

THE REVENGE OF DREYFUS: CHARLES MAURRAS AND HIS INFLUENCE ON
RIGHT-WING POLITICAL DISCOURSE

by

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Abstract

This thesis was born out of an interest in the recent surge of far-right nationalism in the 21st century and a curiosity about whether or not an analysis of the far-right surge in the early twentieth century can be used to better understand it. It includes an analysis of Charles Maurras, the founder of the French far right tradition, as well as a comparison between his ideas and the ideas of his ideological successors. In this thesis, I argue that Maurras employs a synthesis of two elements of thought: an aesthetic traditionalism, which prioritizes tradition, order, and cultural continuity, and a territorial xenophobia, which attacks foreigners and anti-French influences as unhealthy for France. Elements of aesthetic traditionalism are found to be admired and used by thinkers such as T.S. Eliot, while elements of his territorial xenophobia are found in the discourse surrounding contemporary far right movements. Both elements, although never both found together, are reflected in the ideas of nationalist figures and movements post-Maurras in order to respond to a perceived national degradation.

The rise and acceptance of right-wing populism is one of the most important political developments of the twenty-first century. This resurgence of the extreme-right draws its strength from the perceived threat of immigration and a feeling of betrayal as political leaders prioritize global interests over national ones. These new right wing political movements attempt to associate themselves with free-market conservatives, an association that has resulted in the garnering of political power and influence for the extreme-right. The extreme-right has managed to find some degree of legitimacy in many nations that have recently elected, or nearly elected, reactionary political figures to office. This legitimization through political action has begun to normalize many political ideologies that would have, in the past, been viewed as extreme and unacceptable. In an effort to better understand these movements that have come to occupy a prominent and provocative place in the current global political theatre, this essay chooses to explore a figure rooted at the center of a similar far-right resurgence to the one that we see today. This resurgence is that of the early twentieth century, during which, primarily in the first two decades, there was a similar spike in the founding and popularity of far-right movements and figures. This figure, who is himself an emerging figure at the forefront of a new far-right movement, is the French nationalist and far-right intellectual Charles Maurras. This essay aims to explore his thought, the reasons behind it, and the context that it exists within in an attempt to allow a better understanding of contemporary far-right thought.

Charles Maurras, operating at the helm of the Action Francaise movement, exists in the French memory as one of the primary far-right intellectuals and is often titled the founder of the French far-right tradition. Born in 1868, he was a French nationalist who was very influential in

the conservative movements of the late 19th and early 20th century. He primarily published his work in the newspaper *L'Action Francaise*, the ideology of which he had a heavy hand in shaping. Maurras is chiefly remembered as a nationalist and an anti-semitic, known for his monarchism, nationalism, and xenophobia. His nationalism sits at the center of the French nationalist movement and his role in the political theatre of early 20th century France was very significant. It has even been described by some as a proto-fascist movement, offering many ideas and operating under certain methodologies that have a fascist element.¹ Maurras' nationalism is focused primarily on the adherence to a beautiful, traditional France whose political systems act as a guiding force in the production of a competent French political system. Maurras' proposed system is centered around a monarchist system, and this preference for a powerful leader at the helm becomes the most vocal point of his nationalist doctrine. Upon joining the *Action Francaise*, a nationalist newspaper and review, in 1898, Maurras was the only monarchist among the group. By 1903, though, he had convinced his colleagues of the merits of his political theories, thoroughly reshaping the ideology of the *Action Francaise* to his own image. Maurras believed that the ideas of the French Revolution and the implementation of democracy had spurred a decline in French culture and national status, as they were incompatible with the nature of France due to their foreign origin. Maurras wanted, instead, a return to "the spirit and ideal of classicism, the static and perfect order; hierarchical, authoritarian, untainted by any foreign element."²

¹ Ruben Kruglov, "Fascism: French Beginnings and Italian Precursors," *Europe: Essence of Time*, October 1, 2015, Accessed on May 3, 2019.

² Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third Republic: Sorel, Barres, and Maurras*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 68.

This essay divides Maurras' thought, for the sake of the argument, into two separate patterns. The first is that of his aesthetic traditionalism, which prioritized traditional French values and was staunchly anti-republican and anti-individualist. This conservative and aesthetic traditionalism manifests in his writings as a wish for France to heed traditional French ideals and power structures in the refashioning of the political organization of France into a new monarchy. The second pattern of thought is that of his territorial xenophobia. This arises from his belief that the French race can create nothing that is not beautiful and that the manifestation of democratic and enlightenment values in the French Revolution are so out of line with the traditionally beautiful French values that they must have been a product of the influence of foreigners, Protestants, and Jews. This territorial xenophobia portrays the problems of France as being a product of foreign influence, and thus paints foreigners as enemies of France.

The division of Maurras' legacy into these two patterns allows us to observe his influence on his ideological successors. Within the pattern of aesthetic traditionalism, Maurras' thought can be seen specifically in the early ideas of T.S. Eliot, who admires his sense of order, adopts his critique of romanticism, and admires and emulates his ability to affect change via literary criticism. In contemporary extreme-right discourse, though, Maurras' intellectual and positivist-based theories are seldom found. He is recalled much more for the more provocative and jarring side of his thought, that of his xenophobia and anti-semitism. These ideas of his, that France has been corrupted by an overwhelming foreign influence, are the same as those held by the anti-Islamic Identitarian movements in America and Europe in the 21st century. The extreme-right conspiracy theory of the Great Replacement bears a remarkable resemblance to Maurras' ideology, and many far-right leaders are employing a rhetoric that echoes Maurras. An

understanding of the influence of Maurras' thought on the far-right figures and movements of the late 20th and 21st centuries allows a better understanding of the ideological nature of these figures and movements, which is essential in a world in which these movements have achieved a rising popularity and a greater political and public influence.

By recognizing two distinct elements in Maurras' worldview, we can better understand the impact he has had on those people and movements that constitute the post-Maurras far-right political movement.. Elements of his thought have shaped the thinking of those who value order and tradition, advocate for the importance of the national interest over the individual, and decry romanticism as the reason for cultural decay, while other elements have influenced the thinking of those who advocate for cultural homogeneity, and eschew the rights and opinions of foreigners. By studying Maurras' distinct thought, the complexity and multi-faceted nature of right-wing political discourse becomes clear.

This paper begins with an analysis of the complex nature of the thought of Charles Maurras, in which it deals with his upbringing, his intellectual foundations in positivism, his role in the Action Francaise, the ways in which his purpose is structured around beauty and fear, his valuation of tradition, and his recognition of foreign influence as responsible for the calamities of his contemporary France, the incompatibility of individualism and equality with French culture, and the reasons for societal decadence. From there, it divides Maurras' thought into a dichotomy. On one side is his aesthetic traditionalism, on the other is his territorial xenophobia. The distinction of Maurras' aesthetic traditionalism prioritizes the respect for tradition as a framework for solving social and political issues and his advocacy of cultural continuity. His territorial xenophobia prioritizes his ideas about the threat to an ethnic cultural majority posed by

the cultural subversion that comes with immigration and the prioritization of foreign ideas and values. I create this dichotomy in order to better examine the impact of his thought. At multiple points, one of the elements of Maurras' thought is found to be reflected in the ideas of far-right movements and figures that are influenced by him. This thesis then examines these points, dealing with the influence of Maurras' aesthetic traditionalism on T.S. Eliot, as well as the influence of his territorial xenophobia on contemporary far-right figures and movements such as Marion Marechal-Le Pen, Steve Bannon, and the Identitarian Movement. It then offers a conclusion that explains the significance of Maurras' influence and why it serves as an adequate framework for the understanding of twenty first century far-right discourse.

Charles Maurras and his Thought

Charles Maurras was born into a middle-class family in southeastern France. His father died young, and while Maurras himself said that he did not arrive at his political ideas because of the influence of his childhood, it should be noted that Maurras was a child when the Franco-Prussian war was at its height. The news told to young Maurras would most certainly have painted the Prussians as barbarians and the French as innocent. A fear of this enemy and excitement about the war may have come to dominate Maurras' earliest memories. At some point in this period, Maurras lost his faith in Catholicism and became an agnostic. At a young age, Maurras began to lose his hearing, which over the course of the next years would make him almost entirely deaf. Then, at the age of seventeen, he moved to Paris and began to write literary criticism.³

³ Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965), 57-58.

Ernst Nolte, a former German historian at the Free University of Berlin, spends considerable time deciphering the situations of Maurras' early life that lend themselves to the formation of some of his early ideas. For example, upon arriving in Paris, Maurras recounts himself as being "struck... almost hurt," to come across "so many foreign names on the boulevards."⁴ It seems that maybe Maurras, coming from the countryside, having dreamed of Paris as this bastion of French ideals for so long, felt betrayed at Paris' diversity. He found that Paris did not represent his romantic idea of France, that it was not a bastion of French identity, but rather just another multi-cultural metropolis. It had betrayed its traditional French values. This may have given rise to feelings of alienation within this young man of the provinces entering the great city for the first time, a feeling that may have lead to a later reaction of xenophobia and anti-semitism.

Nolte also brings up Maurras' confrontation with the recent memory of the Paris Commune of 1971. In his *Anthinea*, Maurras said that one of "the starting points of the reflections which were to lead me to where I now am" was the recounting of the urge of some of the Communards to burn down the Louvre.⁵ For a young man who had such a powerful idea of France as right and beautiful, the idea of a regime destroying the beautiful French history is repulsive. Here, the French notion of and penchant for revolution took on a dangerous and destructive character in Maurras' eyes. Revolution and that which it brings, namely the Republic, if it continued as is, presented a serious threat to the beautiful French memory.

In 1896, Maurras traveled to Athens to witness the first Olympic Games as a reporter for a French newspaper, the *Gazette de France*.⁶ He wrote of this trip in his *Anthinea*, and it was

⁴ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 60.

⁵ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 61.

⁶ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 63.

very formative for the importance of the role of the nation in his thought. In Athens, at the games, Maurras saw the nations of the world competing with one another. The peaceful contest, here, was the “proving ground of warlike conflict.”⁷ Here, in the form of these games, Maurras saw the conflict of the world manifest as the conflict between nations. Nolte makes the argument that Maurras saw France and the performance of these games, and came to the realization that France was small in the world compared to the might of Germany or the English. He deduced that Maurras would have recognized this, and, in despair, harkened back to a time when France would have been the larger nation, would have lead the world, this being the time before the revolution, the time of the monarchy.⁸

It is with his return from Athens that Maurras arrived in Paris staunchly opposed to the republic and in favor of monarchy. The key, pivotal moment of Charles Maurras’ life was the Dreyfus affair. Maurras wrote his first piece of opinion on the Dreyfus affair for the *Gazette de France*. A justification of the forgery of Colonel Henry, declaring it an act of patriotic devotion and a necessary service to France, this piece announced Maurras undoubtedly in support of the Army and an anti-republican, conservative France.⁹ This essay brought Maurras into the public spotlight, and he quickly became one of the foremost anti-Dreyfus voices to be heard.

Maurras’ position in the spotlight was important, for up to this point in the affair, the discourse on Dreyfus’ innocence had been conducted mostly by scholars and intellectuals from the left who operated in support of Dreyfus. For Maurras, a writer of philosophy and poetry, who had been called “the learned critic Charles Maurras” at the young age of twenty three, to emerge

⁷ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 64.

⁸ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 64.

⁹ Eugen Weber, *Action Francaise : Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 4.

in support of the army and against Dreyfus emboldened many other intellectual conservatives to emerge in support of the army and in opposition to Dreyfus.¹⁰ The Dreyfus Affair polarized the left-right divide in France, resulting in the fashioning of strict battle lines and the division of the country. Maurras, via his defense of Colonel Henry, represented the point at which those on the right felt emboldened to take a stand. This stand was an intellectually conservative presence within journals, newspapers, and public discourse.

After the publication of the Henry justification, there was an effort undertaken by many important conservative intellectuals, Maurras included, to bring together the conservative intelligentsia in order to muster a more cohesive anti-Dreyfus force. This gathering of conservative intellectuals took the form of the “*Ligue de la Patrie Française*” in 1898, and drew intellectuals and scholars from throughout France who “did not, after all, side with the traitor and against the fatherland.”¹¹ While the *Ligue* itself did not have a particularly forceful impact, it is important as the immediate precursor of what came in 1899, which was the formation of the Action Française.¹²

The Action Française began as a political journal, published by Maurice Pujo and Henri Vaugois at the height of the Dreyfus Affair, and eventually turned into a political movement. Its role in France during the days of and immediately after the affair cannot be understated. If the Dreyfus affair can be deemed significant because of the fact that positions within the population that were formerly divided were now united, and vice versa, then the Action Française is precisely one of the methods by which a population formerly divided was now united. It represented the synchronizing of many formerly discordant conservative voices into one

¹⁰ Weber, *Action Française : Royalism*, 6.

¹¹ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 66.

¹² Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 66.

cohesive, and much more influential, group. Charles Maurras, while not a founder of the Action Francaise, became the organization's chief ideologist. His ideology came to dominate the movement, and he almost certainly came to be regarded as the most influential member of the group, and thus the most influential conservative intellectual of the period. In 1899, Maurras was the only monarchist in the group, but by 1903, he had convinced everyone else, and all leading members adopted his theories of monarchy.¹³ The ideology that Maurras introduced and convinced the members of the Action Francaise of were presented as a solution to the problems that were plaguing France in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Maurras' attraction to royalism, and the large following that he quickly gathered behind his ideas, make sense as a product of the political and social situation of Europe in his time. In the time that Maurras was writing he was watching France, one of the few governments in western Europe to have implemented a national democratic political system, fall from its position in the national hierarchy and be supplanted by nationstates that still adhere to the traditional style of monarchy. It seemed perfectly reasonable to attribute the success of these other countries to their adherence to traditional government structure, and to attribute the decadence of France to its recent adoption of alien and non-traditional political and social values. For example, Maurras considered Germany throughout his life with fear and hatred. Also, though, he considered it with envy. The discipline, industry, and order of imperial Germany outlined to Maurras the reason that Germany had gained so much power in the face of a weakened France.¹⁴ Witnessing this imbalance of power growing, Maurras was quick to recognize France's position as one of the few mass democratic states in Europe at this time, and with France standing in the midst of the

¹³ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 66.

¹⁴ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 106.

tensions and relationships of mainland Europe, it seems obvious that a conservative, monarchist idealist should be met with a popular following. As a product of the role of France in European political affairs, the anti-democratic, anti-republican role that Maurras came to occupy was one that was waiting to be filled.

In order to understand Maurras' nationalism and the reasons for his interpretation of his political climate, it is necessary to unravel the fundamental aspects of his worldview. Central to this understanding is the realization of the influence that Auguste Comte and his positivist system had on Maurras. Maurras' entire nationalism is based on an appropriation of the style of Comte's worldview, which is based on a subjective synthesis, and his method towards the betterment of the nation, the goal of his nationalism, is through the positivist lens. Auguste Comte, a French philosopher of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, is credited with the development of the doctrine of positivism. He is also regarded as the first philosopher of science, as well as with the coining of the term sociology. Comte had a very important influence on the thought and philosophy of the 19th century.

Charles Maurras made many references to Comte in his own writings, expressing often a profound respect, at many times a reverence. Maurras calls attention to Comte as a master, and says that he "knows of no other name that should be pronounced with a greater sense of gratitude."¹⁵ To Maurras, Comte and his philosophy are viewed as a saving grace. Maurras expresses a profound gratitude to Comte, saying that he "restored... the hope of order" to him when he was living in a time of mental anarchy.¹⁶ Michael Sutton, a scholar of 19th and 20th century France, believes that this refers to an intellectual crisis experienced by Maurras, which

¹⁵ Sutton, Michael, *Nationalism, Positivism, Catholicism: the Politics of Charles Maurras and French Catholics, 1890-1914*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 13.

¹⁶ Sutton, Michael, *Nationalism, Positivism, Catholicism*, 13.

was resolved in 1890 as the result of the reading of Comte's doctrines of positivism.¹⁷ It is from this point, in 1890, that Comte's positivism sets him upon the path that he walks for the rest of his life. Maurras' nationalism and his belief that foreign influence is responsible for national degradation are formed as a part of an intellectual foundation based upon an interpretation of, and minor departure from, Comte's philosophy.

One unifying belief that both Charles Maurras and Auguste Comte have is their anti-individualism. Essential to their anti-individualism is the notion that, as the individual interest is not of the most importance, some sort of collective grouping must take that position of most importance. For Comte, this collective grouping exists as "Humanity," which he described as the collective grouping of human beings who join together with the goal of "the perfecting of the universal order."¹⁸ This belief is necessarily anti-individualist, as the individual interest can never be heeded to before the interest of humanity. Maurras believes wholeheartedly in Comte's anti-individualism, that the individual interest should never take priority before the interest of the collective grouping. It is with the notion of Humanity as the collective grouping that he takes issue with. For Maurras, people are not united within the group of humanity, for it is not yet concrete in its existence. Instead, the collective grouping, in his time, is still decided along the boundaries of nationality.¹⁹ This is the foundation of Maurras' nationalism: that the nation as a collective grouping of individuals is always superior to the individual, and therefore "never will the rights of the individual be adhered to before the interests of the state."²⁰ This collective grouping takes absolute priority in his mind, as he replaces Comte's humanity with the priority

¹⁷ Sutton, Michael, *Nationalism, Positivism, Catholicism*, 13.

¹⁸ Sutton, Michael, *Nationalism, Positivism, Catholicism*, 24.

¹⁹ Sutton, Michael, *Nationalism, Positivism, Catholicism*, 26.

²⁰ Sutton, Michael, *Nationalism, Positivism, Catholicism*, 44.

of the nation, a preference he indicates by saying that “the primary reality, more real than the individual and more real also than the world, is *la patrie*, the Country.”²¹ The nation becomes a god-like conception in Maurras’ mind, a fact which explains his often used term, the Goddess France.

With the realization of Comte’s Humanity as the influence behind Maurras’ conception of France as a superior societal grouping, it becomes important to understand the ways in which Maurras used Comte’s positivist philosophy to guide his political and social theories. Positivism holds that the world operates according to scientific laws, and thus that knowledge is based upon these natural laws. Therefore, the only way to acquire knowledge is to interpret objective experience by reason and logic. According to the system of Comte, based around the supreme collectivity of Humanity, all instances of the exercising of “intellect and activity [were] to be restricted to the service of Humanity.”²² This means that the ascertaining of new knowledge and the verifying of what is thought to be existing knowledge are both functions that are fulfilled in pursuit of the interests of Humanity. Maurras, by changing the supreme collectivity from Humanity to the Nation, is at the same time ensuring that the production of knowledge via the positivist system is ascertaining and verifying knowledge, via intellect and empirical observation, in pursuit of the interests of the Nation. This explains the method by which Maurras made his critiques against the Republic and against democracy. He believed that, according to recent history, France had suffered and lost its former political power. This decline of national stature began with the revolution, and has continued so long as France has continued the use of the political organization of a republic. Therefore, to Maurras, attempting to view the world

²¹ Sutton, Michael, *Nationalism, Positivism, Catholicism*, 26.

²² Sutton, Michael, *Nationalism, Positivism, Catholicism*, 24.

through this positivist lense, empirical observation, as he chose to see it, revealed that democracy and the ideal perpetrated since the Revolution do not operate for the national interest. This positivist lense also revealed to Maurras that which does serve the national interest, namely the monarchy, which empirical observation reveals to have been the method of political organization at the height of France's power.

In order to understand Maurras' conception of the current state of French society, it is necessary to understand the way that he considers value in the world. Ernst Nolte marks as the driving theme behind Maurras' thought the emotion of fear.²³ Maurras fears the destruction of natural beauty. For Maurras, beauty is brought into the world as a result of the "random chance of being" and will remain in the world so long as it is not destroyed by "the world's primeval brutality."²⁴ Thus, Maurras operates in defense of what he finds beautiful, which is the state of things as governed by nature, unimpeded by outside influence. He fears the destruction of the instances of beauty in the world, and so he paints what threatens beauty, those aspects of destruction, as the enemies of beauty. The result here is a system of good and evil that manifests itself politically. Maurras sees his role in this system as a defender of beauty, and with the role of drawing attention to the destructive enemy. It should be noted that, to Maurras, beauty does not only mean the beauty of physical and tangible things, but it can also apply to "states, peoples, and religions."²⁵ Ideas, traditions, and histories that exist in the world are of the same type of beauty, and, as natural forces are inimical to statues and temples, ideas are inimical to opposing ideas. This conception of aesthetic conflict comes to be a foundational element of Maurras' thought, as he always chose to operate for the preservation of threatened beauty. This perception

²³ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 101.

²⁴ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 102.

²⁵ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 102.

of conflict between beauty and the destruction of beauty, and Maurras' response to it via the emotion of fear, mark a striking realization about the nature of his thought. By attempting to rise to the defense of the ideas and traditions of a France that he believes to be aesthetic, Maurras is reacting to the policies of a government and a national ideology which he finds to be destroying the French beauty.

France, to Maurras, is "a unique treasure without parallel in human history."²⁶ It is the first example of beauty, and it is a legitimate and concrete thing. The concept of France that Maurras holds is not abstract. It has a soul: history, arts, tradition, and the "magnanimous society of its heroes."²⁷ Maurras conceives of a "Goddess France" and, as a god or goddess is given absolute devotion, Nolte argues that Maurras seeks absolute sovereignty for France.²⁸ The traditions and ideas that have sustained France in its beautiful form for nigh on a thousand years are a creation of nature, and for them to not only have come under attack, but been replaced by a few ideas "systematized by fools" is the embodiment of Maurras' idea that the world's "brutality" inevitably destroys the beautiful creations of natural law.²⁹ He is fearful that France may become a nation dependent upon others, and the ideas, products of other cultures, that unnaturally dominate France and destroy its natural beauty seem to be in the process of guiding France towards that.

Tradition, in Maurras' thought, is afforded great meaning. Traditions of a country represent the lessons of man, they arise as the synthesis of human struggle, the product of trial and error. Tradition, to him, is valuable as the representation of the natural state of France. A

²⁶ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 103.

²⁷ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 104.

²⁸ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 103.

²⁹ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 101.

nation that adheres to the laws of nature will have ancient and well founded traditions, such as the old regime. A forsaking of tradition is therefore a refusal to adhere to natural law and the rejection of the lessons of the past.

Maurras would argue that France has forsaken the institution of monarchy because of the introduction of foreign values. These foreign values were introduced to French culture by four groups, these being the Protestants, Jews, freemasons, and metequés. Maurras referred to foreigners who lived in France as metequés, derived from the Greek word metics, which the Athenians used to refer to foreigners living in Athens.³⁰ This is the point at which Maurras' prominent xenophobia and anti-semitism is found in his thought. For Maurras, there was an identifiable and definable French "race." Intrinsic to this race were "masculine traits," from which it gained the ability to "organize and direct."³¹ Guided by its own values, France would be naturally strong, "the most beautiful force of modern times," as it had been for centuries.³² The problems of France, then, were a result of the clash between the French race and the metics of France. Foreigners, not of the French race, could never hope to represent the same traits and interests that define the French "race." Their foreign ideals and traditions stand as sharply divided from those of the "true France," and can not be reconciled. An attempt to merge these foreign ideals with the traditional French classical ideals is impossible, Maurras argues, as they are naturally incompatible. It is the attempt at this, the catering to the metics and foreigners in society on a level equal to or even greater than given to French citizens, that has resulted in the confusing of the ideals of natural France, causing France to be stripped of its natural power and

³⁰ Buthman, William Curt, *The Rise of Integral Nationalism in France: With Special Reference to the ideas and Activities of Charles Maurras*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 219.

³¹ Buthman, *The Rise of Integral Nationalism*, 221.

³² Buthman, *The Rise of Integral Nationalism*, 222.

its natural ability to lead. Thus, Maurras holds as responsible for the problems of French society, that of its inefficiency and decadence, the four groups of foreign influence in France. He reviles these groups, demeaning them in his writings and calling for their expulsion, for the effect their foreign ideals have had; that they have tainted French tradition and French society, causing it to fall from its position in the political hierarchy of Europe and become the national disgrace that Maurras now views it as. This forms the essential nature of his territorial xenophobia.

Maurras believed that these foreign ideals, viewed as so detrimental to the natural state of France, came to manifest themselves in the ideology and action of the French Revolution. The French Revolution came to exist as the product of enlightenment ideals that sharply diverged from those ideals of the old regime. Ideas of liberty, particularly as were conceived as a response to the risk of unregulated oppression by the state and the unchecked power of the king, were, in Maurras' mind, contrary to the French ideal, as were ideas of equality, propagated by the Third Estate and the rising Bourgeoisie, and popular sovereignty. These enlightenment ideals were, to Maurras, foreign and unnatural. They stemmed from the foreign thinkers John Locke and Rousseau, as well as many others.

The point at which France began to descend from its position of power would be, Maurras argued, the Revolution. All of France' problems point back to this single instance of beginning. The French Revolution of 1789 was the point from which France departed from greatness and began to descend to democracy and decadence. For Maurras, the events of 1789 were not a product of the *ancien regime*. In fact, Maurras would never admit any fault of the *ancien regime*, for it represented to him the pinnacle of French tradition, custom, and beauty.

The Revolution, then, was wrongly called French, as it was the “product of foreign ideas.”³³ The revolution was a product of enlightenment ideals, and its implementation into French society was alien.³⁴ It was anti-French, did not fit with traditional French values, and was counterproductive to the natural course of the country. It is the occurrence of exactly what Maurras’ territorial xenophobia seeks to prevent.

Maurras disagreed fundamentally with the ideology of the revolution, and with its notions of equality, liberty, and individualism. He characterized the revolution as “the insurrection of individualism, which led to tyranny of the state.”³⁵ The political and social liberty introduced by the revolution’s foreign values, Maurras argued, led to the deprecation of the individual, whose needs were unsatisfied by the tyranny of the majority, and whose life was upended as family and traditional values were destroyed. While liberty is often perceived as being a result of participatory democracy, given that an individual would seek to produce a government which maximizes his or her own liberty, Maurras sees it differently. For Maurras, liberty is derived from certainty. In a “hierarchical and ordered society,” much like the *ancien regime*, an individual finds liberty in performing their “function.”³⁶ On the other hand, when a government asks of the individual to make decisions of nation-wide policies and practices, this is stripping the individual of their liberty.³⁷ Asking the individual to participate in the creation of successful national policies is asking too much, putting unnecessary stress and worry on the back of the individual, causing him to lose sight of his core values, a problem which would result in the failure of the family. For Maurras, each individual has a part to play in the success of the nation.

³³ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 83.

³⁴ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 84.

³⁵ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 84.

³⁶ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 89.

³⁷ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 89.

For all but the most elite, though, that part is merely performing their function and leaving the business of the state to the king.³⁸ A deviation from this natural state of affairs by removing the function of the king and instead delegating this function among all the people would result in an underperforming system, and does not at all mean the granting of more liberties to the people within the system.

Maurras reviles the Revolution and its concept of equality. He declared it simply unreasonable that all individuals were of “equal political value.”³⁹ Equality was unjustified biologically, for equality in nature could only exist in the cemetery.⁴⁰ The attempt to implement it in society was disastrous. Maurras regarded political equality as a foolish quest. Due to the nature of political organization, there was inherently a hierarchy of useful inequalities.⁴¹ By enforcing an artificial equality on a political society, the political organization of the society would become disorganized and inefficient.⁴² Equality necessitates the handing over of power to the most inferior, to the least equipped people of the nation. It is the surrendering of the power of the nation to the whims of the herd. For Maurras, there was a necessary political and social inequality to any strong form of organization.⁴³ Equality and democracy, Maurras believed, were responsible for the decadence of France, and have resulted in what he perceives as France’s fall from grace and glory.

One of the primary problems that Maurras identified with France was that of democracy. Maurras reviled democracy and the republic, attributing France’s diminished power in the global

³⁸ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 89.

³⁹ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 89.

⁴⁰ Buthman, *Integral Nationalism in France*, 273.

⁴¹ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 89.

⁴² Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 89.

⁴³ Buthman, *Integral Nationalism in France*, 274.

theatre to its implementation. According to Michael Curtis, a political scientist at Rutgers University, Maurras derived many of his opinions of democracy from fellow frenchman Ernest Renan, who he admired in many aspects.⁴⁴ Maurras believed that democratic and republican ideals, at their core, were imaginative and that it was unrealistic to expect them to work once implemented. He thought that democracy, while it worked well in primitive and simple civilizations, was ill adept to solving the modern complexities of France.⁴⁵ This inability stems from two core flaws of democracy, that of its inefficiency and its fundamental disagreement with nature.

Key to Maurras' understanding of democracy is his belief that "individuals left to themselves make a society of barbarians."⁴⁶ From here, as every individual is ruled by his propensity to "immediate pleasures" and the "caprice of money," democracy is premised on the goals of individual interest rather than the national interest. This, combined with the absence of authority, the unpredictability of the ruling body, and the timidity with which an elected body makes decisions, Maurras believed to result in a fundamentally inefficient government that "impoverishes and enfeebles" its communities.⁴⁷

Moreover, Maurras believed that the democratic idea was in fundamental disagreement with nature, in that it created laws that were derived from society rather than from nature. For Maurras, laws were derived from an "examination of natural situations."⁴⁸ In fact, all of society should arise from natural situations, from facts of nature, and thus democracy, with its beginnings as foreign influence, is inherently unnatural to France. Being subject, instead, to a

⁴⁴Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 68.

⁴⁵ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 71.

⁴⁶ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 69.

⁴⁷ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 71.

⁴⁸ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 69.

“contract of wills,” democracy inspired laws that were “destructive to the natural tendencies of customs.”⁴⁹ It also impeded the natural hierarchy. Because of its attempt to invite a decision by all, democracy subjects the superior to the inferior. The best minds get lost among the worst minds in the crowd of the mob, and the superior ideas are not heard above the din and clamor of the rest. Maurras took the right of each man to a voice as the nullification of social hierarchy, as the removal of the superior man, and thus the superior idea, from the top. Democracy, by its inefficiency and incompatibility, rejected the natural laws and traditions of France, and was responsible for the deterioration of France from its former glory.

In conjunction with the foreign ideals and political system that weakened France in this period, another perceived reason for France’s fall in the political hierarchy was that of social decadence. Decadence in 20th century France meant a witnessable decline of morals, values, and national dignity. To Maurras, societal decadence was a witnessable phenomenon, and he believed it would manifest in a society as the immediate preceding element before the destruction of that society. Maurras, in reaction to this perceived decadence, wanted “radicalism in reverse,” with the intent of restoring the past. He wanted the return to the ideal of classicism, “hierarchical, authoritarian, and untainted by the foreign element.”⁵⁰ He advocated an adherence to traditional French values and ideas as a way to counteract this decadence. For Maurras, the indication that French society was socially decadent was that aesthetically beautiful, time-honored traditions had either been threatened or entirely forgone. After the revolution and the republic replaced the *ancien regime*, French society fell into decadence. The now-replaced

⁴⁹ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 69.

⁵⁰ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 99.

French traditions and values were traded for foreign values ill-equipped to deal with France's political and social complexities. Without these traditions, there could be no society.⁵¹

France's great classical traditions were being replaced by the values of romanticism. The outcomes of romanticism, found throughout French literature and politics of the time, were "egotism, foreign origin and perversions, independence and anarchy, [and] a fundamental lack of reality."⁵² Romantic values, if allowed to remain manifest in politics, would lead to a liberalism of anarchy. The egotism of romantic individualism would produce a democracy that does not adhere to the natural laws of France and is unable to steer the nation away from the perils of decadence and foreign influence. Maurras regarded France as decadent because he perceived that its traditions were not being honored nor preserved, and the values with which they were being substituted were not to his liking.⁵³

Maurras' nationalism was, at its core, opposed to the doctrines and ideas of the French Revolution. He believed that its values, ideals, and preferred political organization were the products of foreign influence and were thus incompatible with the nature of France. This incompatibility was the reason that France had lost its former standing in the natural hierarchy and had lost its ability to exert strength and power in the European theatre of nations. Maurras' solution to these problems, manifest in the political goals of his nationalist political discourse, can be described simply. The first action needed is to combat the individualism that has swept through and conquered the minds of the French people, instead reverting to traditional French values in which the family is the primary social unit of an organic body of which the monarchy is the head. Individualism, to Maurras, is the most important, and most destructive, value of the

⁵¹ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 121.

⁵² Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 78.

⁵³ Michael Curtis, *Three Against the Third*, 125.

Revolution. If individualism, to Maurras, is the arch-villain of the liberal values to enter France in the 18th century, then Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Genevan Protestant, is the super-villain who propagated individualism as a value and installed it, and thus the Revolution, into the minds of the French race.⁵⁴

This understanding of individualism, and the other values of the revolution by Maurras, brings us to the next problem essential to Maurras' xenophobic nationalism. This problem is that of the influence of foreigners and foreign ideals upon the natural purity of France and the French 'race.'⁵⁵ This influence came to dominate the French social and political order, replacing the time-worn traditional ideals and values of France. These ideas were incompatible as the principles of the French nation, Maurras believed, as he witnessed the inefficiency and weakness they brought upon France, reducing its international power and its stature in the political hierarchy. The effects of these foreign values and ideals can be seen in the implementation of the foreign method of political organization, the third problem, that of popular sovereignty and the republic. For Maurras, though, the method by which to deal with these problems was to adhere to French tradition, as these traditions developed from the struggles of French ancestors, in an effort to construct a political organization more in line with the nature of France, while at the same time removing foreign influence.

As a result of the reviewing of French history, which adhered to his positivist doctrines of empirical evidence, albeit only partially selected evidence, Maurras concluded that the only apt solution to the problems of France was a reinstitution of the monarchy.⁵⁶ The monarchy was integral to Maurras' nationalism in that it was the only political institution which would "satisfy

⁵⁴ Sutton, Michael, *Nationalism, Positivism, Catholicism*, 58.

⁵⁵ Buthman, *The Rise of Integral Nationalism in France*, 221-223.

⁵⁶ Sutton, Michael, *Nationalism, Positivism, Catholicism*, 52.

all the national aspirations.”⁵⁷ In Maurras’ mind, the monarchy is demanded by the welfare of France, as both the public safety and the national interests are not being satisfied, and if France is to be saved a government free from the constraints of elections and an inefficient administrative system must be implemented.⁵⁸ The democratic system slows down the ability of the government to act quickly, and also removes the chance that a politician can pursue a policy faithfully, over a long course of time. There are two key elements to the monarch of Maurras’ ideas. The first aspect is that the king acts as the embodied will of France, capable of working directly towards the national interest to pursue French power and authority. The second aspect is that of the reactionary king, who responds to and defends against the foreign influence on France and restores the traditions and beauty in order to resurrect the Goddess France. The monarchy prevents against the inefficiency of individualism and ensures that the national interest is being prioritized, and a “dictator-king” would again allow France to be a “work of art.”⁵⁹ Maurras’ king is epitomized as the “united will of the nation.”⁶⁰ By existing as the single political force, the king is not bogged down by the subordinate impulses of the masses, as the republic is, but is rather able to make decisions immediately in the national interest.

Charles Maurras’ nationalism is a reaction to the perceived downfall of France from its position in the national hierarchy. Essential to his nationalism is his belief that France is inherently beautiful and pure, and therefore can do no wrong. Because of this, France’s decline must be attributable to some force that is not French. Using French history as his evidence, Maurras marks the French Revolution of 1789 as the point from which French values were

⁵⁷ Buthman, *The Rise of Integral Nationalism in France*, 269.

⁵⁸ Buthman, *The Rise of Integral Nationalism in France*, 287.

⁵⁹ Buthman, *The Rise of Integral Nationalism in France*, 287.

⁶⁰ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 111.

obscured and ignored in the pursuit of the implementation of new and foreign values and ideas. These ideas and values are incompatible with France, as evidenced by the inefficiencies of the republic and the decadence of French culture. The synthesis of this foreign invasion of enlightenment ideals occurred in the Dreyfus Affair, Maurras recalled, as the specific interests of the individual, Albert Dreyfus, were prioritized over the interests of the entire French army. Maurras' nationalism is inherently reactionary, traditionalist, and xenophobic. He calls for a heeding of the values of tradition in an effort to construct a new political organization that prioritizes the protection of France as a bastion of culture against the invasion of foreign ideals.

Maurras' Contemporary Influence

Maurras' role as one of the principle ethnic nationalists to oppose liberalism and radical republicanism earned him a position as one of the most prominent nationalists of the twentieth century. The wide scope of his nationalism and the large amount that he wrote for the *Action Française* has ensured a continuity of his thought in the memory of 20th century nationalism, and many of his ideas have continued to occupy space in the French political dialogue. For example, Maurras' term '*métèque*,' used to describe one of the four enemies of France, endures in the French language as a xenophobic word for immigrants. Many of his ideas, too, endured. The element of Maurras' thought primarily found to continue after his death is his belief that foreign ideals are fundamentally incompatible with the nation and that their implementation results in the decline of society and the loss of position in the national hierarchy. In order to remedy this, Maurras believed, immigration should be forbidden, that only true citizens may have an effect on their society. This thought is found in many contemporary right-wing political movements, even

some that fail to mention Maurras. The influence of the other aspect of his thought must not be discarded, though, for it also has an effect on his intellectual successors. This aesthetic traditionalism proposes the advocacy of the importance of social order and the national good, as opposed to the satisfaction of individual appetites and interests associated with enlightenment individualism.

Maurras' aesthetic traditionalism is the representation of a few key aspects of his nationalism. It is aesthetic in the sense that Maurras, from a very early age in his life, places enormous value on beauty in the world. He conceives as beautiful those things that exist in their natural state, untainted by outside influence. Maurras uses this definition to describe things such as the French nation and its 'French race', the monarchy, and the Catholic Church as inherently beautiful. This sense of beauty is accompanied by a sense of fear, that these pure, beautiful things will be destroyed by the random nature of the world's brutality. This sense of beauty and the fear of its destruction constitute the core inimical aspect of Maurras' thought, in that everything that is beautiful, or natural, is good, while those outside influences that seek to disrupt and destroy the beautiful state of nature are bad. This is why Maurras' nationalism is concerned primarily with the protection of the integrity of French culture from outside influence that would harm it. This concern with the protection of the integrity of French culture is a product of this fear for the destruction of beauty.

This aesthetic traditionalism is traditionalist in the sense that Maurras believes that tradition represents the learned lessons of the past and should thus be considered when making decisions of the French race and people. He regards French traditions as the product of centuries of beautiful French society. They are the product of the lessons learned from the trials and

mistakes of Frenchmen, and thus a French culture that respects those traditions and adheres to traditional values is a French culture built upon a foundation of the past. It should be noted here that Maurras' traditionalism does not mean that he wishes to return to the past. Rather, he advocates for the consideration of French tradition in the fashioning of a political organization and social system that is fitting for a modern France and its modern problems. The result of this, for Maurras, would be the monarchical political organization that he proposes. His monarchy rejects the individualism, liberalism, and republicanism that are currently a problem in France, preferring instead the order and stability that monarchy, a French tradition, would allow. Maurras' aesthetic traditionalism invokes the natural, beautiful traditions of France in the construction of a new political and social system that better protects France's beauty.

Maurras' xenophobia, which is found throughout his thoughts and writings, is also aesthetic in that it too attempts to protect France from the loss of its natural beauty. The threat to beauty, in this instance, is the effect of foreign influence on France, which distorts a perfect France. In an attempt to protect a perfect France, Maurras paints this foreign influence as the enemy of France. He decries it as Other, as inimical to the French people and the French nation, and argues that Freemasons, Protestants, Jews, and Metèques should not be prioritized over French citizens and should be given no power to effect change in society or politics. This initiates the form of his xenophobia, which argues that anything foreign to France must have loyalty to something other than France, and thus must be Anti-France. The French Revolution is a perfect example of the effects of this foreign influence. It represents the replacement of Traditional French values of order, stability, social hierarchy, and monarchy with the values foreign to France, such as individualism, equality, and democracy. Maurras argues this

replacement occurs as a result of foreign influence, revealing the nature of his xenophobia.

Maurras' xenophobia attempts to draw a distinction between French culture and foreign culture with the intent of protecting French cultural identity from losing its natural beauty to the subversive nature of foreign values.

In examining the impacts of these two elements of thought, this thesis seeks to reveal the impact of these respective trends upon those influenced by Maurras. His aesthetic traditionalism can be seen to inspire the conservative poet T.S. Eliot, and his territorial xenophobia can be seen reflected in the ideology of many far-right movements and figures of the 21st century's far-right resurgence.

Maurras' Influence on T.S. Eliot

Thomas Stearns Eliot is considered to be one of the major poets of the twentieth century, and the influence of his poems remains widespread. In conjunction with his poems, Eliot also sought to, throughout his life, engage in serious literary and social critique. Much of Eliot's early writing, both poetry and commentary, seems to have been strongly influenced by the first world war and the culture surrounding it. He did not write of the gruesomeness of war, though, for he preferred to write of "what he knew--the inner disorder, not the outer."⁶¹ This disorder, while possibly inspired by a witnessing of the disorder of the state of Europe at the time, was concerned not with the "order of the commonwealth," but rather the "order of the soul."⁶² It can be argued that Eliot's poetry achieved the success it did because it appealed to that need of the

⁶¹ Russell Kirk, *Eliot and his Age; T.S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Random House, 1971), 19.

⁶² Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 21.

public to remain in touch with their pre-war human emotions and sensibilities in the face of the wanton destruction and despair that threatened to consume the period.

As a political thinker and social critic, Eliot's thought was rooted in conservative traditions of cultural continuity and natural order. He eschewed many other conservative political figures and public thinkers of his time, though, finding them feeble in defense of tradition and convention. At the ends of his university education at Harvard, Eliot is said to have been living without purpose, to have been "proceeding through distress," unable to discover a strong purpose or belief in "an age where there was so little belief in general."⁶³ It was at this point, unhappy with the fortitude of his ideological contemporaries and curious as to a way to affect a society that had forsaken its traditional culture, that Eliot encounters in the work and writing of Charles Maurras a kindred spirit. He finds Maurras inspirational and holds a lifelong admiration of his work and beliefs, as is evidenced by a letter written to Maurras just before his death in 1952 in which he recounts his experience of reading his "poems with a delectation that I experience only rarely with so-called "modern" poets."⁶⁴

Maurras was one of a small group of intellectual figures who Eliot found agreeable and who influenced his social and political thought. Eliot's appreciation of Maurras reveals a respect for his traditionalism and advocacy of cultural continuity, for his description of romantic individualism as responsible for France's social problems, and for his sense of order and sensibility in his writing. Eliot has a strong respect for the rational elements of Maurras' thought, and these elements have a big impact on his political and social theories throughout his life. In

⁶³ James Torrens, "Charles Maurras and Eliot's "New Life". *PMLA* Vol. 89, No. 2 (1974): 314.

⁶⁴ Typed Letter, Signed, to Charles Maurras, T.S. Eliot, Charles Maurras, <https://www.williamreesecompany.com/pages/books/WRCLIT69995/t-s-eliot/typed-letter-signed-to-charles-maurras>, Unpublished translation by Michael C. Behrent, 2019.

his older age, though, Eliot laments the aspects of Maurras' thought which, he believes, served to distract him from the rational and respectable elements of his ideas. Maurras' imprisonment and embroilment in political practice served to drag him away from his more worthwhile ideas, but Eliot never lost his respect for the man who was essential to the foundation of his social and political theories.

Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1888, to a wealthy family that would have been a member of an American aristocracy, if one existed. The larger-than-life Mississippi, Eliot later says, left an enormous impression on him. He seems to exhibit a thankfulness that he grew up in St. Louis, as the institutions around him, namely "The Church of the Messiah, the old city, and Washington University" were to him strong symbols of "Religion, the Community, and Education."⁶⁵ At his school, he was taught the classics, and what he would later come to regard as the essential foundations of an education, including Greek, Roman, English and American histories, as well as Latin, Greek, French, and German languages. Eliot regards his childhood in St. Louis as very formative, citing that he was brought up to have a reverence for institutions, and he was "taught that personal and selfish aims should be subordinated to the general good which they represent."⁶⁶ Eliot's early years seem to have instilled in him a reverence for traditional institutions of the church, the school, and the family, while also influencing him towards an anti-individualist sense of the priority of the public good. These years prove formative to an Eliot who will soon mature into the longer lasting forms of his work and thought in which he takes these early lessons and expounds upon them, producing a conservative intellectual and political foundation.

⁶⁵ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 25.

⁶⁶ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 25.

From St. Louis, Eliot moves to the second important and influential time of his life, his years at Harvard. These years were spent in high regard by many of his professors, and many had an effect and influence on him. The two primary influences were George Santayana and Irving Babbitt, two men whom Eliot would join in their criticism of political liberalism.⁶⁷ Eliot speaks of his relationship with Babbitt that even though he eventually outgrew and dissented from his thought, he “remains permanently an active influence.”⁶⁸ By this, Eliot means that even when his new ideas conflict with those of Irving Babbitt, it is impossible to ignore that those new ideas are formed precisely as a result of the convictions of Babbitt.

Babbitt’s convictions formed into an intellectual movement that would come to be called the New Humanism, and it was what Eliot was confronting daily in his first few years at Harvard. Kirk describes humanism as “the belief that man is a distinct order of being, governed by laws peculiar to his nature.”⁶⁹ These laws are supplied from human reason, defined in this context as a higher reason that is found via a “respect for the wisdom of one’s ancestors.” A respect for and adherence to these laws help man to curb his appetites, and they are the reason man has succeeded in forming society and removed himself from an animal's lifestyle.⁷⁰ Babbitt’s New Humanism becomes a vehicle for the opposition of what he calls the enemies of true human nature, defined as humanitarians. If the humanist desires a “working in the soul of man,” the humanitarian desires “the gratification of appetites.”⁷¹ The humanitarian desire, Babbitt argued, threatened to reduce humanity to mediocrity, and he sought to oppose that,

⁶⁷ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 26.

⁶⁸ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 27.

⁶⁹ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 28.

⁷⁰ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 28.

⁷¹ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 29.

which he did primarily by engaging in literary criticism. This influence of Babbitt can be seen as being essential to Eliot's early notion of societal decadence.

While Irving Babbitt certainly had a lasting impact, Eliot was not content to live an intellectual life confined to Harvard yard, and he struck out to France, where he found "a most exciting variety of ideas."⁷² The year 1910 in Paris was one of exciting political and literary thought, and while there Eliot read all that he could. Chiefly among these French ideas, Eliot came to read much of our man of the right, Charles Maurras.⁷³ Eliot becomes an avid reader of Maurras in 1910, and this continues for much of his life. In 1928, Eliot wrote a defense of Maurras against Leo Ward's book *The condemnation of the Action Francaise*. In it, he professes to having been "a reader of the work of Maurras for eighteen years," pinpointing to the beginning of his intellectual relationship with Maurras being 1910.⁷⁴ After this encounter with Maurras, among many other political, literary, and cultural experiences that he had in Paris, Eliot returned home to undertake a dissertation on the pure philosophy of F. H. Bradley.

Russell Kirk argues that after this young point in his life, Eliot's sense of political value and his world-view do not develop much further.⁷⁵ His life is spent, rather, in refining the expression of his principles. He does this in the style of literary criticism, and comes to react very strongly against most of the "political messiahs" of his time.⁷⁶ Eliot finds himself ill-inclined to agree with much of the social and political theory of his time, and the roots of his thought, Kirk argues, were entwined with history, that of his family and of the "republic into

⁷² Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 32.

⁷³ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 33.

⁷⁴ Torrens, "Charles," 312-322.

⁷⁵ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 105.

⁷⁶ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 106.

which he had been born.”⁷⁷ This point seems to arise as a witness to Eliot’s admiration of his grandfather, Reverend William Greenleaf Eliot, who Kirk describes as his “political exemplar.” This grandfather seems to embody Eliot’s idea of the ideal man, for he was a “reforming conservative,” and a protector of his Christian community. Eliot’s mother describes him as holding a respect for “all that was sacred and memorable in the past.”⁷⁸ Eliot’s values seem to follow directly those of his grandfather. Eliot’s memory and ideal of his grandfather occupied the place that most political and social theorists of Eliot’s time would have filled with one of the great thinkers of the recent political sphere, such as Hobbes, Jefferson, or Burke, but with all of these men Eliot quickly took issue.

Out of all of the political writers of his era, only two receive continuous mention and praise throughout his essays and commentaries: Charles Maurras and T. E. Hulme.⁷⁹ Kirk argues that Hulme’s influence on Eliot was as reinforcement of already existing ideas, while Maurras’ influence was much more enduring. Eliot chiefly admired in Maurras’ work “his advocacy of cultural continuity,” his defense of “the genius of Christianity,” and his “zeal for order.”⁸⁰ He also admired that he always wrote in “noble prose” rooted in “literary critique.”⁸¹ Eliot came to very much admire and appreciate Maurras as a literary personality and social thinker. He even credits him as being one of the chief factors to guide him towards his eventual Catholic faith.⁸²

In reviews and commentaries, Eliot defends Maurras and the *Action française* from their attackers. He also translates an essay of Maurras entitled “Prologue to an Essay on Criticism,”

⁷⁷ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 105.

⁷⁸ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 107.

⁷⁹ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 106.

⁸⁰ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 106.

⁸¹ Torrens, “Charles,” 312.

⁸² Torrens, “Charles,” 313.

which he then publishes in his review *The Criterion*. In it, Eliot found many ideas that he found to agreeably represent tradition. In it, Maurras makes the argument that good literary style consists of the perfection of order, and that “order is what we should call the conformity of a being to all the elements of its fate.”⁸³ Furthermore, Maurras makes the point that “criticism is an affair of sensibility.” By it, he means that the production of literary criticism should unite both thought and feeling. Torrens argues that this sentence is key for Eliot.⁸⁴ Eliot comes to believe that the major dissociation between 16th and 17th century poetry and modern romantic poetry is the loss of sensibility, the loss of the combined consideration of both intellectual thought and feeling.⁸⁵ Eliot also, in writing his own three-part essay, entitled *Dante*, which he states to be designed to lead inexperienced readers into their own reading of *The Divine Comedy*, dedicates the entire essay to Maurras. It is safe to say, then, that Eliot held admiration for this French social critic, saying, even, in a reflection upon his discovery of Maurras in a letter to the press organization of the *Action Francaise*, that he envisioned Maurras as “a sort of Virgil who leads them to the temple gate.”⁸⁶

In Maurras, Eliot finds the synthesis of three of his ideas. The first of these is a strong anti-individualism. The second is a perception of societal barbarism as a result of romanticism. The third is an appreciation of order and tradition. These ideas were not isolated to Maurras and Eliot, for they were held by many other thinkers of the time. Maurras, though, for the first time, synthesizes these ideas in a format that is incredibly appealing to Eliot. Maurras begins with a witnessing of the barbarism that had become manifest in romantic literature. It was by analyzing

⁸³ Torrens, “Charles,” 315.

⁸⁴ Torrens, “Charles,” 315.

⁸⁵ T.S. Eliot, *The Metaphysical Poets*, 1921.

⁸⁶ Torrens, “Charles,” 316.

the “literary errors of romanticism” that he was led to study “the moral and political error” of his age, a study in which he discovered and applied values of tradition and cultural continuity.⁸⁷

Eliot went through much of the same process. He and Maurras were not interested in tradition and culture for their own sake, but rather as a solution to the political and social inadequacies of their day. By their mark, the values of romanticism and individualism were not leading towards healthy society, and in fact were responsible for a decline in social conditions of western Europe. Eliot found in Maurras a kindred diagnosis of the social problems of the early 20th century.

More importantly, though, Eliot was inspired by Maurras’ path to action. Maurras, to Eliot, was able to effect change as a literary intellectual. Despite the emotional quality of his writing, Maurras was committed to rationalism and positivism as a philosophy. He was instructing his fellow Frenchmen to remember the values of tradition and to use the lessons of the past social order in the construction of the new social order, and he was succeeding, from behind the writing desk. Maurras’ respect for tradition, order, and cultural continuity were very important to Eliot, but of most importance, Maurras inspired Eliot to use his literary skills to rouse Englishman to the state of their social order. Maurras was therefore partly responsible, among a few other chief inspirational figures, for the beginnings of the conservative social critic that Eliot would come to be.

Eliot first encountered Maurras by reading *The Future of the Intelligentsia*, which was a warning to intellectuals of the threat posed to them by the men of finance.⁸⁸ Maurras argues that “the intellectual life was being adulterated by materialism,” that men of letters were hard pressed nowadays to live by way of their craft. Eliot would have greatly identified with this, as he was a

⁸⁷ Torrens, “Charles,” 314.

⁸⁸ Roger Kojecky, *T.S. Eliot’s Social Criticism*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 63.

poor, half-starved poet himself in his early days in London, and chose to continue to follow the writings of Maurras. The Frenchman seemed to pinpoint problems of the social order that Eliot also perceived as important and threatening. They both viewed romanticism and individualism as plagues upon their homes, implementing an age of decadence. Eliot perceived a literary decadence, particularly in the literature surrounding the Great War. In Maurras, he realized that this literary decadence was a representation of a widespread social disorder, and also pinpointed a decline of the intellectual and moral order.⁸⁹

Maurras called on intellectuals to dissociate themselves from the assumption of individualistic authority and attempt to reignite an intellectual and moral order that would be used to pursue a new Monarchism. Eliot respected Maurras' monarchism, not as a viable political philosophy for Britain, but because it was derived from a sense of order and a respect for tradition.⁹⁰ Eliot revised Maurras' monarchism into a monarchism of tradition, that "wherever kings have long reigned, to overturn the throne is to subvert order and justice and freedom."⁹¹ This revision relies on the argument that a nation's tradition is the product of years of human success, and that to radically change the tradition is disregarding these lessons of a successful past. For both of these men, tradition was important because it provided a guide for the solution of modern problems. In the words of Eliot, "life can have meaning only if we know what has been said and done before our hour." He sought to restore tradition, as did Maurras, not in a form of reverence to "yesterday's styles," but rather as "civilization's continuity and essence."⁹² The goal of Maurras and of Eliot was not to revert to the culture of the past, but rather that tradition

⁸⁹ Kojecký, *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism*, 60.

⁹⁰ Kojecký, *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism*, 63.

⁹¹ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 146.

⁹² Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 62.

and culture should not be rejected outright for new ideas. They should be heeded in the creation of new ideas, so as not to squander the lessons of the struggles of human past. To not heed tradition was to create ideas and institutions that could not adequately serve a society.

A key example of the sharing of this idea is Eliot's agreement with Maurras' denigration of liberalism and democracy as weak forms of political organization. Eliot argues that liberalism "destroy[s] traditional social habits of the people," "dissolve[s] their natural collective consciousness into individual constituents," and "license[s] the opinions of the most foolish."⁹³ Democracy, then, instituted by a population affected by the ills of liberal individualism listed above, will only serve to betray its population to outside interests, allowing its culture to be "transformed by enemies."⁹⁴ Both men reviled liberalism and democracy as the political representations of the folly of the advocacy of individualism. From a young age, Eliot was taught that "personal and selfish aims should be subordinated to the general good which they represent."⁹⁵ Maurras' political criticism of liberalism and democracy appealed to Eliot, who in turn hoisted his own anti-individualism standard in opposition to these individualistic politics.

Eliot tended to refrain from aligning himself with one ideological or political movement, though, preferring instead to apply his typewriter to the advocacy of his own personal beliefs. In Maurras, he found a "leader with imagination and courage" who was inspired by the same conservative values as he and sought to fix a social disorder that had resulted because of the shunning of these values.⁹⁶ He admired the man's dedication to reason in argument and thought, his opposition to romanticism, and his sense of order. Eliot felt saddened by the end of Maurras,

⁹³ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 277.

⁹⁴ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 277.

⁹⁵ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 25.

⁹⁶ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 190.

and in an essay entitled “The Literature of Politics”, he expresses his belief that “Maurras would have achieved more by confining himself to literature, and to the theory rather than the practice of politics.”⁹⁷

Early in his seventy-six years, Eliot had solidified his opinions about the current state and dangers of society, and he was determined that tradition must be adhered to if one wished to produce a correct and adequate social order. His upbringing and education at Harvard had taught him the values of uniformity, tradition, and the importance of the role of the citizen in an organic society. Eliot had joined Babbitt in reaction to cultural romanticism, and he was unhappy with the value system of his current society. In discovering Maurras, though, Eliot found a man who shared Eliot’s ideas of tradition and cultural continuity, who saw individualism as a betrayal of traditional values and responsible for weak forms of political organization, and who, most importantly, operated in the tradition of literary criticism and adhered to reason and rationality in thought in the attempt to counteract the decadence and social disorder of the era. In his later years, Eliot continued to acknowledge the effects of Maurras upon his intellectual thought, but also began to acknowledge his disagreement with many of the more brazen elements. Kirk argues that, while Eliot and Maurras, both “men of 1914,” had harshly criticized society and its lack of order, Eliot’s continued reception of respect and influence can be attributed to a “temperance of thought and utterance” that one did not find in the emotional polemics of Maurras.⁹⁸ Eliot himself seems to realize this in 1955, shortly after the death of Maurras, when he says that if he had “never attempted to found a political party” then “those of his ideas which were sound and strong might have spread more widely, and penetrated more deeply, and affected

⁹⁷ Kojecký *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism*, 69.

⁹⁸ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 317.

more sensibly the contemporary mind.”⁹⁹ Eliot’s appreciation of Maurras’ core thought and sense of order remained, then, throughout the years of fascism and collaboration, an appreciation of a fellow social critic.

Eliot represents the adoption of many of Maurras’ beliefs and the continuation of them, but from a voice of respect and temperance rather than one of hate and hostility. It is unsurprising, then, that the voice of hate and hostility, Maurras, is not remembered for the beliefs that are better expounded via respect and temperance. He is instead remembered for those beliefs that fit the voice of hate and hostility, those beliefs rife with anti-semitism and xenophobia. In contemporary references to Maurras, his aesthetic, traditionalist nationalism is often forgotten in favor of his emotional, xenophobic nationalism.

Maurras’ Influence on the Far-Right Resurgence of the Twenty First Century

For all of Maurras’ belief in nature, patriotism, tradition, and the beauty of his nation, it is the darker aspects of his thought that are most often remembered and that come to define his memory in the 21st century. Maurras’ nationalism is inherently xenophobic and anti-semitic because it presupposes that France and the French people can do no wrong, therefore all threats to France’s perfection or instances of French imperfection are perpetrated by a foreign element that has infiltrated France.¹⁰⁰ This xenophobia takes the form of the framing of certain minority groups in France as *Anti-France*, distinguishing them as apart from the French people with the intent of decrying them as enemies of France and perpetrating an Us vs. Them mentality. For Maurras, the four enemies were “Protestants, Freemasons, Jews, and Meteques.”¹⁰¹ This

⁹⁹ Kirk, *Eliot and his Age*, 317.

¹⁰⁰ Buthman, *The Rise of Integral Nationalism*, 222.

¹⁰¹ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 121.

polemical attack against Jews and foreigners in France was necessary, Maurras argued, because of the plight that had befallen the Frenchman. Due to an invasion of foreigners, called metics in the fashion of ancient Athens, the Frenchman had become a foreigner in his own country. This invasion of foreigners had, since the French Revolution, propagated cultural decadence, oppressed the true French citizenry, and distorted French traditional values and the French collective identity.

In contemporary literature, Maurras is remembered primarily for his anti-semitism and xenophobia, which were rife throughout his provocative and controversial writings in which he denounced foreigners and Jews as the enemies of France and republicans as the puppets of these foreigners. Mentions of Maurras in the news media often focus on his anti-semitism, his xenophobia, and the proto-fascist element of his thought. For example, every year, the French High Committee for National Commendations publishes a selection of anniversaries that are considered significant in the history of France. In 2018, the committee published one that commemorated the 150th Anniversary of the “emblematic and controversial figure” Charles Maurras.¹⁰² Very quickly, though, widespread backlash erupted as many called for his removal, arguing that a known anti-semite and collaborationist should not be commemorated. He was quickly stricken from the register, revealing a French culture eager to remove itself from any anti-semitic and fascist association. Recently, Steve Bannon, the American far-right figurehead behind the right-wing Breitbart news network, has inspired much mention of Maurras with the revelation that he reads and respects Maurras’ ideas.”¹⁰³ This mention has prompted many news agencies to inquire into exactly who Maurras was and what he believed. These inquiries tend to

¹⁰² Elian Peltier, "France Rethinks Honor for Charles Maurras, Condemned as Anti-Semite," *The New York Times*, January 28, 2018, Accessed April 17, 2019.

¹⁰³ Emma-Kate Symons, "Steve Bannon Loves France," *Politico*, March 23, 2017, Accessed April 17, 2019.

declare him in a light that frames, very accurately, his xenophobic and anti-semitic arguments. Jeffrey C. Alexander, a Yale sociology professor, wrote in the cultural journal of the American Sociological Association this description of Maurras: “The rabidly anti-Semitic French Catholic political intellectual; fan of Mussolini and Franco; leader of the “anti-Dreyfusards” who persecuted the Jewish Army Captain falsely accused of treason; decades long-agitator against the democratic and secular Third Republic; sentenced to life imprisonment after World War II for collaborating with the Nazi occupation.”¹⁰⁴ These descriptions are very accurate, and do a good job of framing the provocative and extremist element of Maurras. This description mirrors others, though, in that it fails to mention the conservative and traditional aspect of Maurras’ thought, a failing that can be understood in that the most vivid aspect of his thought is certainly not his aesthetic traditionalism. It is also important to note that of Maurras’ thought, elements of his xenophobia and anti-semitism can be seen far more often in contemporary extreme-right movements than can his aesthetic traditionalism.

Maurras’ belief that a foreign invasion was responsible for the decline of French cultural and political identity is the element of his thought that can be seen most often in the right-wing resurgence of the 21st century. His thought is often described as the roots of the French Far-Right tradition, a point that’s argument is made if one compares founder of the National Front movement Jean-Marie Le Pen’s xenophobia with that of Maurras’. The movement attempts to distance itself from Maurras’ ideas after the ousting of Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2011 in an attempt to ‘de-demonize’ itself. Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, the grand-daughter of Jean-Marie and the niece of Marine Le Pen, has referenced Maurras in the most recent decade, though,

¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Raging Against the Enlightenment: The Ideology of Steven Bannon," *American Sociological Association: Culture Section*. August 18, 2017. Accessed April 18, 2019.

reflecting a sense of continuity in the French far-right tradition and discarding the goal of appealing to more establishment voters. The continuity that Jean-Marie and Marion have with Maurras is limited to his notion of the dangers of foreigners and their influence on French culture. In America, Maurras' name has much less significance, but it is mentioned by far-right political figure Steve Bannon, and elements of his ideas can be witnessed in the ideology of the American Identitarian Movement. While only a few on the far-right mention the name of Charles Maurras, the same form of xenophobia, that the influx of foreigners threatens the French identity, can be seen in the anti-immigrant, closed borders policies of the extreme-right today.

Peter Davies, in his book *The Extreme Right in France, 1789 to the Present: From De Maistre to Le Pen*, argues that “many in the modern day[2002] Front National look upon the founder of the Action Francaise [Maurras] as a prophet.”¹⁰⁵ Jean-Marie Le Pen founded this movement, the National Front, in 1972, and it came to serve as the synthesis for many extreme right-wing groups. The movement takes a hard anti-immigration stance and throughout its existence in French politics has continued to increase in popularity. Jean-Marie served as the movement's primary spokesperson from 1972 until his ousting in 2011, and his ideas represented much of the group's ideology. In writing his memoirs, entitled *Fils de la Nation*, Le Pen propounds his authoritarian outlook that is “steeped in France's long standing far-right tradition.”¹⁰⁶ In acknowledging the importance of this far-right legacy, Le Pen made approving references to a few far right intellectuals, one of whom was Charles Maurras.¹⁰⁷ In his political rhetoric, Jean-Marie Le Pen refrained from any deliberate references to Maurras, yet his ideas

¹⁰⁵Peter Davies, *The Extreme Right in France, 1789 to the Present: From de Maistre to Le Pen*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 132.

¹⁰⁶ Jeff Wolfreys, "Rise of a Monster." *Jacobin*. October 2, 2018. Accessed April 18, 2019.

¹⁰⁷ Wolfreys, "Rise."

involving immigration are startlingly similar. Le Pen believes that the introduction of foreign peoples, with their “thought, abundant fertility, incompatible historical traditions and culturo-religious beliefs,” removes the homogeneity of a society. This lack of homogeneity causes internal divisions and tensions that result in “socio-politico-moral decadence” that weakens Europe.¹⁰⁸ Crook makes the argument in his essay that if one replaces Maurras’ enemies with Le Pen’s, then the extent to which Le Pen has modified Maurras’ xenophobic and anti-semitic rhetoric becomes clear. Protestantism becomes Islam and the Germans become North Africans in continuation of the same perceived threat of foreign influence to that homogeneity of the nation. Jean-Marie Le Pen steers clear of making many references to Maurras, but his ideas concerning immigration as a threat to France bears a marked similarity to the thought of the leader of the Action Francaise, revealing the continuity of the National Front movement with the early far-right tradition in France.

In 2011, Jean-Marie Le Pen was ousted from his position as the leader of the National Front movement, primarily as a result of his increasingly hostile rhetoric and his description of the Holocaust as a “detail of history.”¹⁰⁹ His daughter, Marine Le Pen, assumed control of the party and pursued a policy of “de-demonization,” in which she attempts to steer the message of the party away from its extremist roots in an effort to attract more votes.¹¹⁰ Because of this de-demonization, in which she still harbors prominent anti-immigration and eurosceptic

¹⁰⁸ Jonathan Thatcher Crook, “La France aux Français: Continuities in French Extreme-Right Ideology from Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras to Jean-Marie Le Pen” (2016). *Honors Theses - All*. 1596.

¹⁰⁹ James McAuley, “No Publisher Would Touch Jean-Marie Le Pen’s Memoir. Now It’s a Bestseller,” *The Washington Post*, March 1, 2018. Accessed April 19, 2019.

¹¹⁰ Hugh McDonnell, “How the National Front Changed France.” *Jacobin*, November 23, 2015. Accessed April 19, 2019.

policies,¹¹¹ the party avoids any mention of Maurras as inspirational. However, with the entering of the political arena by Jean-Marie Le Pen's niece, Marion Marechal-Le Pen, a reopening of extremist and far-right dialogues is evident. Marechal-Le Pen already enjoyed a level of popularity in the party, and was elected as a member of parliament in 2012, representing the National Front. However, in a response to Marine Le Pen's de-demonization policies, she has united a faction of the party that is far more in line with her father's combative stance. Marechal-Le Pen has, in contrast to Marine Le Pen's diluting of the xenophobic, culture war rhetoric of the old National Front, reinstituted this rhetoric, claiming that young French conservatives should "take back their country."¹¹² Marechal-Le Pen seeks to reinspire the right in France towards a political ideology that is "revolutionary, identitarian, and reactionary."¹¹³ She seeks to dispel a culture propagated by the hegemony of a globalized and deracinated liberal system. Marion uses the language of Maurras to illustrate her political following, stating that she represents the "pays réel," the authentic country of the people, against "pays légal," the legal country that is dissociated from natural France.¹¹⁴ As Marion calls for measures to reduce the effect of "an Islamic counter-society" that exists in French territory¹¹⁵, she reveals her thought to be "in line with Charles Maurras' extreme right tradition of integral nationalism."¹¹⁶ As Marine Le Pen guides the National Front to become more of a mainstream political party by distancing it from its far-right roots, many of the extreme-right feel betrayed. As the party forsakes its

¹¹¹ Cecile Alduy, "What a 1973 French Novel Tells Us About Marine Le Pen, Steve Bannon and the Rise of the Populist Right," *Politico*, April 23, 2017. Accessed April 19, 2019.

¹¹² Mark Lilla, "Two Roads for the New French Right," *New York Review of Books*, December 20, 2018. Accessed April 19, 2019.

¹¹³ Lilla, "Two Roads for the New French Right."

¹¹⁴ Symons, "Steve Bannon Loves France."

¹¹⁵ Lilla, "Two Roads for the New French Right."

¹¹⁶ Lisa Esther Hermann and James Muldoon, *Trumping The Mainstream: The Conquest of Democratic Politics by the Populist Radical Right*, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 263.

far-right tradition and supporters, Marechal-Le Pen is picking up the fallen standard of the French extreme-right tradition, arguing again for the need for the protection of France against the threat of foreign influence. She has adopted the rhetoric of Maurras and her father in the pursuit of a culture war against the perceived threat of Islamic immigrants against the natural form of France. For these two leaders of the French extreme-right to quote Maurras reveals that his influence on the extreme-right has not abated, and that he is still considered by those who are interested in right-wing intellectual discourse.

Outside of France, other reactionary and identitarian movements echo Maurras' ideas as well. Recently, Steve Bannon, the American far-right figurehead behind the right-wing Breitbart news network, has inspired much mention of Maurras after his discussion with a French official in which he states "We are at the end of the Enlightenment. Have you read Charles Maurras?"¹¹⁷ This mention reveals that Bannon, a avid reader of right-wing political theory and discourse, is a reader and fan of Charles Maurras. He mentions him other times, as he makes the assertion that Donald Trump, newly elected anti-establishment President of the United States, "represents the flesh-and-blood, natural, real country, pitted against the abstract, far-off, legal country."¹¹⁸ This distinction of the "real country" against the "legal country" is one of Maurras' better known assertions, in which he asserts that the interests of the real country, the authentic French people, should be prioritized over those of the legal country, those who are in power within the Republic and operate on behalf of republican(foreign) institutions. Bannon operates at the forefront of the American 'alt-right,' an extremely conservative movement infused with white nationalism, and

¹¹⁷ Symons, "Steve Bannon Loves France."

¹¹⁸ Guy Sorman, "The French Source of Trumpism," *France-Amerique*, March 09, 2017, Accessed April 17, 2019, translated by Alexander Uff.

his mentions of Maurras as influential to his ideas reveals a connection between Maurras' concept of the Anti-France and the Identitarian Movement concept of the Great Replacement.

Many of the alt-right identify themselves as Identitarians, associating themselves with the nationalist movement, founded in France, that seeks to “preserve the ethnic and cultural origins of their respective countries.”¹¹⁹ This Identitarian Movement is manifest primarily in two groups. The first group, Generation Identity, was founded in France and operates in Europe. The second group, operating for North America, was known as Identity Europa (and has a presence at Appalachian State University), and is now branded as the American Identity Movement. The Identitarian Movement operates around Renaud Camus' idea of the Great Replacement, which is a conspiracy theory that argues that “unhindered mass immigration and the islamization which comes as its consequence” will displace white culture and peoples in their own countries.¹²⁰ The ideas of the Identitarian Movement, particularly the Great Replacement, bear a remarkable similarity to the ideas of Maurras. Renaud Camus, the author of the Great Replacement theory, even goes so far as to cite Maurras in a tweet, saying “As Charles Maurras said, there is much to criticize in Islam, but it has one undeniable quality—it is a danger for the Republic.”¹²¹ The idea that the influx of foreigners will come to replace the traditional ethnic culture of the country is something Maurras talks about specifically as having happened to his France in the early 20th century. The French Revolution was, to Maurras, the synthesis of this invasion of foreign influence, an invasion that succeeded in 1789 in replacing traditional French values with foreign ones. For Camus to reference Maurras, revealing an influence by him, is incredibly important

¹¹⁹ "Alt Right: A Primer about the New White Supremacy," Anti-Defamation League, Accessed April 20, 2019.

¹²⁰ "The Great Replacement," Generation Identity Homeland Freedom Tradition, Accessed April 20, 2019.

¹²¹ Renaud Camus (@renaudcamus), “Comme le disait Charles Maurras, on peut faire bien des reproches à l’islam mais il faut au moins lui reconnaître une qualité incontestable, c’est un danger pour la République,” Twitter, February 2, 2018, <https://twitter.com/RenaudCamus/status/959377873210695680>.

because his theory of a Great Replacement has come to operate as a central reason for and concern of most far-right, white supremacist movements of the 21st century.

Despite the similarities to Maurras' thought found in the ideology of the Identitarian Movement, the movement never mentions him. This can be interpreted as saying that Maurras has had no influence on the movement directly, despite obviously having an impact on Renaud Camus and the Great Replacement theory. According to Christoph Gurk of the German radio Bayerischer Rundfunk, though, it should be noted that one of the primary goals of the Identitarian Movement is to "make racism modern and fashionable."¹²² The movement also experiences widespread censorship due to their racist and anti-semitic ideas, and thus seems to be taking care in who and what they associate themselves with. Above, the consideration of Maurras in the media tends to outline his anti-semitism, his hate-speech, and his collaboration with the Nazi occupiers. For a movement attempting to legitimize itself into a mainstream political movement, and to rid itself from the fascist/neo-nazi association that white supremacist movements have, it makes sense for the Identitarian Movement to avoid any specific references to Charles Maurras. If the movement claimed Maurras as its ideological predecessor, implying inspiration from him, it would associate the movement with the unflattering elements of his thought. This must be avoided for a movement that seeks to have its claims heard as legitimate in a political theatre, even if a line can be drawn directly from their ideas to that of Maurras.

Far-right movements in the 21st century are tasked with the, rightfully so, difficult task of legitimizing their views in the face of a predominant liberal, globalist ideology. In pursuit of this task, they attempt to walk a fine line in order to both get their views across as legitimate and

¹²² Christoph Gurk, *Diese Gruppen machen den Rassismus hip* (Interview with Alexander Häusler), Bayern plus of the Bayerischer Rundfunk, 17 May 2013.

avoid a denunciation as fascist, racist, or anti-semitic. This is why Marine Le Pen of the National Front has set about the task of ‘de-demonization,’ which seeks to distance her party from these extremist views in the pursuit of appealing to more moderate voters. The Alternative fur Deutschland has pursued a similar process, which has come to result in its rise to the third largest political party in Germany. This legitimization process often involves stifling the extremist factions within the parties, denouncing them as not representing the parties interests. These parties are still very right-wing, though, and continue to be described as nationalist and populist. They retain their views on immigration, and continue to advocate against the EU and global capitalism. The ‘de-demonization’ process sought to soften the language of the National Front, curtailing its anti-semitism and public racism while still remaining its xenophobic and islamophobic anti-immigration platform.

The Identitarian Movement seeks to do the same in a bid to move away from its label as a white supremacist group. It seeks to brand its movement as concerned with identity and culture rather than race and ethnicity. It views itself as a highbrow and intellectual group, complete with slick and intelligent branding designed to dissociate itself from its charges of neo-nazism and anti-semitism. Therefore, it makes sense as to why movements that share such similarity to the arguments of Maurras would choose not to cite him. There is no way to know whether or not he is a direct influence to the ideas of these movements, but regardless of specific reference, their rejection of multiculturalism and pluralism in favor of a the protection of a white cultural majority directly coorelate to the ideas of Maurras.

Conclusion

It should be said that in writing this thesis, I did not set out to make this argument. In fact, I set out with no argument at all, but merely a curiosity about the recent surge in popularity of nationalist and populist movements. I was curious if anything could be learned about this surge from the studying of earlier surges in nationalist fervor. Many discussions about this with Dr. Behrent, my thesis director, eventually guided me to the Action Francaise movement in France in the early 20th century. After an exploration of this, and the discovery of Charles Maurras, the frame of the essay began to construct itself.

Charles Maurras is an important and relevant figure because of his role and position amidst the turmoil of the right-wing surge of the early twentieth century. An understanding of him is important as his thought becomes central to the French far-right movement, and can be argued to be a form of proto-fascism. A synthesis of Maurras' thought is revealing as well. On one hand, he attempts to ground his ideas in the objectively-oriented positivist system, as well as tending to operate with a respect towards reason and rationality. He places importance on an adherence to traditions as a potential solution to the political and social problems of France. On the other, Maurras continuously engages in emotional polemics and fiery writings which espouse xenophobia and a hatred of anything anti-France. His xenophobia aims to minimize the influence of foreign ideas and values on French culture. The existence of these two sides of his thought is interesting because, while they are perfectly synthesized in the framework of Maurras' nationalism, the ideologies of those influenced by Maurras are only ever found to employ one of these elements. T.S. Eliot, who highly respected Maurras for his aesthetic traditionalism, employment of rationality, and sense of order spoke of his political xenophobia as being his downfall. Steve Bannon and Marechal-Le Pen, while they may prefer to be thought of as rational

and empirical, employ the same xenophobic thought that depicts foreign influence as overriding the 'ethnic' culture, while avoiding the same sense of traditionalism and classicism. An understanding of the synthesis in Maurras' thought allows us a view of two lines of right-wing political discourse that have affected the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Not only does an understanding of Maurras as one of the ideological pillars of the far-right make an important contribution to understanding our contemporary political culture, in which, once again, we see a resurgence of right-wing political movements that arm themselves with similar ideologies, it also reveals the extent to which nationalism and populism is a product of the cultural and social conditions of the time. Maurras is attempting to save a France that has fallen from its height of power, has recently been defeated by Germany in 1870, has had to deal with a stagnant and inefficient government, and has forsaken its tradition. T. S. Eliot is lamenting a western world beset by a cultural decadence stemming from the horrors of the Great War and romanticism's influence on art and literature. Contemporary right-wing figures and movements are responding to the effects of globalist policies on local populations, the increase of diversity in the western world, and the mass-migration of immigrants to their nations. The two elements of Maurras' thought listed above offer two separate ways in which nationalists might respond to the perceived social and political degradation of their nations. His aesthetic traditionalism acts as a prescription for a declining France by advising an adherence to the lessons of a more successful past. His territorial xenophobia defends a threatened France by outsourcing the source of its issues to an enemy that is perceived as Anti-France. An understanding of these elements of nationalism allow both a better understanding of the nature and ideology of the contemporary surge in far-right popularity, as well as a better understanding of the ways in which traditionalist

and xenophobic forms of nationalism can be used to respond to a perceived political, social, and national degradation.

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