the flourishing of a well-ordered political community, and it refers to a classical trinity of peace, justice, and abundance turned into contemporary values of safety, health, and economic security with principles of solidarity and subsidiarity [Vermeuele 2022: 7]. The rights are present in the common good tradition, but they are founded on a different basis, not on individual autonomy, but on the common good, they need to be oriented towards the common good.

For Vermeuele, both existing methods of constitutional interpretation are forms of liberalism, either progressive or conservative, and both should be rejected. Originalism lacks “the internal theoretical resources required even to identify meaning without normative argument at the point of application” [Vermeuele 2022: 22].

In courts originalist decisions are pervaded by commitments of political morality, thus in this sense originalism does not exist. On the other hand, progressivism is an “illusion that takes a different form; progressives take themselves to simply be liberating individuals from the unchosen bonds of tradition, family, religion, economic circumstances, and even biology.” [ibid.: 22].

Common good constitutionalism is a rejection of both originalism and liberal constitutionalism and its overriding emphasis on safeguarding individual rights and limiting state power more generally— “positivism and originalism cannot account for theoretical, as opposed to historical, disagreement in interpretation, and originalism has never successfully coped with the problem of abstraction, the question of the level of generality at which to read the original understanding” [ibid.: 22].

Moreover, it is a judicial method capable of escaping legal positivism because it is in a postliberal view of the manifestation of legal liberalism [ibid.: 22].

As far as the principles of Common Good Constitutionalism are concerned, it includes respect for legitimate authority, respect for hierarchies needed for society to function, solidarity within and among families, social groups, workers’ unions, trade associations, and professions, appropriate subsidiarity, or respect for legitimate roles of public bodies and associations at all levels of government, and a candid willingness to ‘legislate morality’. The assumptions of Common Good Constitutionalism are squarely within the intellectual bounds of the Natural Law tradition, with its close linkage of legal interpretation to principles of political morality, the importance of the rule of law values to guiding state action, and the primacy of the common good and human flourishing to justifying political authority [ibid.: 37]. The main point of Common Good Constitutionalism is that it does not aim to maximize the autonomy of each person or citizen, subject to the like autonomy of all, it is backed by a classical legal tradition having a rich account of rights, rooted in the idea of *ius* as what is due to each other. In Common Good Constitutionalism, rights exist to serve and are delimited by a conception of justice that itself is ordered to the common good, the common good does not override rights, but rather defines their boundaries. [ibid.: 25]. The aim of the constitutional order in the theory is to promote good rule not to ‘protect liberty’ as an end to itself, as it is in liberal or progressive theories [ibid.: 37].

Vermeule calls his judicial approach a developing constitutionalism, he draws upon John Henry Newman’s idea of the “development doctrine” to describe and distinguish developing constitutionalism from progressive constitutionalism (in the first view, the natural legal principles remain constant even as interpreters unfold the implications of those principles and apply them to new circumstances over time. In the second the law is instrumentalized to promote an ongoing agenda of progress). In the first one, nothing presupposes or requires a progressive theory

of the good for human beings, with a paramount emphasis on individual autonomy [ibid.: 123].

For a legal theory to be applicable it needs to be grounded in some positive law and legal tradition. Vermeule looks for common good provisions in the American legal order and tradition, e.g. in the British North America Act (or Constitution Act) of 1867 in the clauses of “peace, order, and good government”—the so-called “POGG” clauses, he also referred to the European human rights law featuring “public order provisions”, such as Article 9 Section 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which mentions that “freedoms of thought, conscience, and religion are subject to (...) limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary (...) in the interests of the protection of public safety, public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others” [European Council 1950].

He does so to have grounds for legitimizing public authority’s duty to publicly promote morality and the common good—via maintaining public order, health, and safety. The American system, after some rethinking, would be grounded in the “general-welfare clause”, found in the US Constitution (Article I, Section 8, Clause 1) and in several state constitutions, enacted texts, and judge-made doctrine, which gives Congress ‘power to... provide for the common defense and general Welfare of the United States’ [Vermeule 2022: 32].

The imposition of a parental character of law is only one of the features of the social order inspired by the theory of “*ragion di stato*”—“reason of state”, an idea arguing that the interest of the state is to promote the common good, and the political authorities ruling by the common good shall by default promote the flourishing of their people and secure the state [ibid.: 31]. Another significant change in American legal theory is in Vermeule’s approach to the administrative state, where he advocates for an executive-centred government acting through principles of administrative law’s inner morality. To promote solidarity and subsidiarity. [ibid.: 42].

The idea is contrary to the individualism underlying modern understanding of the doctrine of natural rights because “authority is held in trust for and exercised on behalf of the community and the subsidiarity groups that make up a community, not for the benefit of individuals taken one by one” [Vermeule 2020].

It is a drastic change from the existing one, as some parts would have to “fall under the ax”. Americans would have to say goodbye to “libertarian assumptions

central to free-speech law and free-speech ideology” [ibid.]. Moreover, “libertarian conceptions of property rights and economic rights will also have to go, insofar as they bar the state from enforcing duties of community and solidarity in the use and distribution of resources” [ibid.].

Common-good constitutionalism means an end to private rights currently understood. It “requires overriding the selfish claims of individuals to private ‘rights’”. The constitution would “become more direct, more openly moral, less tied to tendentious law-office history and endless litigation of dubious claims about events centuries in the past” [ibid.]. Furthermore, the proposed order “sees that law is parental, a wise teacher and an inculcator of good habits”. Coerciveness is part of the proposed project, as the “just authority in rulers can be exercised for the good of subjects, if necessary, even against the subjects’ own perceptions of what is best for them” [ibid.].

Practical implications of the Common Good Constitutionalism judicial approach would include, among many, a change in the Supreme Court’s doctrine of standing, bringing an “injury in fact” test to replace the personal injury test, which would result in a plaintiff’s obligation to show some connection between the complaint and the common good, excluding lawsuits strictly for individual and private benefit. Moreover, it would include a change in the free speech laws, as its protection would justify free speech rights not on the practically unrestricted individual autonomy but based on considering speech as a contribution to the common political process of the community. For example, the government could prohibit false statements threatening to destroy a public and common good, such as the military honors system. [Vermeuele 2022: 165, 169]. Since the core task of a public authority is to protect the health, safety, and morals of the public from those degrading it, Vermeuele introduces a concept of environmentalism for morals in the form of possible public prohibition of pornography, which should be left to the reasonable determination of public authorities [ibid.: 171].

The critique of post-liberalism

Postliberal ideas are widely debated among Catholic political scholars, and some accuse the postliberals of integralist implications. Catholic Integralism is a tradition of thought that “rejecting the liberal separation of politics from concern with the end of human life, holds that political rule must order a man to his final goal” and that the temporal political power ought to be subordinate to spiritual one [Waldstein 2016].

James Patterson, an associate professor of politics at Ave Maria University and an author at Acton Institute, a strong critique of postliberal ideas, claims that “post-liberalism is an attempt to rehabilitate right-wing Catholic authoritarianism once prominent in Europe and Latin America during the late 19th and 20th centuries,” and continues that its ideas have origin in the Catholic reactionary thought of continental Europeans like Joseph de Maistre, Juan Donoso Cortés, and Carl Schmitt [Patterson, 2022].

According to Patterson, initially, the group staked its future on neo-integralism quite explicitly [ibid.]. The move to “post-liberal” is more an affirmation of what they oppose rather than affirm, which is perhaps an easier way to gain greater traction and make in-roads among National Conservatives” [ibid.].

Outlining postliberalism, what he sees as disturbing is that winning the political conflict—which for post-liberals is fundamentally theological one between Christian and liberal orthodoxies—“requires total victory, which in turn means seizing the institutions of the federal government and imposing a post-liberal order onto the American people the way they believe progressives have in the past 20 or so years” [ibid.].

This would correspond with Vermeuele’s idea of strategic infiltration of liberal institutions [Vermeuele 2018], and Deneen’s hope in the renewal and reinvigoration of US politics by a responsible governing class [Deneen 2023: 254]. Others, such as Max Bodach, call it the mechanism of the Confessional Tribe—“the tactical retreat of the tribe will allow the formation of virtuous young Christians prepared to articulate new social forms that more explicitly privilege Christianity and Christian values at the expense of traditional liberal values” [Bodach 2021].

His problem with the idea is that it leads “inexorably toward regnant Catholicism, an explicitly political Catholicism” [ibid.]. Patterson goes even further to say that the post-liberal regime has centralized political authority and devalues ideas of natural rights and human dignity, the latter of which Pecknold is especially critical” [Patterson 2022].

Trump’s former Director of Policy Planning at the United States Department of State, Peter Berkowitz, offers a similar critique of Deneen and common good conservatism. To him, “common-good conservatives equate the common good with the highest good”. [Berkowitz 2022].

This is contrary to America's founding principles and older constitutional conservatism, which "regards the common good as revolving around the protection of individual rights shared equally by all," the post-liberals want the government to go beyond defending the freedom to directly cultivate moral virtues and enforce moral duties" [ibid.].

Further accusations are related to a thesis that Deneen's ideas are incompatible with American political tradition, especially the idea of "combining of virtue and individual rights" [ibid.]. For Berkowitz, given Deneen's "scathing critique of existing educational institutions and his failure to consider who will educate the educators, his appeal to the disciplining and elevating task of true liberal education seems fanciful" [Berkowitz 2023].

Lastly, Deneen's endorsement of "pressure from the people" and of "the application of Machiavellian means to achieve Aristotelian ends" makes Berkowitz suspicious that "Deneen's ambitious political project authorizes subterfuge, lawlessness, and brutality" [ibid.].

Whether one agrees with Berkowitz, Bodach, or Patterson, their critique of postliberal thought is to be reckoned with. They constitute an important voice among conservative critics of the post-liberal project.

Real-world impact and conclusion

It is still uncertain what the real-world impact of post-liberalism shall be. One person who might contribute the most to the "post-liberal cause" is J.D. Vance, nominated by Donald Trump as his future vice president if he succeeds in the 2024 elections. Vance described himself as a "postliberal right" member during a panel at Deneen's *Regime Change* book launch hosted at Catholic University of America in 2023 [Catholic University in Washington 2023]. Political commentators such as Jonathan Liedl from the National Catholic Register suggest that the choice of Vance is likely to have a significant impact on the entire outlook of the American right, especially among Catholic conservatives. [Liedl 2023]. In his acceptance speech, he emphasized themes emphasized by post-liberals, such as stability, attachment to the nation, family life, and communal duty [Vance 2024].

Post-liberalism is becoming popular, especially among conservative Catholics and at conservative campuses. A notable example is the online magazine *The American Postliberal*, created by Catholic University of America students influenced by

the Postliberal Order, who define themselves as Catholic Political Realists [The American Postliberal, n.d.].

The post-liberals are very active in Hungary: back in 2019, Deneen visited Budapest and met with Viktor Orbán. He spoke highly of Hungary's family policy measures, stressing that the future would rest on local communities based on national and family values rather than liberalism [About Hungary 2019]. In 2022, they met again and discussed how conservative leadership can win, lead, and shape the next generation. The conclusions they reached were the need to speak directly to the people, to work around the hostility of mainstream elites to conservatives, to shape universities to promote conservative worldview, to form international right-wing cooperation, primarily through academic and NGO networks, and help to nourish "fundamental Christian commitments" [Deneen, Pappin 2022].

Pappin, who in 2023 became the President of the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs (an official foreign policy think tank working directly for the prime minister of Hungary), told the National Catholic Register that a mindset change is needed in America—"being anti-abortion was sufficient for many years, but it is no longer the case, a more positive message is needed" [Pappin, Tadié 2024].

As a strong advocate of Hungarian family policies, he would like to see them applied in the USA since he thinks that the Republicans need to offer a positive agenda that supports the family [Pappin, 2023].

To conclude, it is yet hard to determine whether Postliberalism presented by Vermeuele, Pecknold, Deneen, and Pappin could be considered more as an emerging intellectual movement or an emerging political doctrine; what can be said so far is that it is not a fixed political doctrine yet, and the post-liberal ideas have not yet been put to practice. It presents a particular vision of the nature of man and politics used to justify the need to change the liberal regime to some other form of it. The most concrete points of the Postliberal Order are Vermeuele's common good constitutionalism and Deneen's Common Good Conservatism. The postliberal project sets some policy targets, such as enhancing pro-family policies and bringing back blue laws, but it lacks a more precise and specified political program. The method they want to use to promote the common good and obtain the premodern goals of politics seems to be contrary to the targets they want to reach, as for them, the process of promoting a culture and civil society

oriented towards the common good starts from the places of power, not from the grassroots movement of the civil society itself. Nevertheless, the development of postliberal thought should be followed to examine whether it shall play a more prominent role in American politics and academia.

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